

Weston under Wetherley Parish Council
Ordinary Parish Council Meeting

Wednesday 2nd July 2014
Weston under Wetherley Village Hall 7 pm

Present: Cllr Mrs S Chambers
Cllr Mr P Haine (Vice Chairman)
Cllr Mrs B Boardman
Mrs M Norman (Parish Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer)

Also present: Cllr Norman Pratt and 1 member of the public

1	<p><i>In the absence of the Chairman, the Vice Chairman, Cllr Haine, chaired the meeting.</i></p> <p>Apologies</p> <p>Apologies were received from Cllr Beth Roberts, Cllr Wallace Redford and Cllr John Hammon.</p>	
2	<p>Declarations of interest</p> <p>Cllr Boardman declared a personal interest in relation to item 12 planning application W/14/0106 4 Rugby Road.</p>	
3	<p>Minutes of the Annual Meeting on the 21st May 2014 and the minutes of the previous meeting of the Council on the 21st May 2014</p> <p>The minutes of the Annual Meeting on the 21st May 2014 were unanimously agreed as an accurate record and signed by the Chairman. The minutes of the Ordinary Parish Council meeting on the 21st May were unanimously agreed as an accurate record and signed by the Chairman.</p>	
4	<p>Progress reports:</p> <p>a) Clerk: The Clerk reported that she had received apologies from Mr Joe Bell (Warwick District Council) whose maintenance team had been unable to complete the work on the path beside the church, owing to lack of time. On the next visit, the work will be completed, together with weeding of the alley beside the old courtyard and inspection of the hedges beside Garryvoe Lodge and the former Bull Inn.</p> <p>The Council noted that since this report, the hedges beside Garryvoe Lodge and the former Bull Inn had both been cut back. The maintenance team had also been asked to cut the long grass in the ditch on Sabin Drive now that the wild flowers had seeded. The road signs on the Hunningham Road were still obscured by overgrowth and the Clerk was asked to action this again.</p> <p>She also reported that there had been no further response from the landowners approached on behalf of the Footpath group.</p> <p>b) HS2: Cllr Haine reported that the Parliamentary Petition had been prepared and submitted. He would be attending a meeting with Sharpe Pritchard on Monday 7th July 2014 to receive advice on presenting the</p>	MN

	<p>petition to the Select Committee. Of the 2,900 petitions presented so far, only 30 have been challenged on the grounds that the petitioners are not directly affected by the HS2 line, the Stop HS2 Action Group being one of them. The time scale for hearing all the petitions is estimated to be in the region of two years. It is anticipated that Weston's petition will be heard in November 2014.</p> <p>Several complaints had been received about litter and dog fouling. The Council agreed to consider buying dog litter bins and the clerk was asked to investigate the cost. The item would be considered at the next Parish Council meeting.</p> <p>c) Report on Bubbenhall Liaison Committee: In the absence of Cllr Roberts, the Clerk delivered her report, stating that progress continued to be made on returning areas of land back to fields on both the FCC and Smith's sites. No site issues were highlighted from the environmental agency. Bubbenhall Parish Council reported that a local resident had complained of stones and stray rubbish. An FCC representative had visited the resident to discuss the issue. All trucks must have their loads covered on entry into the site and go through a tyre wash before leaving to minimise the risk of debris on the highway.</p> <p>d) Footpath Group: Mrs Keffler said that the Footpath Group hopes to create new footpaths and is attempting to create a permissive footpath through Simpkins Close. The Group is also working on improving current footpaths. A bridge kit with a handrail is being supplied by the Footpaths team at the County Council and Mr Simon Moreton is very willing for this to be constructed on his land. He will be asked to cut back the hedgerows along the footpath to make the route more accessible.</p> <p>Another well used footpath across the fields to Wappenbury is difficult to access. The Clerk was asked to approach the Clerk at Wappenbury Parish Council to see if they could assist in alleviating the problem.</p> <p>e) Village Fete: Cllr Boardman reported that the Fete had enjoyed a huge success and had made a profit of £2,806. Of this sum, £2,000 had been donated to the Church Restoration Fund and the remainder would be put towards the cost of next year's fete. Chris Garden had been elected Chairman of the Village Fete committee and Glynis Johns the Vice Chairman. The committee had agreed that the fete would be an annual event in future.</p>	MN
5	<p>Wildlife Conservation Group: (see Appendix A attached)</p> <p>Cllr Haine said that there was considerable support from the majority of villagers for a different management scheme of village maintenance. Over 100 signatures had been obtained in support of actively managing areas to promote wildlife. He suggested inviting Cllr Redford and Mr Joe Bell to attend a village walk through to discuss which areas of the village could be managed differently. The savings to the County Council for reduced mowing costs could be put towards establishing wild flowers. It was agreed that Cllr Redford and Mr Bell be invited to participate.</p>	MN PH
6	<p>Parish Council newsletter:</p> <p>The Council resolved to issue an occasional newsletter informing residents of their achievements, as and when appropriate. Cllr Chambers provided samples of the newsletter format for approval and agreed to be responsible for the drafting of the first edition. It was resolved that the first edition should inform residents of topics reported on at the Annual Parish Meeting. It was agreed that the costs of publication would be considered at the next meeting.</p>	SC
7	<p>Defibrillator:</p> <p>Mrs Keffler, on behalf of the Village Hall Committee, informed the Council that the committee intended to host fund raising events to defray the cost of a defibrillator. The events would also serve to raise public awareness of</p>	

