

# Hilderstone Parish Council

## Minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 25<sup>th</sup> September 2013 at 7.30p.m.

**Present:** Cllr. Clark (Chairman), Cllr. J. Crump, Cllr. P. Davies, Mrs. H. Howie (Clerk), Cllr. J. Jones, Cllr. I. Parry, Cllr. M. Shelley (Vice Chairman) There were five members of the public present.

- 1. Chairman's Welcome.** Cllr. Clark welcomed the councillors to the meeting.
- 2. Apologies.** These were received from Cllr. Harp, Cllr. Stringer, 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.** Cllr. Harp has informed the Chairman that the mains drain near the bungalows in Dingle Lane blocks regularly. There is a pump in the vicinity but it would appear that this is not working properly. Stafford Borough Council are currently responsible for the drain not Severn Trent. The Borough Council are assessing the problem and trying to find a solution.

The ward boundaries within Stafford Borough are being reviewed by the Electoral Boundaries Commission. The main aim of this will be to reduce the number of Councillors. Stafford Borough Council has one of the highest numbers of councillors relative to its size. Consultation on this will take place between 22<sup>nd</sup> October 2013 and 7<sup>th</sup> January 2014. The final recommendations will be made in September 2014.

### **6. County Councillor's Report.**

**The Roebuck** – Pete Condliffe reported that he has a temporary tenancy on a six month rolling basis. Business has increased in recent weeks partly by providing a wider range of food and a weekly authentic curry night. The Roebuck is still on the market however, and although Admiral Taverns is currently supporting Pete in keeping the pub open, it is **highly** likely that they will sell it if a suitable buyer comes along. There is no guarantee that any purchaser will keep it as a pub. It may be, that a developer could buy it as a potential housing site. This could result in the pub being boarded up indefinitely whilst planning permissions are sought.

Cllr. Parry reported that an accountant at the County Council has carried out an initial assessment of the possibility of the Parish Council purchasing The Roebuck. The Parish Council would need to take out a Government Public Works Loan for at least £200,000 to purchase the pub. An additional amount of funding may also be required to carry out some essential renovation work. The loan period would be for 20 – 30 years. The loan would not be a mortgage and would be secured against the parish precept not the pub. In the worst case scenario of the pub not making enough income to cover the loan and all associated running costs, the parish precept would need to be increased by at least 300% until (if) the pub could be sold on again. This is a substantial risk for a very small parish and it may be that the Parish Council would not get approval for a Public Works Loan for this reason. If the Parish Council could purchase the pub, it could put in its own tenant and run it as a non-tied pub. This would allow the pub to make more profit and the income generated could be enough to cover the loan and all associated running costs.

The Parish Council re-iterated that it does not have the necessary resources or relevant business expertise to carry out a full financial and business assessment of the Roebuck's long term potential. Without this information and strong commitment from the community, the Parish Council does not currently consider the purchase of The Roebuck to be a feasible option. If a group of local residents with good financial, marketing and business expertise can get together and provide substantive financial and market research evidence that the Roebuck could be sustainable in the long term, the Parish Council may re-consider applying for a loan.

The Parish Council will also require evidence of very strong support from a large proportion of the local community that wants to keep The Roebuck open. Furthermore a community purchase of The Roebuck will require an on-going commitment from a group of local residents to manage the financial, operational and marketing aspects of the business.

The Parish Council has requested that The Roebuck be placed on the Borough Community Asset Register. This currently prevents Admiral from selling the pub for the next 6 months, providing the Parish Council registers as a potential bidder. After that point, if the community does not wish to purchase it, Admiral is free to sell it again.

