

Hilderstone Parish Council

Minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 24th April 2013 at 7.30p.m.

Present: Cllr. Clark (Chairman), Cllr. J. Crump, Cllr. P. Davies, Mrs. H. Howie (Clerk), Cllr. I. Parry, and Cllr. A. Stringer. There were three members of the public present who were interested to know if a decision had been made on the recent traffic calming proposals.

1. Chairman's Welcome. Cllr. Clark welcomed the councillors and members of the public to the meeting. Members of the public are welcome to attend the Parish Council meeting to raise an issue or observe proceedings. The Parish Council may not be able to give an immediate response or decision on an issue, as there may need to be further discussion.

2. Apologies. These were received from Cllr. Harp, Cllr. Jones, Cllr. Shelley, and Cllr. Woodward.

3. Minutes of the last meeting. These were read, approved and signed.

4. Matters arising. Dealt with under the agenda headings.

5. Borough Councillor's Report. No report.

6. County Councillor's Report. Approximately two hundred households had been consulted on the recent traffic calming proposals. There had been a 36% response rate which is a good as far as public consultations go. Of the two main options the majority of respondents (64) chose the chicanes. Only 3 people supported the changes to speed limits and signage; 6 indicated that they wouldn't like either and 7 people suggested that there should be both. The latter option of implementing both, is not possible due to the cost. A fixed camera is not a viable option as it would be difficult to find a suitable site for it in the centre of the village. Some of the comments made about the siting and width of the chicanes will be taken on board.

A safety audit has already been carried out and the detailed design of the chicanes will take place over the next few months. It is not possible to give an exact date for the start of construction, but the target is the end of the summer. This may be delayed if traffic orders need to be publicised. Richard Pilcher asked if a change of County Council administration after the local elections in May might result in the project being shelved. Cllr Parry said that he thought that this was unlikely, as smaller projects such as this tended not to be political. The scheme has been identified as a high priority for the Stone Division and would stay as such. It was agreed that the scheme should have a significant effect on slowing traffic through the village. A negative of the scheme will be queuing at peak times, but this may help to reduce the traffic volume as non-residents find alternative routes to Stafford and Stone.

7. Planning.

New Planning Applications April 2013:

13/18494/FUL Hilderstone Garage, Hall Lane – proposed extension to commercial garage (MOT bay). **Resolved: The Parish Council has no objections to the plans, but agrees that the oak tree near to the proposed extension should be given full protection during construction.** The clerk was asked to check the outcome of the appeal for the car wash which the garage had applied for several months ago.

The Stafford Borough Planning Strategy Statement is now open for public consultation.

8. Traffic and Highways. Cllr. Parry has recently inspected Cotwalton Road at the request of a resident. The Lane is in a very poor state and Highways have been out today to fill the worst potholes. There are also a couple of longer sections that need re-surfacing, this will be carried out in May. Potholes should now be patched properly and not just filled. It was noted that

Dingle Lane, Whitesytch Lane, Cotwalton Lane and Hall Lane were also in a poor state. Whilst the worst potholes are periodically filled in; these lanes have seen much deterioration over the last few years and are now in need of attention. The heavy rain last year has washed large amounts of mud and gravel off the fields and there are some sections on the lanes where this is very deep across the whole road. It was agreed that Cllr. Parry would address the rest of the lanes over the summer.

Speedwatch - Richard Pilcher reported that research has found that there can be a 20% inaccuracy with Speedwatch data due to volunteer sight and hearing problems. Hilderstone volunteers have been asked to declare if they have any sight or hearing problems. The speed and accuracy of recorded data in Hilderstone is improving. The Speedwatch group are now running 4 or 5 sessions per month, including some liaison sessions with the road safety camera van. The camera van has been visiting Hilderstone less recently however. The camera van data has proved that drivers speed excessively through Hilderstone, in some cases over 50mph. At least 50% of vehicles are breaking the 30mph speed limit. Another 2 people have volunteered for the group and once they have been trained there will be 10 volunteers in total.

