

Hilderstone Parish Council

Minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 27th March 2013 at 7.30p.m.

Present: Cllr. Clark (Chairman), Cllr. J. Crump, Cllr. P. Davies, Cllr. A. Harp, Mrs. H. Howie (Clerk), Cllr. M. Shelley (Vice Chairman) and Cllr. A. Stringer. There were no members of the public present.

1. Chairman's Welcome. Cllr. Clark welcomed the councillors to the meeting.

2. Apologies. These were received from Cllr. Jones 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. The Westbridge Park public consultation resulted in a high number of objections and it is unlikely that the proposals will go ahead. There was some confusion over how members of the public could respond to the proposals as a Stone resident had got people to sign photocopied papers. The public could only respond by signing the leaflet distributed. Another supermarket chain has submitted an application for a store on a different site in Stone. This will not provide the funding required to re-develop the leisure facilities at Westbridge Park.

Cllr Harp expressed his dissatisfaction with the County Council's snow clearance during the recent spell of severe weather. Although the snow drifting had been exceptional, the clearance particularly on some rural lanes was not acceptable and presented a severe risk to residents in emergency situations. Cllr. Harp has written to Cllr. Mike Maryon about the matter and received a reply back from Ian Turner. The response was that in an emergency residents should contact the emergency services in the first instance and then Highways would come and clear the road if they could not get through. It was agreed that this was not satisfactory. Cllr Harp suggested that the Parish Councils perhaps needed to compile a list of local farmers who are prepared to clear the lanes when necessary. It was agreed that farmers will probably want to be reimbursed at least for the cost of fuel used as this would be high. Unless the County Council is prepared to set aside an emergency fund for this, it is unlikely to be feasible.

The Borough Council is to undergo a review of its electoral (ward) boundaries. The clerk will circulate some information about this and public consultation on proposed changes will take place at a later date once the review has been undertaken. The main aims of the review are to reduce the number of Borough Councillors and provide more equal wards in terms of population and area.

6. County Councillor's Report. No report, but progress with traffic calming measures are reported under Item 8.

7. Planning

New Planning Applications March 2013:

No new applications

Status of Earlier Applications:

13/18150/LBC Horseshoe Farm Cottage, Sandon Road, Hilderstone – addition of single conservation style Velux window to rear pitch roof to illuminate stairs and landing. **PERMITTED.**

8. Traffic and Highways. Details of the possible traffic calming measures that are feasible in Hilderstone have been released. Staffordshire County Council Highways and Cllr Ian Parry held a

public consultation session on the proposals on the evening of Wednesday 20th March 2013 prior to the village consultation meeting. A letter outlining the two options was sent by Highways to properties in the centre of the village which they felt might be directly affected by the measures. Residents were asked to respond by choosing one of the two options. The two options are as follows:

Option 1: Changes to the 30mph limit zone and the introduction of a 40mph zone on the approaches to the village, with minor changes to signs, road markings and marker posts.

Option 2: Chicane build outs on Roebuck Hill and Cresswell Road to make a one-way priority system.

Only one option can be implemented. At the consultation session the general consensus of public opinion appeared to be that the chicanes will be the most effective method of slowing traffic. **Resolved: The Parish Council's preferred option is the chicanes. It was felt that drivers will simply ignore speed limits and extra signs. The clerk will return the reply slip to Highways.**

It was noted that the cost of constructing the chicanes will be approximately £27,000. It was also noted that the chicanes will need to be wide enough to allow the very large agricultural vehicles that are used at harvesting time to pass through.

9. Footpaths/Village Maintenance/Best Kept Village. Cllr. Davies has asked those residents who expressed an interest at the village consultation meetings for a local walking map and group to report any problems with footpaths, styles, marker posts etc. It is hoped that the Parish Council can have a local footpath leaflet printed which can be circulated to all Hilderstone residents. These leaflets could also be placed in local libraries to encourage people from further a field to come to Hilderstone and perhaps use the Roebuck Pub for refreshments.

The recent poor weather has prevented any village maintenance from being carried out. Bill Holmes has however been helping U3A members to re-furbish the community boules area at the rear of the Roebuck Pub.

The clerk has sent off the Best Kept Village entry form and will organise an initial meeting with residents who volunteered to help with this at the village consultation meetings. It is hoped that this meeting will take place in the next couple of weeks.

