

Hilderstone Parish Council

Minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 23rd October 2013 at 7.30p.m.

Present: Cllr. M. Shelley (Vice Chairman), Cllr. J. Crump, Cllr. P. Davies, Mrs. H. Howie (Clerk), Cllr. J. Jones, and Cllr. H. Woodward. Cllr Harp joined the meeting at approximately 8.00pm. There were no members of the public present.

1. **Chairman's Welcome.** Cllr. Shelley welcomed the councillors to the meeting.
2. **Apologies.** These were received from Cllr. Clark.
3. **Minutes of the last meeting.** The paragraph that related to Annscroft under item 7 Planning, should have read: The Parish Council has no objections to this application, apart from the balcony, which it feels is detrimental to the character of a barn conversion and is a feature which should be removed. It was noted that the clerk had notified Development Control about the objection to the balcony. The minutes were then approved and signed.
4. **Matters arising.** There has been no feedback yet about the financial and business assessment of The Roebuck from Phil and Julie Dale or other village members. An article about this will be in the November edition of the Parish Magazine. Other matters arising were dealt with under the agenda headings.
5. **Borough Councillor's Report.** The problem with the drains on Dingle Lane as reported at the last parish council meeting will be resolved by the Borough Council as funding has now been allocated to it. A date for the work has however to be set.

Stafford Borough is currently undergoing an electoral review by The Local Government Boundary Commission for England. Following public consultation, The Commission has determined that Stafford Borough must reduce its number of Councillors from 59 to 40. This will require a reduction in the number of wards and the next stage of the review is to re-design the ward boundaries. It is currently proposed that the Milwich ward should be extended to include Sandon and Stowe- by-Chartley. The review is open to public consultation until 7th January 2014. The Parish Council will comment on this in due course and members of the public are also entitled to comment.

Cllr. Harp still intends to 'call-in' the planning application for Bearstakes on Sandon Road. The area of agricultural land that will require a change of use to accommodate the small extension, is very minimal. Planning officers tend to be very cautious about granting change of use for agricultural land.

Stafford Borough Council have a scheme to make awards to people in local communities that make a significant voluntary contribution. Details will be sent to Parish Councils, who will be allowed to make nominations.

Cllr. Harp has visited Hilderstone with an Environmental Health Officer to identify any issues. Environmental Health can look at a wide range of issues including mud on the roads, water running down roads and empty properties. Dingle Lane was identified as a problem area with regards to excess water but this may be linked to the current problem with the main drain. It was noted that the County Council have the power to place a charge on land owners to clear ditches without the need to go through a solicitor.

6. **County Councillor's Report.** No report

7. **New Planning Applications October 2013:**

13/19329/HOU Cherry Tree House, Dingle lane, Hilderstone – proposed single storey extension to side and rear. **Resolved: The Parish Council has no objection to this application.**

13/19412/FUL Bearstakes, Sandon Road – proposed two-storey rear and side extension to provide accommodation for disabled person and her carers. Modification of Plans – addition of request for change of use of a small area of agricultural land adjoining the application site.

Resolved: The Parish Council has no objection to this application or to the change of use of the very small area of agricultural land.

Status of Earlier Applications:

13/19110/FUL Annscroft, Sandon Road, Hilderstone – retrospective application for barn conversion. **PERMITTED.**

8. Traffic and Highways. Richard Pilcher and Ian Parry are to meet with Stone Police to discuss Police traffic monitoring in Hilderstone. It is hoped that the Police will carry out more frequent monitoring in the village. Speedwatch continue to carry out regular speed monitoring.

Cllr. Woodward raised the issue of unofficial highways signs in and around the village. It was agreed that the Parish Council was being unfair in asking for signs to be removed from the Hardiwick crossroads, but allows other unofficial signs around the village. It could be argued that the village website sign at the Hilderstone/Sandon road junction posed as much as road safety issue as the 'For Sale' signs placed at the Hardiwick Crossroads. It was agreed that there should be an all or nothing policy.

The potholes on Hall Lane still need repairing as does the kerbing on the Dingle Lane junction. The clerk will chase these jobs. Cllr Jones reported that the potholes on Whitehouse and Cotwalton Lanes have been filled, but a repair to the side of one of the lanes is so steep that it is dangerous. The clerk asked if Cllr. Jones would contact Highways about this.

