



MINUTES

Meeting: PARISH COUNCIL

Date: 3rd October 2022

Time: 7.30PM

Venue: PARISH HALL, THORNWOOD COMMON

PRESENT:

Councillors (10) Cllr A Buckley (Chairman), Cllr Spearman, Cllr Bedford, Cllr Mrs Hawkins, Cllr Clegg, Cllr Mrs S Jackman MBE, Cllr Mulliner, Cllr Tyler, Cllr Irvine. Cllr Mrs Etherington

Officers in Attendance (2)

Susan De Luca – Parish Clerk

Adriana Jones – Principal Financial Officer (PFO)

Members of the Public (1)

Members of the Press (1)

Prior to the start of the Meeting the Chairman asked Members to take part in a moment of reflection, to reflect on the life and times of the 70year reign of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II. In line with most local authorities this Council carried out the Proclamation to the Parish conducted at the Debt of Honour with a number of local people in attendance. However it is appropriate now to have a Moment of Reflection, and the guidelines for this have been issued to Parish and Town Councils and take the format below. The Chairman therefore asked that Parish Councillors join with and that the following Statement be noted in the Parish Council Minutes:

Members of the public in the United Kingdom joined together in a Moment of Silent Reflection on the eve of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II funeral to recognise the length of service and her commitments to the country during her reign. This Council did not meet to undertake this on that date, therefore it is appropriate to do this at the start of their next full council meeting. We ask therefore that we hold a minute silence. During the minute we will have an opportunity to silently reflect on the lifetime of service which Her late Majesty devoted to the United Kingdom, the Realms and Territories and to the Commonwealth. The Queen was sure in her faith and steadfast in her duty, bringing consistency through 70 years of change. We will remember Her late Majesty with affection and gratitude and give thanks in our hearts for her unswerving devotion to us and to our Country.

Councillors and public present held a moment of silence.

C22.095 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (3)

Apologies received from Cllr Mrs Grigg, Cllr Ms Wood, Cllr Blanks.

C22.096 OTHER ABSENCES (1)

Cllr Stroud.

C22.097 MINUTES

The Minutes of the Meeting of the Parish Council held on 5th September 2022 were **APPROVED** and duly signed.

C22.098 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Cllr Spearman declared a pecuniary interest in any item concerning the Local Plan.

C22.099 QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

The Chairman welcomed the member of the public present and advised that the Clerk had received written questions from this member of the public, and that the Clerk would read out the questions and responses.

Question 1 - When the agenda for the above meeting was first published on the Council's website the wording on Item 9 was different to the agenda that was used at the meeting in several ways. When was this and the pdf changed?

Question 2 - Where Councillors advised of the changes?

Question 3 - Is it a common occurrence that the published agenda on the website differs to that used in the meeting?

The Clerk advised she had looked into these matters and according to the records there was only one agenda published on the Parish Council website on 31st August, and asked the member of public to clarify what she felt the changes were. The member of public advised she had initially been described as a member of the public however this was subsequently changed to resident, to which the Clerk advised this wasn't the case as she held the original on her computer and produced the original hard copy onto which she had written notes at the meeting. The member of the public said that she had later gone into the website after the meeting as she had realised that what she had read on the website was different to what she had in her hand, and that she saw that there were differences. The PFO stated that this matter could be verified as the Council's website has a mechanism by which any updates or amended files which are uploaded are recorded, and that this showed only one document had been uploaded, and that this was the same as the hard copy that was given to both Councillors and tabled at the meeting for residents. The member of the public stated that at the meeting the Chairman did say he added something about the hours, to which the Clerk stated that the Chairman had asked for the hours to be recorded - not added to the agenda - to which the member of public disagreed. The Clerk stated that the member of public had asked at the meeting 'who asked for the hours to be put down in the agenda', to which the Chairman confirmed he did. The Clerk confirmed there was only one agenda published, there were no changes made, and if there was ever to be a situation where changes to a published agenda were needed, it would be for a typo or an error of numbering. The member of public thanked the Council for their response.