	<p>the issue. The British Heart Foundation would contribute a grant towards the cost and Mrs Keffler asked for a contribution from the Parish Council. It was resolved that the Council would contribute; the exact sum to be decided at a future meeting.</p>	MN
8	<p>Motion of censure against Cllrs Coles and Mobbs:</p> <p>Cllr Haine proposed the following amendment to the proposal:</p> <p>“a) to pass a motion of censure against Cllr Coles and Cllr Mobbs for their failure to apologise, as instructed by the Standards Committee to the Clerk, the Chairman and a resident of the village and that the Parish Council deplores the behaviour of two of its members, Cllr Mrs Mobbs and Cllr Coles, who have been found by the District Council’s Standards Committee to have acted in an intimidatory and bullying nature towards our Parish Clerk, and to have been disrespectful to the Chairman and a former Chairman. We find it contemptuous that having failed to live up to the standards of the oath of office to which they subscribed, they refused to offer any apology to the injured parties within the time limit set by the Standards Committee and,</p> <p>b) though we regret such findings among our membership, we feel it important that they be communicated, as recommended by the Standards Committee, to all residents in an open letter.”</p> <p>It was unanimously resolved to accept the amendment to the proposal.</p> <p>It was unanimously resolved that:</p> <p>a) the Parish Council had passed a motion of censure against Cllrs Coles and Mobbs and</p> <p>b) that the findings of the Standards Committee should be communicated to all residents in an open letter.</p> <p>It was agreed that the statement approved by the Council at their meeting in April 2014 for inclusion in the Village Newsletter would be used, to be circulated at the same time as the Parish Council Newsletter.</p> <p>Cllr Pratt left the meeting at 8.15pm</p>	
9	<p>Open Dialogue Event 14th July 2014</p> <p>Cllr Boardman volunteered to attend the meeting on behalf of the Parish Council.</p>	BB
10	<p>Underground Drilling Access (payment for access)</p> <p>The Council discussed the NALC Policy Consultation Document on Underground Drilling Access outlining the proposals put forward by the Department for Energy and Climate Change. These proposals were that where underground access rights were granted to companies extracting petroleum or geothermal energy in land at least 300 metres below the surface, people living above underground drilling should receive some kind of payment from the operator in return for the right of access. The Council was asked to consider DECC’s view that:</p> <p>a) Parish Councils would be the most appropriate relevant community body to receive such payments.</p> <p>The Parish Council disagreed with this statement.</p> <p>b) All local councils should be consulted (notified) where underground drilling application are/have been submitted for land within their boundaries – as they can best represent their residents’ views and provide real democratic representation in such case.</p> <p>The Parish Council agreed with this statement. The clerk was asked to submit the Council’s response to NALC.</p>	MN

