

Hilderstone Parish Council

Minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 26th March 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), Cllr. A. Stringer and Cllr. H. Woodward. Richard Pilcher the Speedwatch Co-ordinator and Mr and Mrs Watkin-Jones were present at the beginning of the meeting.

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

2. Apologies. These were received from Cllr. Crump and Cllr. Parry.

3. Minutes of the last meeting. The last sentence in the final paragraph on page two was amended to read that farmers were being offered between '£15,000 and £30,000' to have a wind turbine on their land. Page three, paragraph four was amended to read that Admiral Taverns were not refurbishing The Roebuck, but had contractors in to 'clear out several years of rubbish that had accumulated in the pub, in the hope of giving a new tenant a better chance of success'. The minutes were then, approved and signed.

4. Matters arising. A letter has been received from Cllr. Ian Parry confirming that the County Council will act as the Highways Authority on the Blythe Business Park proposal if an application is submitted to Staffordshire Moorlands District Council. The letter states that pre-application 'discussions are at an early stage to agree the scope of the traffic assessment, access and a wider mitigation strategy for the area before a formal planning application is submitted by the developer.' Others matters arising were dealt with under the agenda headings.

5. Borough Councillor's Report. The Boundary Commission report has been put back until 15th April 2014. The Borough Council tax has been reduced by 2%. The town centre re-development in Stafford has started with the multi-storey car park being demolished. Marks and Spencers and Morrisons are likely to be developed at the same time. A multi-screen cinema and more restaurants are planned as well as more shops. Stafford will be a very different town when the development is finished but hopefully people will have more choice. It is hoped that the top end of the town will be re-developed a later stage. Funds raised from the Section 106 conditions applied to the new development will benefit mainly Stafford and Stone but villages will receive very little of these monies. There were no other Borough Council matters that directly affect Hilderstone.

6. County Councillor's Report. Reported under Matters Arising and Traffic and Highways.

7. Planning.

New Planning Applications March 2014:

13/19733/HOU Beech Tree Byre, Moss Lane, Hilderstone. Retention of timber framed parking/store building. Retrospective Application. **Resolved: The Parish Council has no objections to the appearance of the building, but it does not condone retrospective planning applications. Perhaps property owners that do not follow the correct planning procedures before they erect buildings, should face an additional financial penalty to discourage them from doing so.**

Status of Earlier Applications:

13/19630/FUL Wind Turbine near Drumble Woods , Cotwalton. **PENDING CONSIDERATION.**

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

Blythe Business Park – no application as at 25.03.14

8. Traffic and Highways. As a follow-up to the Villagers Voices for Staffordshire Moorlands presentation last month, Richard Pilcher provided some further information on traffic flows from Cresswell to Hilderstone. 40% of the traffic travelling from the North to the South through Hilderstone comes from Cresswell. Some of this traffic may turn off to Meir Heath along Hilderstone Road but it is a small proportion. If the new development at Cresswell goes ahead, there might be another 100 vehicles per hour through Hilderstone at peak times. This would represent a 33% increase in traffic. Cllr. Harp advised that if the County Highways engineers deem that increased traffic is unlikely to cause a problem, the planning officers will probably take very little notice of any other objections about potential increases in traffic.

Cllr. Parry has advised the Chairman that an engineer has been asked to look at the visibility of the traffic calming 'build-outs'. A bollard is to be placed near the Cresswell Road build-out to stop vehicles driving down the pavement where there is a dropped kerb. The reported blocked gullies have now been cleared. The positioning of the build-outs is still being questioned by members of the public. It was agreed that the roads in Hilderstone were difficult and the assessment of the positioning of the build-outs was carried out by highways engineers.

The poor state of the lanes around Hilderstone has been reported to Highways and drawn to the attention of Cllr. Parry. A significant amount of mud was dropped on the main road by an agricultural vehicle in recent days. It was noted that much of the mud dropped by farmers is due to over-loading of muck-spreaders and trailers etc. This is classed as an insecure load which is an offence.

9. Footpaths/Village Maintenance/Best Kept Village. Cllr. Davies has recently had a conversation with Stone Ramblers who have a works programme in the area to carry out repairs to styles, fingerposts and footpaths. Cllr. Davies has requested a few jobs including the footpath 14 fingerpost.

An oak tree in the field next to Ash House on Cresswell Road has been partially felled leaving only the trunk. There is concern that other mature trees in the area may be felled. The row of mature trees along Cresswell Road in the same field forms an attractive 'gateway' feature to the village and it would be a shame to lose these. There has also been a significant amount of tree felling in the small wood behind the open space at the rear of The Meadows. The clerk was asked to contact the Tree Officer at the Borough Council to ask for advice on these matters.

The clerk has received a quotation from Bill Holmes to replace the Parish Council notice board at the village hall. **Resolved: the quotation of £270.00 for materials and labour is accepted and an order should be placed.**

A few members of the public have asked if they could place notices in the village hall notice board. At the moment there is only one key holder who is away on holiday this week. The clerk was asked to contact the village hall committee to see if a spare key could be left at the village hall so that other village volunteers could get access to the board and keep it updated.

There are few unkempt front gardens along Sandon Road which will let the village down in the Best Kept Village Competition if they are not tidied. The clerk was asked to write to the homeowners drawing their attention to village efforts to maintain a high standard.

