

# Hilderstone Parish Council

## Minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 26<sup>th</sup> June 2013 at 7.30p.m.

**Present:** Cllr. Clark (Chairman), Cllr. J. Crump, Cllr. P. Davies, Cllr. A. Harp, Mrs. H. Howie (Clerk), Cllr. J. Jones, Cllr. I. Parry, Cllr. M. Shelley (Vice Chairman), Cllr. A. Stringer.

There were 8 members of the public present who wished to raise various matters with the Parish Council. These issues were presented to the Council before the start of the main meeting as follows:

**Request to Purchase Part of Play Area Land** – The owners of Bank Cottage on Dingle Lane have spoken to Stafford Borough Council about the possibility of purchasing a few square metres of the play area to extend their garden. The area in question is at the back of the wooded area to the rear of the play area and near the bungalows. The owners have been notified that the Parish Council has objected to the proposed purchase. The owners stated that the piece of land is currently overgrown and not maintained. They had arranged for a tree surgeon to look at the area and he had concluded that the trees were not particularly special. Their plan would be to perhaps put in a laurel hedge and a small pond. At this stage they could not state how many square metres they intended to buy, as it was at the early stages of discussion. They had consulted the neighbouring bungalow resident and he had not objected.

The Parish Council reiterated that the existing wooden fence is part of the original village conservation boundary and of historical importance. The Borough Conservation Officer is not keen for the boundary to be changed. The Parish Council is also concerned that if this sale is allowed it may set a precedent for other householders to purchase some of the play area and this would reduce the size of what is already a small park. It was noted that the wood was planted in order to give the residents in the bungalows some privacy and a buffer from noise. The rest of the bank was planted with shrubs for the same reason when the play equipment was installed a few years ago. The Parish Council has today received three objections from nearby residents who have heard about the proposed purchase. It was agreed however that the Parish Council would have a site visit to the owners land to look at it from their point of view and discuss possible options.

**Roebuck Public House** – Phil and Julie Dale presented a paper explaining the current situation and possible options to secure the future of The Roebuck. As notified in a recent email and public meeting, despite an increase in business at the Roebuck it has not been possible to make a profit due to the 'tied' status of the pub. As a result, Phil and Julie Dale can no longer continue with the lease and currently The Roebuck is due to close on Friday 28<sup>th</sup> June 2013. An action group has recently been formed to carry out a local survey of residents and explore all avenues that could rescue this important community asset.

One possibility is for the pub to be run by a local community management committee that would be able to negotiate lower alcohol purchase prices and dedicate the time needed to fully develop the business. In order to purchase the pub, finances would need to be raised. A deposit could be raised via community donations or share purchases. The remainder of the funds might be raised by the Parish Council via the Public Works Loan Board. It was noted that Hilderstone Parish Council has an annual precept of just £7000 and no fixed assets, so to take on such a loan without careful and detailed analysis of the business potential would be a large risk to the local community. Although the pub premises would secure the loan, there was no guarantee that it could be sold in the future for the same amount it was purchased for. Any losses incurred in such a situation would have to be born by the local tax payer.

County Councillor Ian Parry said that he recognised the risks, but felt that the pub is such an important community asset that it is worth exploring the possibilities. With this in mind he has asked an accountant at the County Council to analyse the recent accounts and assess the business potential of the pub. Once this information has come back to the Parish Council and the Roebuck Action Group, a decision will be made on how to proceed. As Parish Council administration resources are very limited, it will have to be the Roebuck Management Group

that does all the market research, business plans etc. The Parish Council will need to approve the Management Committee however.

**Traffic Calming Proposal** - The Speedwatch Co-ordinator presented a paper proposing a 20mph speed limit in the centre of the village in between the chicanes. In the past, the Parish Council has been advised that a 20mph speed limit was not possible on a main B road. The Speedwatch Co-ordinator has researched this and his paper provided evidence of 20mph limits on B roads through other villages experiencing similar traffic issues. County Councillor Ian Parry who was present at the meeting said he would discuss the proposal with Highways to see if this would be possible. Councillor Parry pointed out that there will probably be a cost implication in implementing this, as changes to speed limits require a Traffic Management Order which are quite expensive. As funds at the County Council are limited there is currently no guarantee that this proposal will be approved, but Councillor Parry will pursue it. The Parish Council supported the proposal. It was agreed that pursuit of this proposal should not delay the construction of the chicanes however.

### **Agenda Items:**

**1. Chairman's Welcome.** Cllr. Clark welcomed the councillors to the meeting and informed the members of public present that they could stay to observe discussions related to the agenda items. The issues raised by the members of the public however would be discussed in a closed meeting at the end and no decisions would be notified tonight.

**2. Apologies.** These were received from Cllr H. 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 had just returned from two weeks holiday and there doesn't appear to be any new issues to report at the Borough Council.

**6. County Councillor's Report.** The County Council is currently under-going a review of the school transport policy. This review includes a public consultation on the withdrawal of discretionary school transport funding for children attending a school in the catchment area but which is not their nearest school. The County Council spends a large amount of money on school transport for a relatively low numbers of children and it needs to look if savings can be made without too much impact. Currently children get free school transport if:

- a) At primary level their nearest school is over two miles from their home.
- b) At secondary level their nearest school is over three miles from their home.

There are some discretionary grants which allow for transport funding if the preferred school is less than two or three miles respectively. The proposal is to withdraw these discretionary grants but still provide free transport if the nearest school is more than two miles or three miles respectively.

