

Hilderstone Parish Council

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

Present: Cllr. M. Shelley (Vice Chairman), Cllr. Clark (Chairman), Cllr. J. Crump, Cllr. P. Davies, Cllr. A. Harp, Mrs. H. Howie (Clerk), Cllr. I. Parry and Cllr. A. Stringer. There was one member of the public present (R. Pilcher representing Speedwatch).

1. Chairman's Welcome. Cllr. Shelley who was chairing the meeting, welcomed all those present.

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. Cllr. Crump had visited Mr and Mrs Downing on Dingle Lane to look at the oak trees which are about to be placed under a tree preservation order. Cllr. Crump had written a report about the problems which the trees were causing Mr and Mrs Downing due to the overhang in their garden. This report had been circulated to the other councillors prior to the meeting. Mr Downing had since contacted the clerk to say that he no longer wished to appeal against the tree preservation order. It was agreed that the Parish Council would not object to the tree preservation order as the trees could still be pruned within specified guidelines.

All other matters arising were dealt with under the agenda headings.

5. Borough Councillor's Report. The Borough Council is currently setting the budget and is now budgeting for a three year period. It is reviewing all departments to see if further savings can be made; this is a continuous process throughout the year. The Council tax will be frozen again next year; there has been no increase for five years. Despite the budget reduction and cost savings, there has been no noticeable difference in the level of services. Savings have generally been made by increases in efficiency.

The New Plan for Stafford Borough will need some modifications before it can go for final approval. In particular, the section relating to the travelling community will need amending.

The Pride in Your Patch award was launched on 3rd December 2013. All parishes are invited to nominate a local volunteer who has made a major contribution to the local community.

A planning application for an extension to Ivy Cottage, Sharpley Heath Road has been submitted. As the application requires a change of use of a small part of the green belt land adjacent to the existing property, Cllr Harp will call the application in to the planning committee. This is because the planning officers are generally not willing to approve a change of use of green belt land. The area of land in question is within the current garden boundary of the cottage but outside the current property curtilage. It is however, a very small area of land and a change of use will have very little impact on the surrounding rural area. The parish council agreed that it had no objections to the application and supported Cllr. Harp's intention to call the application in for a committee decision.

6. County Councillor's Report. Cllr. Parry was pleased to report that the traffic calming chicanes are now scheduled to be installed before Christmas. Signs giving advance warning of the works will be placed at either end of the village in the week beginning 2nd December. EON will be on site to install the power for lighting the chicanes (this is required for pedestrians using the chicanes as crossing points). Civil engineering will be on site to install the chicanes from 11th December and the target completion date is 17th December. Traffic lights will be in place during the construction period so this may cause some traffic build up at busy periods. The chicane on Roebuck Hill will be near to the current slow sign painted on the road. The other chicane will be on Cresswell Road near to the bus stop. Cllr. Parry has been assured that there will be enough room for the bus to stop without this causing a problem. It was noted

that parking on Cresswell Road near to this chicane for church services may cause a problem. It was agreed that this could be monitored once the chicane has been installed. The chicanes will have black bollards and will be edged with setts so that they fit in with the village environment. Both chicanes will initially be one build-out, but it will be possible to install a second one at both locations if they do not slow the traffic down enough. As there had been only minor adjustments to the location and design of the chicanes since the original public consultation, a second round of public consultation was not required. On behalf of the village and the Parish Council, Cllr. Shelley thanked Cllr Parry for his commitment, time and allocation of a large proportion of his County Councillor's budget in getting the chicanes finally installed. The village had campaigned for many years for some traffic calming measures and Cllr. Parry's assistance has been very instrumental in this. It was also noted that the dedication of the village Speedwatch group in monitoring traffic speeds and collecting the key data required has also been of great importance in obtaining the chicanes.

The County Council is looking again at where it can make savings. It has 25% less to spend than three years ago and 50% less staff than four years ago. Over the last five years, Staffordshire County Council has made £130m of savings whilst freezing council tax. One of the areas that the County Council is currently consulting on, in an attempt to make savings, is youth services. This covers a very wide range of activities but surprisingly 96% of the provision is delivered by voluntary groups which are supported by grants and their own fund raising. The County Council currently spends £7 million on providing just 4% of the provision but it feels that this money could be spent more effectively by targeting the really deprived areas. The proposal is to channel more funding into these areas via the Staffordshire Council of Voluntary Youth Services (SCVYS). Each district will receive an allocation so that with the help of SCVYS staff the provision can be more targeted. Some of the current £7 million youth budget will be re-directed to early intervention in families with severe problems and where the children are in need of a high level of external support. The consultation starts on 10th December and ends in the New Year.

Cllr. Clark reminded all present that there will be a Village Review meeting in March in the village hall. All councillors including the County and Borough councillors are requested to be in attendance. The meeting will review the progress made one year on from the initial round of village consultation meetings and consider where further improvements can be made.

7. Planning.

New Planning Applications November 2013:

13/19080/FUL Ivy Cottage, Sharpley Heath Road, Hilderstone – change of use of land north of the cottage to extend the residential curtilage. Demolition of part of the cottage and construction of two storey extension in lieu. **Resolved: the Parish Council has no objections to this application and is in favour of the application being 'called-in' for a committee decision, as discussed with Cllr. Harp under item 5 above.**

13/19526/HOU Old Post Office Cottage, Sandon Road Hilderstone - external solid wall insulation using Weber Therm XM System in white render finish. **Resolved: the Parish Council has no objections to this application.**

Status of Earlier Applications:

13/19329/HOU Cherry Tree House, Dingle lane, Hilderstone – proposed single storey extension to side and rear. **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. PENDING DECISION.** Cllr Harp has called in the application but it has yet to be assigned a committee date.