C22.100 REPORT OF THE CLERK

Councillors *NOTED* the report of the Clerk as detailed within the agenda, as well as other updates as follows:

- **Wooden Waymarker, Wheelers Farm Gardens** – The Clerk confirmed this had been repaired by Countrycare and had been reinstalled.
- **Debt of Honour** – Clerk advised she had received an enquiry regarding installing another bench on the empty slabs at the Debt of Honour, in honour of the late Queens Elizabeth II, confirming that this would be on the next agenda for consideration.
- **Weald Common Tree Project** – Staff and Cllr Buckley continue to work on this, with a number of site meetings having taking place, and an update will be provided later in the meeting.
- **Various Planning Matters** - Clerk advised that the Council was no longer being given extensions of time to consider planning applications. Cllr Mrs Jackman asked why this was the case, to which the Clerk advised that EFDC Officers were working to the statutory timescales. Cllr Mrs Jackman asked that this be included in the EFDC Liaison Committee

meeting. Cllr Bedford confirmed that he would ask the question and advised that Nigel Richardson had attended Theydon Bois Parish Council recently so may be willing to attend. It was noted that the next liaison is possibly not until March next year as the recent one scheduled for October had been cancelled. Cllr Spearman stated that this was the way planning was going, and that you cannot even get a buildings regulation officer to come out these days.

- **Cemetery Matters**
- **Allotment Matters** – Hastingwood site visit now next Wednesday.
- **Remembrance Sunday**
- **Operation London Bridge** – Death of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II – detailed further in the agenda.

C22.101 REPORTS & MEMBERS REPORTS

a) **Chairman's Report** – The Chairman stated he would report fully on Weald Common under the specific agenda item, however wanted to advise Councillors that the HMRC Inland Border Facility on the Airfield had now officially closed, and that no further grant funds were due to this Council by EFDC. In addition, he had been in contact with ECC Highways who had confirmed that it would be National Highways who would be collecting the signage, etc. Cllr Bedford stated that EFDC also contributed funds towards the Church Lane Flood Meadow using monies they received from HMRC, and that the signage may still be in situ to directionally assist those who were dismantling the site. Cllr Irvine stated that HMRC had prepared the site for a specific purpose which is now no longer needed, resulting in EFDC effectively having a drive through site that could be used for another purpose. Cllr Bedford stated that this was being looked at by EFDC however he could not elaborate on this further at this time. Cllr Irvine stated that the traffic which was a real concern at the start of the HMRC process never really materialised, although it was not unreasonable that people were concerned, however if the site is used going forward for something similar this could still present a problem for local residents. Cllr Bedford stated he could not elaborate. Cllr Tyler asked Cllr Bedford why there was so much mysticism about the site as its future use could affect local residents. The Chairman asked Cllr Bedford when we would find out more, to which he responded in the next 2-4 months. Cllr Clegg stated that he would like it recorded that he would not be in support of it becoming another truck stop like the one at Waltham Abbey. Cllr Bedford stated that the HMRC site had around 2,000 movements a week however this did not affect the village at all, to which the Chairman stated that this was because the Parish Council got involved at the start and agreed a 10 point plan including signage requirements. Cllr Bedford stated that the HMRC site adapted to changes in circumstances. Cllr Mrs Etherington stated that the key message here is that that whatever becomes of this site it is clearly sensitive and may not be popular, stating that if it was to become something like a recycling centre she felt the community would not be happy. Cllr Mrs Etherington asked Cllr Bedford if the future of the site would be something that could be detrimental to the village, to which Cllr Bedford advised that EFDC were at a time where the situation was quite sensitive and he could not disclose what the current thoughts were, stating however that the felt Cllr Mrs Etherington's fears were unfounded.

b) **Vice Chairman's Report** – No report

c) **District & County Councillors Reports** – No reports.

d) **Parish Councillors Reports** – Cllr Tyler asked that thanks were recorded for the staff for the work they did in relation to operation London Bridge, confirming the Parish Council acted exactly in

accordance with protocol. It was noted that around 13 hours overtime was used, however the staff would not be claiming for this. The Chairman thanked Cllr Tyler for the lowering of the flag.