**Resolved: The Parish Council will register as a potential bidder on the Community Asset Register, in order to invoke the six month moratorium. This does not mean that the Parish Council is obliged to make a bid. If a group of local residents does not provide a full business assessment, business plan and evidence of strong local support within the next five months then this matter will be given no further consideration by the Parish Council. It was agreed that an article to this effect will be placed in the November edition of the Parish Magazine.**

**Traffic Chicanes** – Cllr. Parry reported that the chicanes will now be installed in the New Year, hopefully by early spring. The delay is due to a shortfall of funding which Cllr. Parry has to raise from various sources other than the main Highways budget. Cllr. Parry has made a significant contribution from his own Highways budget allocation and County Councillor's fund and he asked if the Parish Council could make a contribution to the cost. Cllr. Clark pointed out that the Parish Council has made a contribution to other road improvement projects in the past as it was deemed appropriate that the local community bore some of the cost. **Resolved: The Parish Council will make a £750.00 contribution to the cost of the chicanes out of the cumulative reserves.**

The original design and positioning of the Cresswell Road chicane is to be modified slightly due to issues raised by residents living near to it. The County Council is obliged to carry out a second public consultation on this, which has also caused the delay. This consultation is scheduled to be carried out before Christmas.

**B5066 Hilderstone Road** – the surface dressing on Cotwalton Road corner which failed last year, has been inspected recently. The surface will be gripped tested in the next few weeks to see if it is safe. Once the grip test has been carried out the potholes will be filled and properly patched. This is currently scheduled for November. Cllr. Clark commented that he had noticed that traffic speeds between Cotwalton Road corner and the junction with Sandon Road are increasing. This is causing a danger to residents exiting The Meadows. He has asked Speedwatch to carry out some monitoring in this area and the initial data showed that speeds are often in excess of 30mph. Unfortunately the Road Safety Partnership and the Police have said that it is not safe for Speedwatch to be monitoring traffic in this area.

Cllr. Parry said that he has raised the issue of accountability of the Road Safety Partnership and the Police traffic monitoring teams. He has noticed that many camera vehicles appear to be situated in areas where they are not necessarily improving road safety. For example, on dual carriageway bridges. It was agreed that their time would be better spent in villages with speed problems or accident blackspots.

## **7. Planning.**

### **New Planning Applications September 2013:**

13/191110/FUL Annscroft, Sandon Road, Hilderstone – retrospective application for barn conversion. **Resolved: 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 feels that this is a feature which should be removed.**

## **Status of Earlier Applications:**

13/19204/HOU Bearstakes, Sandon Road – proposed two-storey rear and side extension to provide accommodation for disabled person and her carers. **PENDING CONSIDERATION.**

**8. Traffic and Highways.** Reported under Item 6.

**9. Footpaths/Village Maintenance/Best Kept Village.** Cllr. Davies has walked footpaths 12,13 and 16. There are a couple of markers which need replacing which he will report. There are also a few hedges which are in need of cutting; but these may well be cut soon now that it is the hedge cutting season. It was noted that there are quite a few domestic hedges within the village which are also in need of cutting. It was agreed that to cut down on postage costs, the clerk should draw up a standard letter that Councillors can hand deliver to those properties with untidy hedges and gardens, faulty burglar alarms etc.

Dog fouling is becoming a problem again particularly on Barnes Croft green and footpath 14 between the infant play area and The Meadows. The clerk will continue to liaise with the enforcement officers at the Borough Council on this matter.

Western Power is intending to carry out some tree work in the Roebuck car park and on Roebuck bank. In the Roebuck car park the trees will be reduced in height to clear the power lines. On Roebuck bank the self-seeded ash saplings will be removed completely. The clerk has advised Western Power to make contact with Admiral Taverns and also the Borough Council tree officer with regards to the trees in the Roebuck car park. The Parish Council has no objections to this work being carried out however.

