

# Hilderstone Parish Council

## Minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 26<sup>th</sup> February 2014 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), Cllr. A. Stringer and Cllr. H. Woodward. There were three members of the public present including a journalist from the Staffordshire Newsletter.

**1. Chairman's Welcome.** Cllr. Clark welcomed all present to the meeting.

**2. Apologies.** These were received from Cllr. Harp.

**3. Cresswell Traffic Survey.** Villagers Voices for Staffordshire Moorlands (VVSM) had made contact with Hilderstone Parish Council to see if councillors would be interested in the results of a traffic volume and speed survey carried out in Cresswell in 2013. It was felt that this data might be relevant to Hilderstone in light of the recent proposal to expand Blythe Business Park at Cresswell and build a two hundred unit housing estate nearby. If the proposed development goes ahead, it could result in increased traffic through Hilderstone. It was noted that at this stage, a formal planning application has not been submitted to Staffordshire Moorlands District Council for the development.

Two members of VVSM presented the data at the meeting. VVSM had decided to carry out their own traffic survey in response to the results of one carried out on behalf of Blythe Business Park. VVSM felt that this survey did not accurately reflect the full volume and speed of traffic through Cresswell, as the road monitoring strips used were only placed at one point in the village (near to Blythe Business Park). Two strips were used in the VVSM survey; one near to Rookery Crescent at the south end of Cresswell, the other near to the junction with Uttoxeter Road at Draycott to the north of Cresswell.

Generally the same number of vehicles travel north and south. The majority of vehicles travel at between 35 and 40 miles per hour in the 30 mile per hour zone with a few vehicles travelling at excessive speeds. On Sunday mornings 45% of vehicles are speeding. There are a relatively low number of very large vehicles travelling through Cresswell and these are generally travelling south towards Hilderstone. There is an 'Unsuitable for Large Vehicles' sign warning drivers not to travel via Hilderstone, but the data shows that most seem to ignore this. The recommended road width for two vehicles travelling in opposite directions being able to pass is 5.5 metres. The road between Cresswell and Hilderstone is only 5.168 metres at one point. It is accepted that agricultural vehicles working on local farms have to use the roads, but there appear to be many more commercial lorries using Cresswell and Sandon Road as a short cut to the M6 at Stafford. It was also noted that a few Hilderstone residents had complained to Cllr. Clark that more large flat-bed lorries, probably travelling from the aggregate quarries in the Moorlands were going through Hilderstone in the early hours of the morning. The VVSM representatives said that they had recorded such lorries travelling via Cresswell from Cheadle. Cllr. Parry said that the County Council were consultees on traffic and highways matters for any planning applications within Staffordshire. He confirmed that the County Council Highways Department would comment on the application if one is submitted for Blythe Business Park, but he couldn't indicate at this stage what the comment would be. Cllr. Parry said that it might be worth investigating if a stronger vehicle weight restriction could be imposed at Cresswell to stop lorries travelling south along Cresswell Road either from Uttoxeter Road at Draycott or when exiting Blythe Business Park.

It was agreed that it was not necessarily the volume of traffic, but speed and the size of lorries that currently pose the larger problem in Hilderstone. The proposed development at Blythe Business Park could however increase traffic volumes through Hilderstone by approximately 230 per day. There are also other business developments proposed near to the Blythe Bridge roundabout at Draycott and the old Creda site on Grindley Lane. Traffic volumes through Cresswell and Hilderstone could therefore increase further in the future as some workers may commute between Stafford and Blythe Bridge. There is also more land available for further

development at Blythe Business Park over and above the current proposal. It was agreed that more employment and housing is needed, but that there are plenty of brown field sites in the North of the County around Stoke-on-Trent before green field sites need to be used. The contentious issue with the proposed development at Cresswell is the housing estate which is to be built on a green field site.