Cllr Clegg reported on the Community Speedwatch, stating that they were out at 12pm in Upland Road, and that he had spoken with Cllr Irvine and they would also be in Hastingwood at two different sites on Thursday morning, as requested by those who live there, at around 8.15am.

Cllr Clegg asked for help and advice regarding a water main that had been gushing out water outside the first garage in Thornwood for over three weeks, advising that a local resident had tried to convince Affinity Water to come out and look at however they hadn't come. Come winter, if this isn't fixed the area will be very icy and dangerous. The Clerk advised that she would arrange for this to be reported.

Cllr Mrs Hawkins asked that thanks were recorded to the Parish Council for supplying the hall free of charge for the MacMillan event, which raised over £1,300 for charity.

- e) **Queens Hall Charity Report** – The Clerk confirmed that Cllr Wood had provided a written report as follows: *As the meeting was cancelled due to the passing of the Queen we have a meeting next week now. We have had yet again another issue with a regular hirer which will be addressed at the next meeting. We have now had our governing document changed as requested to allow us to remove trustees who do not attend meetings however it was pointed out to me that there is a clause already in the document that would allow us to do the same - we will be looking into this and discussing at the next meeting. Sadly we failed to secure funding for the Emergency Electrical / Fire alarm works and they are now looking at this with another source of funding for us - we are awaiting support from Chris Whitbread on this. Apart from this we are all doing well*
- f) **Neighbourhood Plan Report** – Councillors recalled that this was currently on hold pending the Local Plan, however the PFO advised Councillors that the Ongar Neighbourhood Plan recently passed its referendum and confirmed that an email containing the link to the Neighbourhood Plan was sent out to Councillors earlier in the day. The PFO advised that Councillors really should read this document, paying specific attention to the policies it contains, as this matter will be on the November agenda for discussion. It is essential Councillors are very clear about what a Neighbourhood Plan is / does, so that the Council can make an informed decision about the future of the Neighbourhood Plan. It was agreed that any Councillor who wished for a hard copy would need to advise the PFO.
- g) **EFDC Local Plan Report** – The PFO advised that Cllr Bedford's report contained within the Cabinet Agenda of 11th October states that the timescales for consultation were not yet confirmed, but it will be no longer than the statutory 6 weeks. Officers are working to deliver the consultation as soon as possible in the coming weeks to move towards the conclusion of the Examination and the final adoption of the Plan. Cllr Bedford advised there was a delay as it was due to be consulted upon straight after the summer holidays, however he was hoping to have a timetable by the end of this week. The PFO also advised that the Cabinet report stated that Work has progressed on the Latton Priory Strategic Masterplan (one of the strategic sites within the Garden Town and within Epping Forest District) by the applicant and design team, in discussion with the Council's Implementation Team and HGGT partners. The strategic masterplan is expected to be reviewed by EFDC Cabinet in November, for approval for public consultation. Consultation is expected to take place in November- December. Cllr Spearman asked if this formed part of the EFDC Local Plan, to which it was confirmed it did however it was part of the Harlow and Gilston Garden Town Development. Cllr Bedford explained that other areas within the Epping Forest District also formed

part of the Harlow and Gilston Garden Town. The Clerk advised that herself and the PFO would be attending a Zoom session on 12th October for an update on the Masterplan. Cllr Spearman asked if this would hold up the Local Plan.

- h) **Highways Report** – ECC Members Pothole Scheme – Councillors were reminded that Cllr C Whitbread advised there were two batches of 18 potholes that could be put forward for repair, and stated that so far this Council had forwarded about 6, and asked Councillors to advise the Clerk if there were any further they would like submitted. Cllr Spearman advised that there were many along Silver Birch Avenue to which the Clerk confirmed she would put this forward as a general area. Cllr Tyler explained that there were many street lights out, and as such it was extremely difficult to see any potholes which was dangerous.