10. Village Consultation. The village Feedback Meeting held on Wednesday 20th March 2013 was well supported with approximately 90 people attending. At the meeting Cllr Clark, fed-back on the results of the questionnaire which was handed out at the first meeting. These results have also been reported in the latest pamphlet and the March Parish Newsletter. During the refreshment break people were asked to sign up as volunteers for particular groups/activities. 35 people offered to volunteer, several of these signed up to more than one group.

Progress Made to Date - Since the first consultation meeting in January, significant progress has been made with the setting up of a children's activity group. The Parish Clerk and two very enthusiastic parents met with an officer from Staffordshire Council of Voluntary Youth Services who can help to set up the group. As a result of this meeting Hilderstone was also offered a substantial amount of funding to run some children's activities over the next 6 – 8 months. Despite the snow, the first Hilderstone Children's Club session was held at Easter and this was also used as a consultation session to find out what children and parents would like. The group still need more volunteers and a small committee needs to be formed in order to set up a charitable bank account and apply to other funding sources.

Members of The University of the Third Age (U3A), Stone who have been looking for a boules piste in the locality have re-furbished the piste at the rear of the Roebuck Pub. Bill Holmes has also assisted with this on a voluntary basis. The piste is a community facility and is open to all. U3A members say that it is now one of the best boules pistes in the area! It is hoped that this facility will also increase patronage of the Roebuck.

Agreed at the Meeting - Communications within the village need to be improved and whilst the village newsletter is still popular, information about events can sometimes be too late. It was agreed amongst all those present at the meeting that there is definitely a need for a new village website that is regularly updated, containing information about all the village groups and social events. A village resident who is an IT specialist, has offered to design and set up a new website on a voluntary basis and will start this soon. The village newsletter will still be printed, but there may be a charge to residents for this in the longer term. Notice boards will still be used, as this is a relatively inexpensive way of keeping people informed.

Whilst a village shop is something that people like the idea of, it was agreed that it would not be viable unless there are plenty of volunteers to help run it. Realistically, it would probably need to be quite small scale and stock mainly non-perishable goods. It could perhaps be part of the Roebuck or the village hall business activities, but will require a strong team of people to come forward and offer to set it up.

The Parish Clerk will collate the contact details of all those who have agreed to volunteer, circulate these to established village groups and where needed, will co-ordinate an initial meeting to get new groups started. After this groups will be expected to run with little input from the Parish Council. The Parish Council will continue to liaise with the authorities on traffic and highways maintenance and planning issues. There does not appear to be a large need for more affordable housing within the village, although this will be periodically reviewed.

The objective now is for residents to show true commitment by supporting village assets and pushing ahead with some of the new activities that people have said that they would like to see. The church is still struggling financially and needs more people to attend, volunteer some time and make financial donations.

There will be a Village Review Meeting on Wednesday 19th March 2014 to see what progress has been made.

11. Correspondence

- Electoral Role Changes
- Community Re-cycling Scheme
- Letter re ELGIN road works web tool
- Members' Digest 181

12. Finance.

The monthly accounts were presented and signed by the Chair. The current account is £3876.63 in credit and the deposit account £3114.85 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. Midlands Building & Construction, War Memorial Cleaning - £478.80
2. Mrs J Reddy, Donation towards start up costs for Children's Club - £104.36
3. Mr W Holmes, Cost pf Materials for Community Boules Area - £220.00
4. Cllr. R. Clark, Stamps and Printer Ink relating to Village Consultation – £36.60
5. Mrs H Howie. Clerks Overtime Relating to Village Consultation & Expenses - £283.76

The clerk has received confirmation of the precept and concurrent monies for the 2013-2014 financial year. The concurrent monies have been held at last year's level and not reduced as expected. The first payment will be received in early April.

13. Any Other Business.

There will be a Bingo evening in the village hall on Friday 12th April 2013 in aid of the Royal Agricultural Benevolent Institution which assists farming families experiencing financial difficulties.

Cllr. Clark and Cllr. Crump will carry on with the conservation area appraisal when the weather improves.

Members' Digest 180 – nothing of interest to report.

14. Date of next meeting.

The next meeting will be held on Wednesday 24th April 2013 at 7.30 p.m. The meeting closed at 9.30pm.

..... Cllr. R. Clark, Chairman. 24.04.13