

Hilderstone Parish Council

Minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 23rd September 2015 at 7.30p.m.

Present: Cllr. Clark (Chairman), Cllr. J. Crump, Mrs. H. Howie (Clerk), Cllr. J. Jones, Cllr. I. Parry, Cllr. M. Shelley (Vice Chairman), Cllr. A. Stringer. There were no members of the press or public present.

1. **Chairman's Welcome.** Cllr. Clark welcomed the councillors to the meeting.
2. **Apologies.** These were received from Cllr. Davies, Cllr Harp and Cllr. Woodward.
3. **Minutes of the last meeting.** These were read, approved and signed.
4. **Matters arising.** Matters arising were dealt with under the agenda headings.
5. **Borough Councillor's Report.** No report.
6. **County Councillor's Report.** The economic downturn in 2009 resulted in the public sector being significantly down-sized. Public debt and borrowing was at the highest level ever and local councils were required to reduce costs across all departments. Since this period costs at Staffordshire County Council have been reduced by one quarter and it is now expected to reduce costs by a further third by 2020. Around two thirds of the County Council budget is spent on some form of care (domiciliary, child protection, dementia, disability etc). This sector of expenditure is increasing year on year. Grant funding from Central Government is set to be reduced severely between 2015 and 2020 and the Council will be expected to raise monies via the council tax and other income sources. It is very likely therefore that resources in departments such as Highways are going to be heavily stretched and that parish councils should expect an increase in lead times for less urgent jobs. The County Council is always looking at ways of reducing costs and working more efficiently across the county. The care systems in Staffordshire could be more streamlined and assessment of individual care packages more rigorous. Improvements in the care system will take time and in the short term everybody needs to be aware that all services are going to be under severe pressure to deliver everything that local tax payers would like.

Despite the imminent financial restraints, Cllr. Parry reported that he has been liaising with Highways on local road issues in the Hilderstone area. There have been delays with the safety improvements to the Hardiwick crossroads due to the contractor's schedule, but progress should be made soon. Hall Lane has been re-assessed and although the engineers say it is safe, patching work will be carried out this financial year. Cllr. Clark asked if the deep potholes at the junction with Cresswell Road could at least have a temporary fill as they are posing a safety issue. The incomplete white lining in the centre of the village is **not** part of a planned project to remove the build outs. It will probably be completed as part of another package of road marking works in the area. Cllr. Parry will speak with Richard Rayson about moving the speed indicator device to the centre of the village but Hilderstone may have to wait as there is currently quite a long lead time on this.

Cllr. Clark reported that he had recently spoken to the Police and Crime Commissioner Matthew Ellis about Speedwatch support. Matthew Ellis had stated that Neighbourhood Watch is his current priority, but he is hoping to address Speedwatch in 2016 when hopefully monies saved in other areas will become available. Cllr. Parry agreed that many volunteer Speedwatch groups across the County had been let down by a lack of support from central agencies. The Safer Roads Partnership appeared to be impervious to local concerns. The plan is to have more local groups where residents can have more influence on road safety issues.

With regards to the proposed expansion of Blythe Business Park at Cresswell, Cllr. Parry agreed that there must be limits on commercial vehicles turning left towards Hilderstone. Cllr. Clark said that there appeared to have been an increase in commercial vehicles travelling on

the B5066 from the Meir Heath direction to Hilderstone. Cllr. Parry said that he had received several complaints from residents in Blythe Bridge and Stallington that more lorries were travelling down Stallington Lane probably due to SatNav. Cllr. Parry is currently trying to get some 'Not suitable for HCV' signs installed at either end of Stallington Lane and hopefully this will reduce the number going towards Hilderstone.

7. Planning.

New Planning Applications September 2015:

15/22901/ANX 1 Spot Lane, Spot Acre. Single storey ancillary residential annex. Comprising lounge with tea making area, bathroom, one bedroom and hall. **Resolved: the Parish Council has no objections to this application.**

Status of Earlier Applications:

15/22807/HOU Ash Grange, Sandon Road. Proposed extension to form wet room and garage extension. **Awaiting Decision**

APP/Y3425/A/14/2222107 (13/19630/FUL) Appeal lodged against refusal of wind turbine at Drumble Woods, Cotwalton. **September 2015 - Notified that Bill Cash has asked for the appeal to be 'Recovered'. This means that the Secretary of State can ultimately make a decision on the application if the recovery request is approved.**

The Village Conservation Area Appraisal Exhibition and Parish Open Forum took place in the evening on Wednesday 9th September in the village hall. The Borough Conservation Officer Penny McKnight hosted the conservation area exhibition and was available to answer any questions that villagers had about the proposed changes. Approximately fifteen households came to view the exhibition and ask questions. Despite all the parish councillors being available on the evening to answer any other queries or issues raised by residents, only three villagers took the opportunity to use this service.