10. Village Consultation This was brought forward on the agenda and discussed at the beginning of the meeting. Mr Watkin-Jones who had attended the recent village consultation meeting had recently sent an email to the Chairman expressing his disappointment with the meeting and he was invited to the Parish Council meeting to discuss his views further. Mr Watkin-Jones said that he felt that the presentation at the consultation did not fully celebrate the achievements and progress that had been made by new volunteers during 2013. There was general praise but specific criticism, with the key voices being unheard and the different village successes almost ignored. After the 2013 meetings he felt that villagers had come away feeling very positive and enthused by the meeting, but after the last meeting he and at least nine other residents came away feeling as though what been achieved was

unappreciated. The last message from the Parish Council appeared to be that this was the 'last chance' for villagers to make a difference. He hoped that the Parish Council would have further consultation meetings and that it will continue to co-ordinate volunteer groups within the village. He believes that there are now around 50 people in the village willing to get involved but there still needs to be some level of encouragement from the Parish Council. If there is another meeting, perhaps each group leader could be invited to have a brief public platform from which they can update the village on their group's progress, successes, planned next steps and the ideal help they need to achieve those new goals. This might help to take the pressure from the Parish Council in trying to attract new volunteers.

Cllr. Clark responded by stating that the reason for the 2013 series of meetings was because the Parish Council had identified that the village assets were in serious difficulties and the number of existing village volunteers was very low and they did not have the capacity to do any more to improve village life. The questionnaire handed out at the first meeting gave some clear responses and statistics on what villagers felt were important to village life and some new activities that they would like to see. At a later meeting villagers were asked to volunteer to join particular groups by adding their names to lists placed around the village hall. Although the numbers of new volunteers looked good initially, closer inspection revealed that many of them were existing volunteers or people who had put their names on several lists. In reality there were probably only around 25 new volunteers that had contributed time to the village in the last 12 months. No new volunteers had come forward to help run the Church, village fete or the village hall.

The purpose of the 2014 meeting was to review the recent achievements but also highlight that there was still a need for more volunteers and for villagers to take full ownership of and run groups themselves. The achievements made in 2013 had been reported in the pamphlet circulated to all households by the Parish Council and these were also highlighted at the meeting. The long-term village volunteers (which includes the parish councillors) have contributed a great deal of time over many years without little encouragement from other people. It was important to point out at the 2014 meeting, that if residents wait for things to happen, then they probably are not going to happen. Cllr. Shelley said that the role of the Parish Council was to act as a liaison point between the County and Borough Councils and the village, on matters such as planning, highways, village maintenance, policing etc. Although the Parish Council is happy to help new community groups to get established, its role is not to run or co-ordinate these groups.

The Parish Council has expended a great deal of time in the last 12 months consulting with residents, keeping them informed of the progress through pamphlets and the Parish Magazine, developing a new website and helping to set up new groups. It does not have the resources to continue at this level of involvement however and it now down to residents to be pro-active and not expect the Parish Council to set up groups and events. The fact that the Roebuck has recently closed again, that the Children's Club has had to reduce the number of sessions due to a lack of volunteers and that only 15% of those present at the last meeting had viewed the new village website demonstrates that whilst good progress has been made, there is still a need for more residents to get motivated and drive the village forward. The Parish Council will act as an initial source of advice and information, but real progress will only be made if the new village volunteers with new ideas start to encourage more residents to get involved.

11. Correspondence Received March 2014:

- Community Council Diary of Events.
- Community Council Good neighbourhood Scheme information.
- Members' Digest 193.

Members' Digest 192

P1.4 HS2 Route Consultation. Considered a report proposing a response to the latest consultation on HS2 Phase 2 route. More details in section 2 of this edition of Members'

Digest (pages 2.59-2.63). The Leader of the Council briefly stated the Council's stance regarding the proposals.

Resolved – that the proposal of the Cabinet Member – Planning and Regeneration Portfolio be approved as follows:- The Cabinet approves an interim response to the Phase 2 Route Consultation, and refers the matter to Council for further consideration. THIS ITEM WILL NOT BE CALLED IN AND WILL BE REFERRED TO COUNCIL ON 4 FEBRUARY 2014.

12. Finance. The monthly accounts were presented and signed by the Chairman. The current account is £4726.26 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 financing of the Parish Magazine is strained and there is a danger that unless more donations are made, it will not be possible to print a hard copy of it. It was agreed that the Magazine is an important tool in village communications and many residents still prefer to receive a hard copy. Advertisers are also likely to prefer that a hard copy is circulated. **Resolved: that as the Parish Council also uses the Magazine to communicate with residents, it should make a donation of £100 towards the printing costs.**

A grant application will be submitted to Cllr Parry to assist with the costs of the village Christmas Party 2014.

The following payments were approved:

1. Community Council of Staffordshire, Best Kept Village Competition Entry Fee - £15.65
2. Staffordshire Parish Council's Association Subscription 2014-2015 - £202
3. Mrs H. Howie, Clerks Expenses, Annual Home Office Allowance & Overtime - £240.60
4. Hilderstone Village Hall, Children's Club Hire of Hall for Spring Event - £20.00
5. Hilderstone PCC, Donation towards Parish Magazine Printing Costs - £100.00

13. Any Other Business. The recent jumble sale organised by Cllr. Jones and Cllr. Woodward raised £230 which was donated equally to the village Christmas party fund and Church.

14. Date of next meeting.

The next meeting will be held on Wednesday 23rd April at 7.30 p.m. The meeting closed at 9.50pm

..... Cllr. R. Clark, Chairman. 23.04.14