C22.102 FINANCIAL

List of Cheques and Monthly statement of Accounts

Councillors **NOTED** the cheque list and monthly statement of accounts for September 2022, and the bank balances as at 30th September 2022. Cllr Bedford asked for clarification about the income from Hastings Direct, to which the Clerk advised that this was concerning a drunk driver accident in Hastingwood that resulted in the loss of a Parish Council owned street light, and that she had fought tooth and nail for this money which Hastings Direct were very reluctant to pay out. It was noted there was still one outstanding query on this matter in that Hastings Direct would not pay out for the cost to emergency close the footpath to complete necessary works to the street light stating this had not been authorised. The question was raised as to if the Parish Council had looked into paying off the last amount of the public works loan to which the PFO stated this is considered each year at budget and that at the last F&GP Meeting it was established there was no financial gain to be made by paying it off early. The loan finishes in 2025.

C22.103 OPERATION LONDON BRIDGE – DEATH OF HM QUEEN ELIZABETH II

Members **NOTED** that all matters relating to this sad occasion were carried out in accordance with the Government guidelines of Operation London Bridge. On the day that the death was announced the flag was lowered, notices were put on Noticeboards with regard to where flowers could be laid and also details were placed on both social media and the Parish Council Website, including information as to when the flag had to be raised for the proclamation of the new king and then lowered again. However there was still some confusion amongst residents, and some residents actually either tried to lower the flag on ascension day or sent in complaints. Two areas were set up with books of condolences, both of which will now be sent on to the District Council. Proclamations were drawn up and read by the Chairman at the debt of honour, and were also posted on the Noticeboards. Flowers that were laid at the memorial will be moved to the Princess Diana tree. Cllr Bedford asked if a review of the processes had taken place, and would we have done anything different, to which the Clerk advised that the only change would have been placing notices by the flag poles so residents were aware of the flag flying protocols. Cllr Bedford asked if the PC should take responsibility for the flag poles at the Debt of Honour as it was noticed that the flag was the wrong way round and was not raised or lowered correctly, to which the Clerk stated that it was possible EFDC was unaware of its responsibilities regarding these flag poles. Cllr Tyler stated that following the tampering with the flag at this time, the white cap at the top of pole seems to be damaged and will need replacing.

C22.104 NORTH WEALD AIRFIELD ALTERNATIVE MASTERPLAN

Councillors **NOTED** that Councillors Chris Whitbread and Nigel Bedford had been asked whether or not EFDC have had sight of the revised Masterplan or the Parish Council notes from the

presentation with Relight. At the PC Meeting with District Councillors, attendees were advised that both had been seen by Nigel Richardson's Department. It was also noted that the EFDC Council agenda states with regard to the Airfield Masterplan that the 'final version of the Master Plan is being reviewed and all going well should be presented to Cabinet as soon as the Local Plan is adopted.'

C22.105 INVESTMENTS

Councillors recalled that the Clerk, PFO and Cllr Blanks have been looking into the Councils finances and investment opportunities. There are a number of complex factors to consider, including:

- The Councils level of finances, versus the level of protection under the Financial Services Compensation Scheme (FCSC) - £85,000
- The level of exposure when considering the level of protection under the FCS, and what needs / should be done about this.
- Which financial organisations can the Authority use to deposit funds, and how easy are they to use (example of previous account – Barclays – proved exceptionally difficult to use)
- What is the level of surplus funds and how can this be invested appropriately, with the necessary risk fully examined and duly considered.
- The Parish Council is required to comply with all necessary legislation
- If the Council wishes to invest, or if it simply wants to spread the risk

The PFO has contacted Churches, Charities and Local Authorities (CCLA) Investment Management Limited – an investment fund well recognised in the sector, owned by three client groups – churches, charities and local authorities – in order to obtain some further advice regarding investments. Office staff and Cllr Blanks will continue to look at suitable options and this matter.

C22.106 LOCAL GOVERNMENT REVIEW OF ELECTORAL BOUNDARIES

Councillors **NOTED** that Cllr Whitbread and Cllr Bedford advised that this Council should have an opportunity to make comment during October in regard to the Boundary changes, and that it was a case of watch this space. The Clerk stated she had been advised this would be early October.