**4. Minutes of the last meeting.** These were read, approved and signed.

**5. Matters arising.** The draft village conservation area appraisal prepared by Cllr. Clark and Cllr. Crump has been submitted to Stafford Borough Council. It is now awaiting a full write-up by the Borough Conservation Officer and this will probably not be completed until late summer. Once it is ready, there will be a public consultation meeting before it receives final approval. All other matters arising were dealt with under the agenda headings.

**6. Borough Councillor's Report.** No report.

**7. County Councillor's Report.** Cllr. Parry confirmed that the County Council will act as a consultee on highways matters if a planning application is submitted to Staffordshire Moorlands District Council for the proposed industrial and housing development at Blythe Business Park in Cresswell. A letter to this effect has been posted to the Parish Council today (26.03.14).

Gulley drain clearing is on a pre-programmed schedule, but unfortunately Cresswell Road was not on the recent job sheet when the team was in Hilderstone. Cllr. Parry has requested that the team come out and clear all the drains on Cresswell Road within the next 10 days. Although the recent road sweeping had cleared much of the loose grit from the top dressing applied in the summer, it was noted that the build-out on Cresswell road is covered in mud and grit. The ruts on Hilderstone Road between the Cotwalton Road corner and The Meadows have still not been filled and are getting worse. There are also some loose cats eyes in area. The ruts are in the tyre line of vehicles and drivers are swerving to avoid them.

Cllr. Parry and Richard Pilcher had recently met with the Police and Crime Commissioner to discuss how local Speedwatch groups, the Safer Roads Partnership and the Police traffic enforcement teams can be better co-ordinated. Currently they all seem to work in isolation and it is felt that this reduces the overall effectiveness of traffic enforcement. Cllr. Parry has asked for more governance and accountability of the Safer Roads Partnership. The Police are lacking in resources for traffic enforcement and Cllr. Parry has asked if there are other ways that speed enforcement can be implemented. There will always be a proportion of drivers that speed excessively through villages, but it is hoped that through education and traffic calming measures the number of these can be minimised.

The County Council tax has been frozen again for 2014-2015. Stafford Borough Council have announced that they will reduce their council tax by 2% for 2014-2015. The County Council is currently consulting on the delivery of library and children's centres in an attempt to reduce costs and improve the services.

## **8. Planning.**

### **New Planning Applications February 2014:**

13/19630/FUL Wind Turbine near Drumble Woods , Cotwalton. The details of this planning application had been circulated by email to all parish councillors as the closing date for comment was 14<sup>th</sup> February 2014. Four councillors had expressed an objection to the application and therefore the clerk had to go with the majority view and has informed the Planning department that Hilderstone Parish Council objects to the application. Cllr Parry said that he has also objected to the application. There is a large amount of public objection to the application and Bill Cash MP has also objected strongly to this and other wind turbine applications in the Stone area. It was noted that all farms in the area have received a letter from a wind turbine energy company offering landowners £15,000 to £30,000 per turbine.

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

13/19774/FUL High Forest Farm, Sharpley Heath Road, Hilderstone – Conversion of existing agricultural building (barn) to 3 bedroom residential dwelling. **PENDING CONSIDERATION.**

13/19677/HOU East View, Sandon Road, Hilderstone – proposed garden room extension. **PERMITTED.**

13/19412/FUL Bearstakes, Sandon Road – proposed two-storey rear and side extension to provide accommodation for disabled person and her carers. Modification of Plans – addition of request for change of use of small area of agricultural land adjoining the application site.. Application has been considered at committee who asked for garden to be used for extension instead of adjoining field. Plans re-submitted. **PERMITTED.**

Admiral Taverns have recently started some work to clear our several years of ‘rubbish’ which has built up in The Roebuck. Cllr. Clark was walking past when workers were clearing out some of the old furnishings and was invited in by the contractor’s team leader who was on site. Admiral have stated that they intend to re-let it to a new tenant landlord and hope that the clearance will give the new tenant a better chance of success. The team leader also stated that Admiral was pleased that the Parish Council had requested that the pub be placed on the Borough Asset Register in order to protect it from re-development.

