

Hilderstone Parish Council

Minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 25th June 2014 at 7.30p.m.

Present: Cllr. Clark (Chairman), Cllr. P. Davies, Cllr. A. Harp, Mrs. H. Howie (Clerk), Cllr. J. Jones, Cllr. M. Shelley (Vice Chairman), and Cllr. H. Woodward. 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. J. Crump, Cllr. I. Parry and Cllr. A. Stringer.
- 3. Minutes of the last meeting.** These were read, approved and signed.
- 4. Matters arising.** The Church has been in contact with the Borough Tree Officer about the split branch on the oak tree in the churchyard, the necessary paperwork is about to be completed and will need approval before any pruning can take place.

The organisers of the Vide Grenier and Village Market have now written a report and these are on the village website. The reports will also appear in the next edition of the Parish Magazine, along with a report for the Scarecrow Weekend. The Scarecrow Weekend attracted 300 people and raised £650.00 (which is the highest amount in recent years). It is encouraging that more village events are taking place this year, including those at the Roebuck where a recent coffee morning raised £60.00 for Fulford First Responders.

The village flag pole has been purchased and installed at the church ready for the 100th Year Commemoration of World War One. The pole is easy to install and can be moved to other areas in the village as required. The necessary approvals have been obtained from the Borough Councillor and it was noted that flags can only be flown during periods of national celebration and village events. Flags must not be flown on a permanent basis including on private land.

The proposed tree preservation order on Cresswell Road would appear to apply to the trees in the field with the stable block; not in fields belonging to High Elms. The Parish Council is not clear who currently owns the field in question. The paperwork issued by the Borough Council to the owners of High Elms is confusing and there was no clear plan showing the field and trees. It was agreed that Cllr. Harp would speak to the Borough Tree Officer to clarify ownership of the field and which trees the preservation order will apply to.

Other matters arising were dealt with under the agenda headings.

- 5. Borough Councillor's Report.** The Boundary Commission is in the final stages of determining the new ward boundaries for Stafford Borough. The Milwich Ward boundary and name will remain as originally proposed and there will be two borough councillors.

The New Plan for Stafford Borough is nearing completion. A few minor modifications need to be made before it obtains final approval, but Development Control are now able to use the majority of The New Plan in determining applications. Some of the larger service villages still intend to go ahead with developing their own Neighbourhood Plan, as they are earmarked for major expansion of housing numbers. The smaller rural villages such as Hilderstone are not earmarked for any major development but will be allowed some infill and small housing developments where land is available and a local housing need is identified by the Parish Councils. Any new housing must still meet the local planning regulations stated in the New Plan. In general parish councils will be encouraged to re-develop brownfield sites and empty buildings rather than build new housing on greenfield sites.

Cllr. Clark commented that the North end of Stafford town centre is in a poor state with rubbish and food waste in many shop doorways. Retailers and offices also appear to be leaving boxes of rubbish outside their premises. Whilst the street cleaning is good at the South end of the

town it would appear that the North end is being neglected. Borough Cllr. Harp agreed to speak to Streetscene about this.

Cllr Clark has spoken directly with Talk, Talk about the poor broadband speed in Hilderstone. Talk, Talk have stated that because Hilderstone has a very old telecommunications exchange, the broadband speed will never be very good. The broadband speed will only improve significantly if the exchange is replaced. It was noted that customers that are paying extra for a higher broadband speed, are paying for a service which cannot be fully delivered. This problem does not appear to have been taken into account in the Superfast Staffordshire broadband project, which aims to improve broadband speeds to 97% of premises in Staffordshire. Cllr. Clark has raised this with County Cllr. Parry and it was agreed that local people should be made aware of the problem and report their broadband issues to the Superfast Staffordshire project at: superfast@staffordshire.gov.uk

6. County Councillor's Report. Reported under Item 8 Traffic and Highways.

7. Planning.

No new applications in June 2014

Status of Earlier Applications:

14/20384/FUL Hilderstone Garage, Hall Lane, Hilderstone. Variation of condition two to allow a revised siting of the vehicle storage building. **PERMITTED.**

13/19733/HOU Beech Tree Byre, Moss Lane, Hilderstone. Retention of timber framed parking/store building. Retrospective Application. **PENDING CONSIDERATION.**

Blythe Business Park – no application as at 24.06.14.