8. Traffic and Highways. Richard Pilcher reported that Speedwatch had monitored traffic speeds near to The Meadows junction on the B5066 Hilderstone Road, as requested by the Parish Council. Speeds here were no worse than in any other area monitored in the village. There were some vehicles travelling in excess of 30mph but the numbers were not significantly high. Some drivers had made it clear that they were not happy with Speedwatch being stationed in this location and one had made a complaint to the Safer Roads Partnership. The Safer Road Partnership has since told Speedwatch that it should **not** monitor speeds at this location as it is not an approved site. This due to its proximity to the 30mph sign.

The potholes on Hall Lane and near The Bird in Hand have been filled recently. There were no new road defects to report currently.

There had been another accident at the Hardiwick crossroads a couple of weeks ago. It was noted that more roadside advertising signs had appeared there and it is a Highways policy to remove any unofficial signs, especially if they caused a potentially dangerous distraction to drivers.

9. Footpaths/Village Maintenance/Best Kept Village. Cllr Davies has contacted the Rights of Way officer with regards to the overgrown hedge on footpath 14 and also the style issues on footpath 10. The Rights of Way Officer has confirmed that she will contact Stafford and Rural Homes about the overgrown hedge to the rear of 2 Farm Lea. The footpath 10 styles will be inspected soon and the land owner contacted as appropriate.

It was agreed that the Best Kept Village volunteer group should be asked to meet again in the New Year to discuss an action plan for The Best Kept Village Competition 2014. The clerk reported that the Parish Council notice board at the village hall is leaking and in need of repair or replacement. The Clerk will contact Bill Homes to see if it can be repaired and if not, ask for a quote for a new notice board. It was agreed that the new notice board needs to have a larger display area, with perhaps just one large door to facilitate this.

10. Correspondence Received November 2013 :

- Electoral Boundary Commission letter regarding Electoral Review of Stafford
- Electoral Role Changes
- Members' Digest 189
- SPCA Notification of AGM and Fee for 2014-2015
- SPCA Annual Report and Gazette

It was agreed that the Parish Council should respond to the Electoral Boundary Commission consultation on the Electoral Review of Stafford. **Resolved: Hilderstone Parish Council wishes to maintain a link with other rural parishes such as Milwich and feels that it can be best served by a Borough Councillor who will work with parishes with similar issues. Hilderstone Parish Council does not feel that it would be appropriate for it to be in the same ward as a more urban parish such as Fulford which is more heavily populated and therefore has different issues.**

Members' Digest 188

pp1.1-2.6 Scrap metal dealers act 2013. Comes fully into force on 1st November 2013. Approval licences etc. dealt with.

p2.13-2.14 Financial matters relating to council tax, business rates arrears and housing benefits overpayments. Submitted for approval to write off. The report related to write offs of debts in excess of £2500.

p.2.20-2.22 Flexible retirement, relates to a specific officer, requested a reduction in hours from full time (37 hours a week) to 4 days (30 hours a week), this would relate to a saving to the council of approximately £17000 in a full year.

pp3.5-4.11 Stafford Hospital, Council's letter of support and reactions to the report.

p5.3 Proposed development for a single 500kw wind turbine and associated infrastructure Stafford Northbound motorway service area Stone. (Application No 13/18650 FUL) Permitted subject to conditions set out.

p6.6 Retrospective planning permission for play area equipment at The Greyhound Inn, Saverley Green (13/18934 Permit)

p6.16-6.17 Half term provision for children including multi mix activity days and mobile skate park. Basketball coaching for youngsters available from 7th October at Sir Graham Balfour School.

11. Finance.

The monthly accounts were presented and signed by the Chairman. The current account is £6648.57 in credit and the deposit account £3116.01 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 J Reddy, Children's Club Christmas Party Costs – £111.00
2. Mount Nurseries, Daffodil Bulbs for Village Planting - £70.00
3. Hilderstone Village Hall, Hire for Children's Club Events - £30.00
4. Mrs H Howie, Clerks Expenses and Mileage - £10.10
5. Mrs K. Murray, Children's Club Christmas Party Costs - £11.01
6. Mr W H Holmes, Village Maintenance and Highways Jobs - £100.00
7. Ven-Agri, Daffodil bank Cutting Services - £225.00
8. Cllr. H Woodward, Christmas Party Costs Advance - £350.00.

As agreed at the last meeting the clerk had circulated a revised draft budget showing a 4% and 5% increase (as well as the previously discussed 3% increase). **Resolved: the Parish Council agreed a 4% increase in the budget and precept request for the 2014 – 2015 financial year.** It was noted that if the council tax base (number of households where council tax can be charged) changes, the impact on the actual charge made to households may be greater or less than 4%. The clerk has yet to be notified by the Borough Council of the tax base for 2014-2015 .

12. Any Other Business.

10th December – Village Christmas Party.
21st December – Village Christmas Concert.
27th December – Village Christmas Walk.

Cllr. Crump reported that the sheds at the back of the village hall had now been emptied and the sheds will soon be removed.

13. Date of next meeting.

The next meeting will be held on Wednesday 22nd January 2014 at 7.30 p.m. The meeting closed at 9.15pm

..... Cllr. R. Clark, Chairman. 22.01.14