Cllr. Clark and the clerk had attended a recent special Parish Planning Forum to update parishes on the status of New Local Plan for Stafford Borough and also some recent major planning applications which have been submitted by housing developers. The New local Plan for Stafford has been submitted for initial examination by the Secretary of State. The inspector has asked for some modifications to be made and the Main Modifications Report has been issued for public consultation until 20<sup>th</sup> March 2014. The main modifications relate mainly to sustainability and habitat regulations. There has been no change to the proposed numbers of new houses to be delivered in the rural areas outside Stafford, Stone and the larger villages such as Gnosall and Eccleshall. There have been several applications submitted by developers for housing estates in Stone and some of the larger villages such as the Haywoods. Most of these applications are not in line with the New Local Plan and the Borough Council is not keen to approve them. Although the New Local Plan has not yet received final approval, the Borough Council has been assured by the inspector, that it will carry more weight than the existing Local Plan the nearer it gets to final approval.

**9. Traffic and Highways.** Reported under item 7.

**10. Footpaths/Village Maintenance/Best Kept Village.** The finger posts on footpaths four and sixteen have now been replaced. There is still a need for a marker for footpath 14 at Dingle Lane, Cllr. Davies will ask if one can be installed. The grass verge opposite Whitesytch Lane is being churned up by farm vehicles exiting Whitesytch Lane and turning towards Sandon. A local resident has asked if rocks can be placed around the verge to stop the drivers mounting the verge. The clerk confirmed that under current highways legislation it is illegal for residents to place rocks on any verge or pavement. The resident will be advised to contact Highways to see what can be done to prevent vehicles from mounting the verge.

Concern was expressed about the oak tree in the church yard as it has a large spilt. Cllr. Clark said that the split was there after the tree work was carried out last year but he will check if it has worsened. Cllr. Woodward confirmed that she had obtained some poppy seeds and would sow these in the church yard to commemorate the First World War centenary.

Hilderstone will enter the Best kept Village competition again this year. The clerk will arrange a meeting of the volunteers in early March. After this year, the volunteers will be required to organise themselves. The clerk will ask volunteers if they will be willing to maintain the front of the Roebuck if it is still without a tenant landlord in spring. If they are not willing to maintain it the pub can be excluded from the competition but it would be preferable for some maintenance to be carried out otherwise it will become a village eyesore. The clerk will contact

Admiral in due course to see if they intend to carry out some grounds maintenance whilst the pub is empty.

## 11. Correspondence Received February 2014

- Register of Electors 2014
- Walking for Health Information from Stafford Borough Council
- Members' Digest 192

Members' Digest 190 – much of this digest covers the budget setting process for 2014-2015 and 2015-2016. The deadline for members to call-in a decision of the Cabinet to the appropriate Scrutiny Committee has been revised. It is now 5.00pm on the last day of the call-in period which is shown on the front of the digest. Stafford Borough Council are to hand the money from the £75.00 fixed penalty dog fouling notices to people who have given information that has led to the fine.

Members' Digest 191 – Ashtree Cottage, 2 Bourne Court. Application to fell one variegated sycamore and prune two more within the conservation area. Permitted.

Horseshoe House, Sandon Road – application to remove trees within the conservation area.

Warmer Homes Helpline. The Borough Council has set up a telephone line to help residents beat the cold this winter as part of a new partnership to improve the energy efficiency of homes in the Borough. The telephone number is 0800 6771785.

## 12. Finance.

The monthly accounts were presented and signed by the Chairman. The current account is £3116.40 in credit and the deposit account £4944.78 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, Clerk's expenses & mileage - £23.77.

**13. Any Other Business.** There will be a jumble sale on Saturday 22<sup>nd</sup> March at 2.00pm in the village hall to raise money for the village Christmas party.

## 14. Date of next meeting.

The next meeting will be held on Wednesday 26<sup>th</sup> March at 7.30 p.m. The main meeting closed at 9.15pm and this was followed by a closed meeting to discuss confidential matters.

..... Cllr. R. Clark, Chairman. 26.03.14