## **10. Correspondence.**

- The Plan for Stafford Borough – Notification of Examination by Inspectorate
- Electoral Role Changes Notification
- Members' Digest 187

## **Members' Digest 186**

2.1-2.6 Progress on Corporate Plan for 2012-2015. E.g. working on a vibrant night life etc.  
2.7-2.32 Adoption of a surveillance policy – Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act (RIPA) regulates the use of certain surveillance techniques by public authorities, consideration of human rights act before implementing any surveillance. E.g. Covert but not requiring prior authorisation CCTV cameras providing general traffic, crime or public safety information.  
2.33-2.38 Assets of Community Value – relates to land rather than building in this guise.  
2.39-2.41 Provision of toddler play area at Grindley Park. (cost £25,326)  
6.14 13/18732/HOU Permit Two storey extension and rear extension to Arnfield Cottage, Sandon Road, Hilderstone.  
6.223 Stafford Borough Walking Festival 5-11 May. Aims e.g. to encourage organised and independent walking. Activities a history walk round Stone.  
6.25 £1000 fine for irresponsible dog owner.

## **11. Finance.**

The monthly accounts were presented and signed by the Chairman. The current account is £3327.67 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. Grant Thornton UK LLP, External Annual Audit Fee - £120.00
2. Royal British Legion, Remembrance Day Wreath - £17.00
3. Oak Tree Farm Rural Project, Brick Paver Donation - £35.00
4. Mrs J Reddy, Children's Club, Harvest Event Costs - £19.95
5. Funtastic Entertainments, Children's Club Christmas Event - £228.00

6. Mrs H. Howie, Clerk's Expenses - £10.99

The clerk has received approval for the annual accounts return from Grant Thornton UK LLP the new external auditor. The relevant notices have been placed on the notice boards.

The clerk will need to compile the draft budget for 2014-2015 for discussion at the October meeting. It was noted that the precept has not been increased for the last two years. **Resolved: the parish Council should consider a 2 – 3% increase in the budget to cover increasing costs.**

**12. Any Other Business.**

**Report on SPCA Stafford Area Committee – Attended by Cllr. Crump on Thursday 5<sup>th</sup> September.**

There were four presentations.

1. Chris Welch, CEO of the Community Council of Staffordshire. He reminded members about the group oil buying scheme, the possibility of a recycling bin for clothes at village hall locations and the good neighbour scheme.
  2. Stephen Knott of Staffordshire County Council talked about “the beauty of Staffordshire” and the Council's plans for this. Could Cllr Parry please give us an explanation of the 3 directorates?
  3. John Perry talked about the Best Kept Village Competition, he mentioned the phone box in Hilderstone! He said that if churches had conservation areas in their churchyards could they be clearly labelled as such.
  4. There was an update by Andrew McCrae on SPCA and NALC. There is a Good Councillor's Guide (do we have a copy, it is £3 or it can be accessed online)
- Members were reminded of the Parish Forum on 26<sup>th</sup> September.

Cllr Brunt said the Committee is under threat because of lack of money. There is no money left to run the committee after December 2013. They are going to contact the parish councils covered by the Stafford Area Committee to see if they are prepared to pay a £20 levy. We will be contacted at some stage.

**Conservation Area Appraisal** – properties in the village still need to be ‘graded’ in terms of historic value, appearance, importance to the character of the village etc . Cllr. Crump agreed to undertake this.

**Parish Council Website** – the clerk had received a complaint that the minutes of the meetings were not been uploaded onto the Parish Council website promptly enough and that this was detrimental to village communications. The clerk accepted that this is a problem and stated that it was partly due to her high workload and low number of contracted hours (4 per week). The clerk has many competing demands in the days immediately after the parish council meeting, as well as her other main job. Sometimes the uploading of minutes gets over-looked. It was agreed however that the clerk will aim to get the minutes on the website within two working days of the parish council meeting. It was noted that the Parish Council website will soon be fully integrated into the new village website ([hilderstonevillage.org.uk](http://hilderstonevillage.org.uk)). It was also noted that members of the public are always welcome at the monthly parish council meetings to view proceedings and hear the latest news first hand.

**13. Date of next meeting.**

The next meeting will be held on Wednesday 23<sup>rd</sup> October at 7.30 p.m. The meeting closed at 10.00pm

..... Cllr. M. Shelley, Vice-Chairman. 23.10.13