8. Traffic and Highways. The speed of some drivers (generally young) in the early evening through the village is alarming. Furthermore, 20% of all traffic passing through the village is still exceeding the speed limit. Cllr. Parry has been informed and he has suggested that the Parish Council write to the Police and Staffordshire Safer Road Partnership to raise the issue and ask for more speed monitoring. The Crime and Police Commissioner Matthew Ellis has written to all the Parish Councillors inviting them to a meeting to discuss local crime and policing issues. As speeding traffic is one of the key problems in Hilderstone, it was agreed that this and the need for more regular police speed monitoring should be raised with Mr Ellis.

Cllr. Clark and Richard Pilcher of Speedwatch have been in discussion about the Cresswell Road Speed Indicator Device (SID) which needs to be re-located now that the build-outs are in place. It is proposed that the current SID is moved into the centre of the village near to the village hall if possible. It is also proposed that the sharp bend flashing sign before the Roebuck Hill build-out is replaced with another SID. Other counties have SIDs which show the speed of vehicles and thank them if they are under 30mph or ask them to slow down if they are over 30mph. Cllr. Parry has said that he will look into whether these changes can be made but it will depend on the financial resources available and highways regulations.

It was agreed that Cllr. Clark will continue to liaise with Cllr. Parry on the following highways issues:

1. Re-locate speed indicator device/flashing bend sign and possibly replace with better ones.
2. Improve reflection, lighting and signage on build-outs. A report back from the engineers visit has yet to be received and no improvements to the build-outs have been made.
3. Repair the road surface near to the build-out on Roebuck Hill and re-paint the SLOW road marking near to Roebuck corner.

9. Footpaths/Village Maintenance/Best Kept Village. There has been no response on the fingerpost for footpath 14 through the play area. Cllr. Davies will chase this up with Stone

Ramblers. There was an issue with an aggressive loose dog in the infant play area, this was reported to the Borough Council and the local PCSO but it appears that the dog is no longer in the village. There is still an issue with residents parking in the restricted area at the end of Farm View, especially in the evenings. This causes an obstruction to the entrance of the infant play area and is a danger to children. The Parish Council will continue to liaise with the Borough Parking Enforcement Officer and the local police on this.

The Best Kept Village Competition judges have been in the village for the second round of judging. The village has been well maintained in June and it is hoped that it will get through to the finals again. If it does, the village will be judged again by mid-July. There were ten village volunteers at the last Churchyard tidy session.

10. Correspondence.

- Invitation from Matthew Ellis re: Policing and Crime Consultation Meeting.
- Members' Digest 196.

Members Digest 195 – Stafford Borough Council is committed to maintaining a clean and safe environment for the benefit of all residents. Keeping streets clear of litter and addressing other environmental issues, including fly tipping, dog fouling, graffiti and fly posting are to be a priority. An untidy environment gives a poor impression and contributes to people's fear of crime. The Borough Council has therefore developed a 'Tidy Towns and Villages' strategy which aims to improve the quality of life for all those who live, work and visit Stafford borough.

Stafford Borough Council aims to prosecute all those accused of committing fraud, theft or bribery against the council particularly in relation to housing and council tax benefit claims. In most cases the Council will refer the matter to the Police for an independent prosecution.

11. Finance.

The monthly accounts were presented and signed by the Chairman. The current account is £6523.21 in credit and the deposit account £3116.40 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. Cllr. R. Clark, Village Flag Pole, Flag & Clips - £58.98
2. Mrs H. Howie, Clerk's Expenses and Mileage - £28.69
3. Cllr. R. Clark, Chair's Allowance 2014-15 - £330.00
4. Mr W.H. Holmes, Village Maintenance and Plants for Boxes - £110.00

The external audit Annual Return has been posted to the auditor and its receipt acknowledged by email. There should be no external audit fee for 2013-14, as the Parish Council's income was less than £10,000.

12. Any Other Business.

Staffordshire Parish Councils' Association 75th Anniversary Conference. Cllr. Clark and the Parish Clerk had attended the conference on Wednesday 11th June 2014. All the speakers at the conference had given informative presentations and Cllr. Clark reported back on the most relevant points as follows:

Staffordshire County Economy – Cllr. P. Atkins, Leader of Staffordshire County Council stated that Staffordshire is currently one of the fastest growing sub-regions in England, a vast improvement from 2008 when it was one of the worst performing sub-regions. Unemployment for Staffordshire excluding Stoke-on-Trent was 1.6% in 2013, which was well below the national average of 7.5%. If Stoke-on-Trent is included the figure was 5.4%, still below the national average. This has been achieved by the various Councils and agencies working together more closely to attract inward investment. The result has been more jobs created in the County particularly by JCB and Jaguar. In addition to this £33 million is being injected into

the Staffordshire economy by the Local Enterprise Partnership. One of the main aims is to ensure that some of the better paid new jobs created are taken by local people; this may require some significant investment in training and continuing professional education. The various Councils and agencies have also been working together to save resources across the county by identifying areas of duplication and agreeing on which agency will deliver a particular service.