8. Traffic and Highways. Cllr. Clark attended a local parish councils meeting organised by Checkley Parish Council recently. Unfortunately he had been invited to the wrong part of the meeting and missed the discussion on the Blythe Business Park expansion plans at Cresswell. At the meeting it was confirmed that Staffordshire Moorlands District Council (SMDC) does not currently have an approved local development plan and this makes the district vulnerable to opportunistic developers. SMDC is currently developing a local plan and both Cheadle and Forsbrook are earmarked for new housing estates. This could generate a further increase in traffic on local rural roads including Hilderstone. Cllr Clark asked the Parish Council if it still wished to be involved in the legal challenge by Draycott and Cresswell villages to try to stop the proposed development at Cresswell from going ahead. It was agreed that Hilderstone Parish Council did not have the resources to attend all the meetings and be heavily involved in this campaign. **Resolved: Hilderstone Parish Council will ask Draycott Parish Council to keep them updated with news of the situation but it is unlikely that Hilderstone Parish Council will be able to attend every meeting. Hilderstone Parish Council will not at this stage be making a financial contribution to any legal costs linked to the legal challenge to the validity of the planning application.**

Other highways and traffic issues reported under item 6.

9. Footpaths/Village Maintenance/Best Kept Village. In response to the recent article that was published in the Staffordshire Newsletter, the Parish Council asked the Clerk to publish a statement in the next Parish Magazine as follows:

The Best Kept Village result for 2015 was raised at the August parish council meeting where a journalist was present. The term 'townies' was **not** used by any of the councillors, parish clerk or member of the public present at the meeting. This term was applied by the journalist in response to a statement that **some** people moving into the village from urban areas are not

used to getting involved in community activities such as the Best Kept Village and that they often think that their property frontages are always the Council's responsibility. No criticism was made at the meeting of any of the existing Best Kept Village volunteers or indeed other villagers who make a significant contribution to village life. Some of these volunteers are from urban areas and are enthusiastic about getting involved in local activities. The fact still remains, that despite the lengthy village consultation meetings in 2013 where over 70 people indicated that they would like to see a more vibrant village life, there are still less than 30 regular volunteers in the village out of a population of around 500.

10. Village Events. Village events to be held in the village hall in October are as follows:

Harvest Supper on Monday 5th October.

Coffee Morning and Christmas Fair on Saturday 10th October.

Hilderstone Village Market on Saturday 24th October.

Film Night on Friday 30th October.

The 60th Anniversary of the village hall was well attended by around 60 people mainly in the evening, but there were children playing on the bouncy castle in the afternoon.

The jumble sale in September raised £80.00, which is not as good as in the past.

11. Correspondence September 2015.

- Changes to Electoral Role
- Members' Digests 211

Members' Digest 210 (Cllr Jones) – The Paediatric Assessment Unit and Shugborough Children's Ward at Stafford Hospital has recently been closed and the services transferred to The Royal Stoke University Hospital. A representative group from the hospital will be invited to the Mayor's Palour where the Mayor will convey thanks to the staff on behalf of the entire Borough Council. It was noted at a Stafford Borough Council committee meeting that these wards should not have been closed as they were vital and precious services which have served the community of Stafford well.

Stafford Borough Council are stepping up their campaign to reduce the amount of fly-tipping around the Borough. A 35 year old man has recently been fined £150 for dumping rubbish on the verge on Newport Road in Stafford. Five more people are also expected to be fined for other incidents of fly-tipping. Householders have a duty to ensure that rubbish from their homes is disposed of properly. Members of the public can report fly-tipping to Stafford Borough Council by email at info@staffordbc.gov.uk or telephone: 01785 619000.

12. Finance. The monthly accounts and bank statements were presented and signed by the Chairman. The current account is £4975.65 in credit and the deposit account £3118.98 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. OVH Limited, village website hosting fee renewal for six months – £38.95.
2. Mrs H Howie, Clerk's expenses for September - £20.60.
3. Mrs H Howie, Clerk's overtime worked in September - £47.91.
4. Mr W. H. Holmes, village & highways maintenance in September - £120.00.
5. Royal British Legion, poppy wreath donation - £25.00.

Resolved: that the Parish Council will pay for the cost of two bags of gravel and labour for the Church footpath (approximately £100.00) and half the cost (approximately £250.00) of cutting back four trees in the Churchyard. The Parish Council has a duty to ensure that the Churchyard is well maintained and as such contributes to the cost of its upkeep.

The clerk will prepare the draft budget for 2016-2017 for the October 2015 parish council meeting based on a 2%, 2.5% and 3% increase.

13. Any Other Business. Cllr. Shelley asked what the situation was with Green Lea School. Cllr. Crump confirmed that the School was not currently in danger of closing but the numbers of pupils needed to be higher.

The post box near the Bird in hand has gone missing (possibly stolen). The clerk will make enquiries with Royal Mail. It was also noted that the defibrillator on Stone High Street has recently been vandalised.

14. Date of next meeting.

The next meeting will be held on Wednesday 28th October at 7.30 p.m. The meeting closed at 9.50pm.

..... Cllr. R. Clark, Chairman. 28.10.2015