The County Council does recognise that this may cause a greater impact for those families living in rural areas. Hilderstone children can attend either Fulford or Green Lea at primary level. Most currently go to Green Lea with a view to attending the middle and secondary schools in Stone. If the new proposal was brought in those children living on The Meadows estate could get free transport if they went to their nearest school at Fulford but not if they go to Green Lea. Children that attend Fulford Primary generally go to Blythe Bridge High School at secondary level. This could end up splitting the village children into two 'cohorts' which in a small village may reduce social interaction.

### **7. Planning.**

#### **New Planning Applications June 2013:**

13/18732/HOU Arnfield Cottage, Sandon Road – proposed two-storey rear and side extension. **Resolved: the Parish Council has no objections to the extension in principle but would prefer the old roof at the front of the house to match the new roof on the side extension.**

13/18833/HOU Bearstakes, Sandon Road – proposed two-storey rear and side extension to provide accommodation for disabled person and her carers. **Resolved: the Parish Council has no objections to these plans.**

#### **Status of Earlier Applications:**

13/18494/FUL Hilderstone Garage, Hall Lane – proposed extension to commercial garage (MOT bay). **PERMITTED** ( with conditions attached to existing trees, hedges and shrubs).

**Conservation Area Appraisal** – Cllr Clark and Cllr Crump had met with the Borough Conservation Officer to discuss the work they had done on the conservation area appraisal. They have been asked to categorise each property within the conservation area into positive, neutral or negative. The conservation area boundary will also be re-drawn to include Hilderstone Hall, its trees and pond. The fields containing the anglo-saxon farming ridge/strips will also be included in the conservation area. Once the modified conservation area has been approved, householders will not be able to change anything on listed and positive houses without prior approval from the Borough Council. This will include any tree of a certain age (assessed by trunk width), including those that have self-seeded. There will be a public meeting later in the year to present the new conservation area boundary and inform the public of the requirements.

During the meeting with the Conservation Officer, Cllr Clark had raised the issue of the removal of the wall at Laburnum Cottage. The Council had made the decision not to request the wall to be re-instated in 2004, but had not consulted the Parish Council at the time. The Parish Council asked Cllr Harp to look into whether that decision could be over-turned on planning grounds i.e. was change of use from garden to parking area granted? If not could the owners be requested not to park on it and use it only as garden area even if the wall is not re-instated.

**8. Traffic and Highways.** The Speedwatch Co-ordinator had reported in the public session at the start of the meeting that four traffic monitoring sessions had been held in the last month. During that time 92 people had been sent a warning letter for exceeding the speed limit. The top speed recorded was 48 mph. The team now has eight members so can continue to carry out regular sessions. No date has been provided by the County Council for the start date of the chicane construction but it is still hoped that this will be by the end of the summer months.

**9. Footpaths/Village Maintenance/Best Kept Village.** The footpath near the church has been strimmed recently and will be done again in a few weeks. There has continued to be a good turn out of volunteers to help with the monthly church yard tidies and much progress has been made. Cllr Clark and Cllr. Crump went to Green Lea School to present the Best Kept Village poster competition prizes and were met with a great deal of enthusiasm. Next year the school has said they will get the poster to the Parish Council for 9<sup>th</sup> April so that they are well in advance of the start of the village judging. The Best Kept Village Competition presentation evening is on Monday 5<sup>th</sup> August 2013. Cllr Davies will represent the Parish Council and two of the Best Kept Village volunteers that have helped at all of the church tidy sessions will be nominated to go.

#### **10. Correspondence.**

- Letter from Stafford Borough Council re dog fouling campaign.
- Members' Digest 184

## 11. Finance.

The monthly accounts were presented and signed by the Chairman. The current account is £5824.11 in credit and the deposit account £3115.22 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 - £23.58
2. OVH Limited, Village Website Hosting Charges for 6 months - £35.93
3. Mr W H Holmes, Village Maintenance - £125.00
4. Mr R Clark, Mileage and Parking Expenses - £27.80
5. Mrs J Crump, Vouchers for Best Kept Village Poster Competition - £30.00

The Annual Return forms have been posted to the external auditors.

Cllr Clark reported that the crown of the large oak tree in the church yard had been split in the recent high winds and it was in a dangerous state with two large branches hanging down. The Church is liaising with the Borough Tree Officer as the tree is in the Conservation Area. As Church funds are currently very stretched it was agreed that the Parish Council would pay half of the cost of the necessary tree surgery work, estimated at £300.

## 12. Any Other Business.

**Members' Digest 183** – The final report on Stafford Hospital has been released. The next meeting of the Strategic Board is being held on 9<sup>th</sup> July 2013 at 10.30am at Stafford Hospital.

The Borough Council is opposed to the HS2 proposal by the Department of Transport as it feels that the negative environmental impacts far outweigh any economic benefits.

The Borough Council is also opposed to the Government's bedroom tax.

The Borough Council is stepping up its dog fouling campaign by going into schools to inform children of the anti-social nature of not clearing up their dog's mess. Littering is also being tackled firmly and a woman in Stafford has recently been fined £400 for discarding a cigarette in the town centre.

## 13. Date of next meeting.

The next meeting will be held on Wednesday 23<sup>rd</sup> July at 7.30 p.m. The meeting closed at 9.30pm and this was followed by a closed meeting to discuss the issues raised by the members of the public.

..... Cllr. R. Clark, Chairman. 23.07.13