On the issue of HS2, Cllr Atkins reported that the County Council is generally opposed to it. As it is likely to be approved however, the Council recognises that it must plan ahead to ensure that compensation for those affected is maximised and that the environmental impacts are minimised. Stoke-on-Trent City Council are still campaigning for a station near the centre of the city.

Cresswell Parish Council raised the issue of the increasing number of long-haul lorry drivers parking up overnight in public lay-bys near to industrial and retail estates around Stafford. Cllr. Atkins agreed that this was something that needed to be addressed and that perhaps the businesses to which they were delivering should be responsible for providing some off road parking. Cllr. Atkins agreed to take this issue away for discussion with Stafford Borough Council and other appropriate agencies.

Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE) – Neil Sinden spoke about the recent national planning policy reforms which have left much of the existing Green Belt largely intact. It is important to recognise however that government policy is still in favour of a high level of development, particularly in respect of new housing and this could threaten areas of open countryside. 47% of Staffordshire is currently outside of the Green belt and therefore potentially at risk of development. Stafford Borough Council's New Development Plan focuses major new developments on the edges of Stafford, Stone and the larger villages and not in the rural areas. CPRE will continue to lobby the Government and local authorities to try to ensure that Brownfield sites are re-developed, before new Greenfield sites are used. CPRE claim that there are more Brownfield sites than previously thought; currently enough to build 1.5 million new homes nationally.

Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) – Matthew Ellis the Police and Crime Commissioner for Staffordshire spoke about his role and some of the improvements that have been made within the Police service in recent months. Since he came into post he had found that on the whole the Staffordshire force is good at policing but there many areas of inefficiency and poor management of budgets. Currently Officers are having to duplicate information in many different manual forms and he feels that the force is several years behind in the use of technology. Several thousand hours of officer time is being freed up for beat duties by reducing this inefficiency and he promised that there will be 250 new community police posts within the next 18 months. PCSOs will be expected to engage regularly with Parishes again. More will be invested in Neighbourhood Watch Schemes with an emphasis on encouraging younger people to get involved. A cadet programme for 14 to 17 year olds has been introduced and this is proving to be both popular and successful. A programme for 8 to 10 year olds is also being developed. He also mentioned that The Staffordshire Safer Road Partnership is raising a significant amount of money from fines and that they will be asked to re-invest some of this in local road safety/calming schemes.

Volunteering in Staffordshire – The Lord Lieutenant of Staffordshire, Ian Dudson spoke about the importance of volunteering and the invaluable work that many hundreds of volunteers deliver across a variety of organisations. He recognised that all Parish Councillors are volunteers and asked that they continue to try and encourage others within their communities to become volunteers.

Other Parish Business. Cllr. Jones raised the poor state of Whitesytc Lane particularly near to the village. A local resident has reported this to Highways on several occasions and after becoming increasingly frustrated by the response she has contacted the Parish Council. The matter has been passed on to County Councillor Ian Parry to resolve and it is hoped that some work to clear the ditches and patch the potholes will take place in the next few weeks.

A builder's lorry has been seen unloading materials on Cotwalton Road where the caravan was situated. This will be monitored to ensure that no unauthorised building is erected or fly-tipping takes place.

The village summer fete will take place in the field between the Church and Lower Farm on Sandon Road in the centre of the village this year. It is hoped that this will increase the attendance figures and also the number of stalls and activities at the fete. A few new village volunteers have come forward to help but more are still required. Information compiled by Howard Watkin-Jones about the 'Friends of' group has been placed on the village website and in the Parish Magazine. It is hoped that this will generate more new volunteers for the main village assets and events.

It was agreed that village events should be placed on future agendas as a separate item.

13. Date of next meeting.

The next meeting will be held on Wednesday 23rd July at 7.30 p.m. The meeting closed at 9.30pm

..... Cllr. R. Clark, Chairman. 23.07.14