

Weston under Wetherley Parish Council
Ordinary Parish Council Meeting

Wednesday 9th April 2014
Weston under Wetherley Village Hall 7 pm

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

Also present: Cllr Richard Davies, Cllr Wallace Redford, Cllr John Hammon and 3 members of the public

1 Apologies

Apologies were received from Cllr Norman Pratt, Cllr Lesley Mobbs and Cllr Andy Coles.

2 Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest.

3 Minutes of previous meeting of the 26th February 2014

The minutes of the meeting on the 26th February 2014 were agreed as an accurate record and signed by the Chairman.

4 Councillor vacancy

It was unanimously resolved to co-opt Mrs Brenda Boardman to fill the casual vacancy on the Parish Council. Mrs Boardman signed the Declaration of Acceptance of Office as Parish Councillor.

5 Progress reports:

- a) Clerk: The Clerk reported that the s239 Notice had been placed in the Leamington Courier on the 21st March 2014.

The dog warden had been contacted with regard to the problem of dog fouling. The dog warden advised continuing to publicise the issue via the website and newsletters. More dog waste bins could be installed in the village, though the Council would need to consider how frequently these can be emptied. New notices have been placed in the village and more could be made available if the Council considered this to be desirable, though he cautioned against cluttering the village with too many notices as this could be counter-productive. The warden will continue to patrol the village.

The new litter bins will be installed as soon as they are available. Warwick District Council has promised to monitor the situation to see if more bins are needed.

The grass cutting schedule for this season is 14 cuts throughout the village with the exception of a short stretch along the Rugby Road where there will be 3 cuts. WDC are very amenable to reducing the number of cuts if this is

	<p>the Council's wish.</p> <p>Cllr Redford has been requested to assist in the matter of the drainage problems near Garryvoe Lodge. Problems with uneven pavements and potholes have been reported to the County Council. The playground equipment has been inspected by Warwick District Council and the necessary repairs will shortly be completed.</p> <p>The member of the public who responded to the request for a local handyman has since decided to withdraw his application.</p> <p>b) Coventry Gateway Project: The public enquiry into the Gateway project began on the 8th April and is scheduled to last until the 13th May 2014.</p> <p>c) Underground Coal Gasification: Cllr Haine informed the Council that it is the intention to establish an online community forum in order to disseminate balanced information on the topic. Cllr Redford confirmed that no application for a licence had been made to Warwickshire County Council. He had been informed that Clough Industries had decided not to apply to carry out any fracking operations under land because of the difficulties involved.</p> <p>d) Parish Plan implementation: Cllr Haine expressed his thanks to Warwick District Council for the co-operation and advice they had given with regard to the Orchard planting. He also thanked all the volunteers who had given their time and energies to the planting of the trees. The churchyard, woodland area and the bank on the Rugby Road have all been weeded and the wild flowers planted there are being monitored. The original proposed site for the All Weather playing field has proved to be impractical. There is insufficient space and there were concerns about inconveniencing neighbouring houses. Further discussions are now taking place with the District Council with regards to a site on Sabin Drive. A proposal will then be made to the Parish Council who will consult with residents as to the suitability of the new location.</p>	
6	<p>HS2</p> <p>a) It was unanimously resolved that, in accordance with s239 of the Local Government Act 1972, the Council judged it expedient to oppose the High Speed Rail (London West Midlands) Bill .</p> <p>b) It was further unanimously resolved that Sharpe Pritchard (Parliamentary Agents) be authorised to sign and present the Petition of the Council against the Bill.</p> <p>c) By virtue of s 101 of the Local Government Act 1972, it was unanimously resolved that the clerk be authorised to take all necessary steps to carry the foregoing resolutions into effect.</p> <p>Following representations from two landowners affected by the High Speed Rail route, the Council reassured them that the mitigation proposals to be put forward in the Parliamentary Petition would not further jeopardise their position. Draft copies of the Parish Council's petition would be sent to them. Cllr Hammond advised that the District and County Councils be kept informed of our proposed petition in order to ensure consistency of approach.</p> <p>Cllr Davies left the meeting at 7.50. He offered his good wishes to Cllr Boardman on her co-option as Councillor, and stressed the importance of volunteering for public service.</p>	MN
7	<p>Village Maintenance:</p> <p>Cllr Haine stated that the frequent mowing of grass verges in the village was having an adverse affect on essential wildlife. The village needed to review its maintenance of grassland areas with a view to habitat regeneration where practicable. It was also recognised that some residents may not understand the purpose of the review and consequential actions, and Cllr Boardman suggested that an educational and consultation programme be undertaken to gain their support.</p>	
8	<p>Offchurch Playing Field:</p>	