C22.107 COFFEE WITH COPS

Coffee with Cops was held in the Methodist Church on Tuesday 6th September between 10 – 12 noon. It was not that well attended, with only two Members of the public in attendance. However there were also three Councillors who attended. The Police would like to hold another event in early November in North Weald but a venue would be needed as a result of the Methodist Church closing. Councillors felt that an evening session would be a good idea as the last two daytime sessions were not very well attended. It was noted that the events were publicised on the Parish Notice boards and social media. Cllr Bedford suggested the name of the event should be changed to ASB meeting, however the Clerk advised such a meeting was held previously with people wanting to argue. Cllr Mrs Etherington suggested the Police should look on the village social media site. Cllr Bedford suggested that perhaps a notice should be placed in Village Life stating that residents could submit a question that the Parish Council will ask the police on their behalf. It was **AGREED** that the Clerk would go back to PC Cook asking when he was looking to hold an event.

C22.108 WEALD COMMON

The Chairman advised that the two projects continue to move forward and that the Swale has now been cut into the grass to help divert the water run off away from the play area and path. After a site visit, it has been agreed that this swale needs to be fenced off so the mound doesn't get flattened

and that the PC staff and himself will monitor this when the weather gets wetter. The PFO is creating signs to be erected in the area to advise people of where to walk and the alternative routes.

With regard the Tree project, there was a meeting last week with two officers from ECC (Tom and James) at which the PFO, Senior Admin Officer and TGM were present. It is understood that the Forestry Commission are happy with the project, however we are just awaiting formal written confirmation of this along the granting of funds. Tom has reserved the trees we need, which is just under 3000 in total. Grant funding has been identified and provisionally allocated, and we are looking at the logistics of the project. A meeting has been arranged for the following week to put together a timetable of works, possibly starting at the end of November. Tom will create a site planting map/plan. This Council has been allocated around £20,000 of funding for the project, £6,000 of which is for maintenance for the next 10 years, and there is additional funding agreed in the 2022/2023 budget by this Council. The PFO advised that some of these costs will need to be paid out by the Council in the first instance and then the funding reclaimed. This was normal procedure with the Forestry Commission grants. The Chairman advised it was hoped to consider a dementia area and a meeting would be taking place with EFDC in the coming weeks to look at this. It was also hoped that St Andrews school could be involved in some way.

Cllr Irvine stated that many good things this Council does goes unnoticed, and people only tend to remember the negative elements, so it would be good at a later meeting to update people on what the plan is. In addition, some of the trees planted on Weald Common previously have been vandalised and are there any steps to try and avoid this. The Chairman stated that the two tree planting areas on Weald Common were interesting in that the area near the play area that was fenced in and grass cut suffered from regular vandalism, however the upper area that was not fenced in nor cut did not suffer from any vandalism at all. The Clerk explained that it was hoped this Council could encourage people to take ownership of the area which would result in less likelihood of vandalism. Cllr Bedford suggested that each tree could have a stake with a name attached to it. The Clerk advised the Council was looking at all different sorts of ideas.

Naming of the Area

The Clerk has received a request from a Councillor about possible names for the area and members were asked if they had any names that they would like to put forward for consideration. Some of the suggestions were Jubilee Park, North Weald Park, Weald Common Park, New Kings Wood, King Charles Wood and Coronation Wood. Cllr Clegg asked if there were any restrictions on naming of the area after the monarch, reminding Councillors of the issue when naming Cyril Hawkins Close. The Clerk advised she would look into this matter.

Information Board

Councillors were asked what they would like to see included on the information boards, for example the history of the site and inclusion of the Radio Station etc. The Chairman advised that the pathways along this area are well trodden and converge at the Copper beach, and that the plan was to make a feature of one of the blocks. Cllr Bedford suggested a laser cut etching as something that would last a long while. Cllr Tyler advised Councillors that the radio station was used up to 1983 and one of last messages it took was regarding the sinking of the Belgrano.