9. Footpaths/Village Maintenance/Best Kept Village. The Best Kept Village Judges' Report for 2013 has been received and circulated to all the volunteers as well as the parish councillors. A copy will also be placed on the village website. Although Hilderstone slipped back from second to third place this year, the comments were very good on the whole. Cllr. Harp remarked that the competition was very strong this year and the best villages had all been maintained to a very high standard. It is hoped that the Best Kept Village Group will have a meeting early in the new year to plan for 2014. It was encouraging that there had been a large group of regular volunteers willing to help with the monthly churchyard tidy sessions and a great deal of progress had been made there.

More bulb planting has been carried out around the village. There are many weeds and nettles on footpath 14 and the clerk has instructed Bill Holmes to spray these if the weather is suitable. Stafford and Rural Homes are currently disputing responsibility for the hedge at the rear of 2 Farm Lea. Cllr. Davies confirmed that the boundary of all the houses on Farm Lea and Farm View extends to the edge of footpath 14. House owners are therefore responsible for the hedges on the other side of the garden fences to the rear of their properties.

10. Correspondence Received October 2013 :

- Electoral Role Changes
- Request for Donation from Moddershall Cricket Club (declined).
- Members' Digest 188

Members' Digest 187 – there has been meeting to consider the Stafford and Surrounds Health and Wellbeing Strategy Group which sets out the objectives and outcomes of the strategy. The group has identified 18 priority areas for action and these areas are to be held to account by the Stafford Borough Council Committee over the next two years. The priorities will include housing, environment, public health, warmer homes, health watch (especially older people) and obesity in children.

Staffordshire Police are working with young police cadets and volunteers as part of the Safer, Fairer, United Community for Our County project.

11. Finance.

The monthly accounts were presented and signed by the Chairman. The second precept payment was received on 25th September. The current account is now £6007.62 in credit and the deposit account £3115.61 in credit. Although most of these funds are allocated as indicated by the monthly accounts which are circulated to all Councillors prior to each meeting. The following payments were approved:

1. Mrs H. Howie, Clerks Expenses and Overtime for October - £50.26
2. Mr W. H. Holmes, Village Maintenance - £120.00

The draft Parish Council budget and precept request for 2014-2015 was considered. The clerk explained that a 3% increase has been applied as agreed at the last meeting. This increases the overall precept by 211 pounds per annum and an average band D Parish Council charge by 84 pence per annum. Last year the Borough Council did not reduce the concurrent grant, but confirmation will not be received until early spring as to whether this grant will be maintained at the current level. Given the relatively low increase in the precept for tax payers, the Parish Council felt that a larger increase in the budget and precept could be justified. As well as increases in general costs, the ongoing village consultation, development and traffic calming measures are requiring additional expenditure by the Parish Council. It was agreed that the clerk will produce another draft of the budget based on a 4% and 5% increase for consideration and final approval at the November meeting. As well as looking at the impact of these increases on an average band D property tax, the Parish Council will consider the impact on a band G property at the next meeting. It was noted and appreciated that Cllr Crump and her husband had set up and provided the village website free of hosting charges for the last 15 years but the new village website is incurring an annual cost of approximately £75. The clerk explained that this was because the new website held a substantially larger amount of information and therefore the hosting charges were higher. The new website has been developed free of charge by a local IT specialist and this person could not be expected to pay the ongoing hosting costs.

It was noted that Cllr. Woodward and Cllr. Jones will require some funds for the village Christmas party at the next meeting.

12. Any Other Business. Cllr. Crump has agreed to visit Mr and Mrs Downing on Dingle Lane to view the oak trees which are causing them many problems. It has not been possible to visit the Downings before the Parish Council meeting. Cllr. Crump will write a brief report after the visit and the clerk will circulate this to the other councillors. Mr Downing has until 31st October to object to the Tree Preservation Order which is to be placed on the trees and which will prevent any substantial pruning of the trees. The Parish Council will need to decide whether it supports this objection or not.

Rehearsals have started for the village Christmas Concert being organised by Andy Reiss. The concert will take place on Saturday 21st December 2013. Jenny Green has also offered to organise a Christmas walk on Friday 27th December starting at 11.00am from Highfields Farm and finishing in The Roebuck.

13. Date of next meeting.

The next meeting will be held on Wednesday 27th November at 7.30 p.m. The meeting closed at 9.15pm

..... Cllr. M. Shelley, Vice-Chairman. 27.11.13