	<p>It was unanimously resolved that the Clerk should write to the resident who had queried the restriction placed on Offchurch Playing Field.</p>	MN
9	<p>It was unanimously resolved that the Council would adopt the policy suggested by Cllr Haine in relation to any future actions taken by the Council (see Appendix A attached).</p>	
	<p>Footpaths Group:</p> <p>Draft letters having been circulated to the Parish Council, it was agreed that, at the request of the Footpath Group, these should be sent to the landowners concerned, requesting their assistance in improving the footpaths across their land. The Council noted its gratitude to the landowners for all the help they had received so far.</p>	
10	<p>Financial Regulations</p>	
	<p>It was unanimously resolved to adopt the draft Financial Regulations previously circulated. (see Appendix B attached).</p>	
11	<p>Proposed sites for Gypsies and Travellers</p>	
	<p>No comments were expressed by the Parish Council in response to the consultation document issued by Warwick District Council.</p>	
12	<p>Annual Parish Meeting</p>	
	<p>A budget of £50 was agreed to provide refreshments and mount a small exhibition of the past year's events in the village for those attending the Annual Parish Meeting. Suggestions for items on the agenda were to be sent to the Clerk.</p>	
13	<p>Finance</p> <p>a) The clerk presented the financial report (payments and summary schedule attached). Listed payments were authorised and approved. The Chairman and Cllr Chambers were authorised to sign the finance sheets and supporting documentation.</p> <p>b) The Council approved the Annual Return and the Annual Governance Statement and the Chairman and Clerk signed both documents.</p>	
14	<p>Planning applications: W/118/10CM002 (Smiths' Concrete – variation on operational hours). No objections were raised by the Council to the proposed change to the operating hours.</p> <p>Cllr Hammond informed the Council that an application had been made for change of use at The Bull Inn.</p>	
15	<p>Business from members of the public: There was no business from members of the public.</p>	
16	<p>Councillors' reports and items for future agenda: Cllr Haine suggested investigating the possibility of establishing a funding group to promote the welfare of young residents of Weston. The issue of potholes was also raised. It was suggested that the Council should review the status of applications made to the Planning Authorities by residents seeking to purchase public open space land to the east of No.1 Sabin Drive.</p>	

17 **Correspondence not noted in other items**

- i) Warwickshire County Council: Chairman's Invitation
- ii) HS2 Petition – information
- iii) Councillor application – Mrs Brenda Boardman
- iv) Warwick District Council: Gypsy and Traveller sites Consultation Document
- v) NALC: draft Financial Regulations
- vi) Warwickshire County Council: Common Permit Scheme
- vii) WALC: newsletter January to March 2014
- viii) Warwickshire County Council: variation on planning application Smith's Concrete, Bubbenhall

18 **Signing of cheques and payment list:**

The Chairman 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 21st May 2014.

Appendix A (item8)

This matter has taken up an unconscionable amount of time of the Parish Council, and that of successive clerks, ever since it was first mooted in early 2012. We should therefore ask ourselves whether there was ever any justification for it becoming a concern of the Council, and if it was then was it dealt with in an appropriate way?

For it to be a legitimate concern, there surely ought to be evidence that residents of our village (who fund the precept) had concerns about the status of Offchurch Playing Field? And that their concerns, relative to other matters that impacted the quality of life in the village, were such that time and money should be budgeted from the precept to deal with it? However, the Council must also be sensitive to possible actions in its neighbourhood that may adversely impact it's operation, so with the Clerk's help I have further investigated the possible issues around the proprietorship of the Offchurch Playing Field.

Our investigations have determined that a restriction of this type is normally entered by one of the joint proprietors when he has cause to believe that an attempted fraud may be perpetrated against him by one or more of the other joint proprietors. Any evidence supplied to the Land Registry to support the fact that Weston PC believed that this was the case is regrettably absent from the files. The effect of the restriction would be to prevent the JPC from selling any part of their land, or removing Weston from the proprietorship register, unless the Registrar were satisfied that their motive in doing so was not fraudulent.

There is an oblique reference in one of the emails on file to suggest that the JPC were, quite properly, intending to amend the proprietorship register to reflect the current status of the JPC. The restriction would prevent them from doing so without Weston's co-operation. One can only speculate as to what action, if any, Weston intended to take, were this eventuality to arise. A refusal to co-operate could result in a costly legal battle, with the loser paying the winner's costs.

All of this begs an important question about the way the matter was handled. Surely if so much was at stake, the Parish Council should have been at pains to speak with those former Councillors who were involved in the negotiations that took place during the separation of Weston Parish Council from the Joint Parish Council? And should a matter which involved significant potential expenditure have been

entrusted to just one Councillor, rather than having being directed to a specially convened sub-committee with representatives of those knowledgeable about the history of the separation of the Council from the Joint Parish Council?

I believe we should resolve that, whenever an issue of this kind arises in the future, we must subject it to the 'Offchurch Playing Field Test'. This would involve us asking ourselves whether spending time on the matter and investing Parish monies would be well spent, justified, and in line with our objectives as a Parish Council.

Peter Haine
Vice Chairman –
Weston under Wetherley Parish Council

April, 2014