The Neighbourhood Highways Team will be in the village on 20th & 21st May. It was agreed that they should edge and sweep the pavement on Roebuck bank and clear the mud of Dingle Lane.

9. Footpaths/Village Maintenance/Best Kept Village. The holly trees on Hilderstone Walkway around the infant play area have recently been cut. There are some overhanging shrubs and brambles near to the notice board and bench that are need of cutting back. The clerk will write to the house owner. The trees on the village green have been inspected by an arboriculturist. Apart from one branch on the willow that needs attention, the rest of the trees are in good condition.

At the village feedback meeting on held Wednesday 20th March, 17 people volunteered to form a Best Kept Village group. The volunteers and Parish Clerk met on Wednesday 10th April to discuss what is required and decide the best way forward. Each of the volunteers agreed to be responsible for a particular (public) area of the village. This work will include weeding, grass trimming, watering flower boxes, sweeping down benches etc and litter picking. Bill Holmes will continue to carry out his usual duties, but the volunteer work should improve the overall tidiness of the village as Bill cannot attend to all areas on a weekly basis. A churchyard tidy was held on Saturday 20th April and approximately 17 volunteers turned up to help. It was a successful session, with a lot of work being carried out and volunteers had indicated that there was a good atmosphere and they had enjoyed it.

10. Village Consultation – Progress. In addition to the progress with the best Kept Village Group reported above, the clerk is to hold a meeting on 1st May 2013 with those people who volunteered to organise some social events in the village. Work on the new village website has started and the Chair and clerk will meet soon with Stephen Ireland to discuss what information needs to go on it. It is hoped that this will be live in the next couple of months.

11. Correspondence.

- Notification of County Council elections 2nd May 2013
- Community Council of Staffordshire Newsletter
- Members' Digest 182

12. Finance.

The monthly accounts were presented and signed by the Chair. As of 31st March 2013 the current account is £4587.20 in credit and the deposit account £3115.22 in credit. Although most of these funds are ring-fenced and will be carried forward to the 2013-14 financial year. The following payments were approved:

1. Staffordshire Parish Council Association Membership Fee - £202.00
2. Mr T. Kitchen, Litter Grabber - £10.99
3. Mrs H Howie, Clerk's Expenses and Overtime - £144.92
4. Giles Insurance Brokers, Children's Club Insurance Premium - £ 316.50

The end of year accounts and annual return for 2012-2013 will be inspected by the internal auditor on 7th May 2013. The Parish Council will approve these at the Annual General Meeting on 22nd May. The deadline for the submission of the annual return to the external auditor is 24th June 2013.

13. Any Other Business.

Cllr Clark reported that a resident has raised the issue of the level of council tax charged on empty properties. If a house is inhabitable or empty of furniture, the first year is free of council tax. In the second year there is a 50% reduction on the full council tax, but after two years the council can charge 150% of council tax if the property remains empty. This policy has been designed to prevent properties from staying empty for many years. Cllr Clark has raised the issue with Cllr Harp.

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P1.3 - Mid Staffordshire Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust – meeting to be convened to discuss this on 18th March.

MOD Stafford 1100 service personnel to be based here confirmed by Ministry of Defence.

P3.3-3.11 - Council tax details, e.g. Hilderstone Band D £1448.53

p6.17 - Report on the popularity of February half term activities – all 350 places for swimming sold at Alleyne's. 40 youngsters took part in Footie Fest, 50 attended Game On multi-activity and 20 children took part in the mobile skate park activity.

The clerk still has not received a response from Alistair Welsh at the Borough Council about the Community Asset Register. It is not clear whether this has been set up yet. It was agreed that the clerk should ask Cllr. Harp to pursue the matter.

14. Date of next meeting.

The next meeting will be held on Wednesday 22nd May at 7.30 p.m. The meeting closed at 9.40pm.

..... Cllr. R. Clark, Chairman. 22.05.13