11	<p>Finance:</p> <p>a) The clerk presented the financial report (payments and summary schedule attached). Listed payments were authorised and approved. Cllr Haine and Cllr Chambers were authorised to sign the finance sheets and supporting documentation.</p> <p>b) The budget sheet was received and approved.</p>	
12	<p>Planning applications:</p> <p>W/14/0812; 5 Simpkins Close. The Council objected to the application on the grounds that the size of the extension would fall outside the existing footprint of the boundaries in that part of the village.</p> <p>W/14/0106; 4 Rugby Road. Cllr Boardman, having previously declared an interest in relation to this item of the agenda did not take part in the discussion or vote. Although the two councillors who discussed the application were in favour of supporting it, it was agreed that the views of the three councillors absent from the meeting should be obtained before submitting a reply on behalf of the Parish Council.</p> <p>W/14/0965; 16 Alderman Way. The Council objected to the application on the grounds that the size of the extension would fall outside the existing footprint of the boundaries in that part of the village.</p>	MN
13	<p>Business from members of the public:</p> <p>Mr and Mrs Bradshaw had requested the Council's assistance with regards to overhanging trees and bushes near their house. Cllr Haine reported that the District Council were aware of the problem which would be attended to at the appropriate time. Work on the tree would not take place until the autumn in order to protect wildlife. The Clerk was asked to communicate this to Mr and Mrs Bradshaw.</p>	MN
14	<p>Councillors' reports and items for future agenda:</p> <p>Contributions to the defibrillator and the costs of the Parish Council newsletter would be considered at the next meeting. A date to be set for the village walkthrough.</p>	
15	<p>Correspondence not noted in other items</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) Planning application W/14/0768 Weston House ii) Planning application W/14/0739 Grove Rise iii) WALC: Rural Affordable Housing questionnaire iv) WALC: Open Dialogue Event invitation 14th July 2014 v) NALC: Underground Drilling Access Consultation document vi) WALC: Pensions for Council employees vii) Bubbenhall Liaison Committee agenda viii) Planning application W/14/0812 5 Simpkins Close ix) Planning application W/14/0106 4 Rugby Road x) Planning application W/14/0965 16 Alderman Way xi) Letter Mr & Mrs Bradshaw xii) Wildlife Conservation Group report 	
16	<p>Signing of cheques and payment list:</p>	

Cllr Haine and Cllr Chambers were authorised to sign the cheques and other supporting documentation.

The meeting closed at 8.45 pm.

The next meeting of the Parish Council will take place on Wednesday 10th September 2014.

Appendix A

Weston Wildlife Conservation Group Report to Weston Parish Council, June, 2014

1. Maintenance of Areas under Management

The churchyard area under management, the copse beside the churchyard and the bank beyond have both been tended by a working party recently, to remove unwanted growth, scatter seed that has set, plant snowdrops obtained by splitting clumps in the hedgerow opposite and generally validate that things are progressing as desired. We are trying to obtain some young, native whips to plant this coming autumn to fill out areas where the hedgerow was removed.

The Community Orchard areas, and the Jubilee Copse planted by the Parish Council have been kept under surveillance, with the areas around the trees being weeded as necessary, and watering carried out on 2 occasions.

The ditch at the northern end of Sabin Drive, on the B4453 has proved problematical, in as much as the District Council's maintenance contractors have been poor in working with us to achieve the right balance between allowing the native wildflowers to flourish, but keeping the verge and adjacent areas cut back to help ensure safe egress from Sabin Drive. We have tried to alleviate problems by scything or strimming the area on three occasions in the last two months. This is commented on later under proposals.

2. Consideration of putting more areas under management.

There is now a major National campaign underway, sponsored by the charity Plantlife in which Alan Titchmarsh is challenging local authorities to revise their grass cutting in order to halt any further decline in wildlife species. The campaign starts from the premise that with 97% of the nation's wildflower meadows having been destroyed since the 1940's, verges and public open spaces now represent a key resource for growing the wildflowers that not only make our countryside beautiful, but also provide the pollen and nectar needed by insects that are crucial to the food and farming ecosystem.

The Wildlife Conservation Group has been promoting this campaign, and had a stall at the village fete to explain the reasons for the campaign and ask for their support. Over 100 people gave us their support and made positive comments about how they would like to see more areas managed for wildlife. These we can add to the 250+ signatures we collected at last year's Open Gardens on a similar theme, and we will be lobbying our County Councillors and District Councillors on their behalf for Warwickshire County Highways and Warwick District

Council to revise their policy on mowing verges in line with the recommendations of the Plantlife campaign.

We do recognise that there is no simple answer to this problem. It is not a matter of just not mowing verges. Sadly, over recent years, verges have been mown incessantly in the name of 'safety' (though national and international studies have shown there is no evidence to support this claim) and the cut grass left to rot – thus making the verges fertile - exactly what native wildflower species detest. They like ground that is starved of nutrients, so in order to restore the verges, the soil fertility has to be reduced.

However, this is not difficult, though it can be labour intensive and costly. If we reduced the amount of mowing that is done, the money that is saved could be used to kill off and re-seed areas with native wildflower mix as has been done in some areas, even within Warwickshire. We would like the Parish Council to discuss this with the District Council for areas that have potential, and where there would be no realistic road safety issues.

3. Proposal

In an effort to play our part in restoring suitable areas of grassland and hedgerows to their native state, we would like the Parish Council to support us in discussing with the District Council a joint effort towards achieving a better balance between regularly mown areas and those managed for wildlife conservation.

Peter Haine
on behalf of
Weston Wildlife Conservation Group
June, 2014