C22.109 REMEMBRANCE SUNDAY

Members **NOTED** that arrangements were in hand for this event, and that staff had been in contact with both the Vicar of St Andrews Church and the Chairman of the RBL NW Branch. The Clerk was just waiting for the Chairman of the RBL to confirm timings, after which invites will be sent

out. The price of a lunch is £19.00. There is a bugler confirmed for both services. The Clerk had attended a meeting with Pat Seagar, EFDC, regarding 56 Squadron to the event, and advising that the service time at the Debt of Honour will stay the same at 12.15pm, however lunch will be at 1pm to accommodate 56 Squadron as they have to leave early for a parade in Epping at 2pm

C22.110 NORTH WEALD LIBRARY – GOING FORWARD

Members were reminded of this Council's desire to return to the library and offer a service to the public. The Clerk did not need to ask the question at EFDC Council as she managed to get signatures on a letter by District and County Councillors, with the assistance of Cllr Bedford. She has received a verbal answer from a question raised by our PFO at EALC's AGM that the Registrar is still using the Office in North Weald Library for their purposes, and if this is the case then this Council will not be able to return there. A formal response was still awaited. Cllr Bedford advised that Cllr Chris Whitbread had advised him that he had spoken with the Cabinet member at ECC again who confirmed that there is storage and staffing for the Registrar at the library at present. Cllr Tyler suggested that storage should be moved to a building that is not a fire risk, to which the Chairman agreed stating that if it is just storage surely another building could be used and the library opened up on more days for members of the public use. Cllr Tyler advised that he was at the Willingale War memorial the previous day at which Cllr McIvor and Alex Burghart were present and suggested a letter should be written to them asking for their assistance and support. Councillors **AGREED** a letter should be sent from the Chairman asking them to get involved in supporting the Parish Council returning to the library.

C22.111 WARM BANKS

The Clerk advised that at present this Council could not determine if it could support this initiative unless the Council could return to the library, so it would be best to place this matter on hold for the current time until a formal response from ECC is received. It was agreed that this Council cannot do a warm bank if it has nowhere warm to do it from. The Clerk advised that the Council had been offered £200 funding from EFDC towards a warm bank if we can find somewhere. Cllr Bedford stated that the current feeling from County is that they were unsure if people would actually use warm banks. Suggestions for other possible locations were the snug room at the Kings Head the lounge area of the NW Village Hall, Norway House and Leonard Davis House, however each of those had their own safeguarding issues or are regularly used without space being available. Councillors generally felt that this wasn't just about people popping in for a coffee, but to keep people warm for a large part of the day. Cllr Clegg said that in his experience with food banks was that it wasn't just about food but also about company and meeting people. Cllr Tyler stated that the library was the best place for a Warm Bank. It was **AGREED** to place this on hold at the current time.

C22.112 BATTLE OF BRITAIN SUNDAY – 18TH SEPTEMBER

Councillors **NOTED** that this event had to be cancelled due to the death of the late Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, however wreaths were laid by the Chairman on behalf of the Parish Council, Royal Norwegian Airforce, and 56 Squadron on the Tuesday following the Queen's funeral. He was joined in the wreath laying by EFDC Cllr Mrs Mary Sartin Chairman of EFDC.

C22.113 EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC AND PRESS

The public and press were excluded from the meeting, the Council believing that publicity would be prejudicial to the public interest by reason of the confidential nature of the business about to be discussed.

C22.114 NORTH WEALD METHODIST CHURCH

Due to the confidential nature of this subject, these minutes are not available for public inspection as they contain or relate to exempt information within the meaning of the Paragraphs indicated of Part I of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972.

C22.115 NORTH WEALD RADIO STATION BOWLS CLUB

Due to the confidential nature of this subject, these minutes are not available for public inspection as they contain or relate to exempt information within the meaning of the Paragraphs indicated of Part I of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972.

**C22.116 LETTER FROM RESIDENT REGARDING WHEELERS FARM GARDENS
ALLTOMENTS**

Due to the confidential nature of this subject, these minutes are not available for public inspection as they contain or relate to exempt information within the meaning of the Paragraphs indicated of Part I of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972.

Meeting closed

Signed

Date