

# **WESTLETON PARISH COUNCIL**

## **MINUTES**

Minutes of a Meeting of Westleton Parish Council held at 7 30 pm on **Monday 25 July 2011** in Westleton Village Hall.

### There were present –

Cllr A Smith (*in the Chair*), Cllrs A Alexander, J Alexander, B Caines, A Clough, C Freeman, P Holmes, A Paige, S Robertson, R Swindell, G Turner.

### In Attendance

Chris Cardwell, Clerk of the Council.

There were 14 members of the public present.

### **Pre Agenda Matters**

The Chair welcomed all to the meeting.

Contributions from members of the public were received on the following matters –

- The restoration works to St Peters Church resulted from the initiative of Canon Peter Morris whose contribution should be formally acknowledged
- Thanks were expressed to Cllr Clough for his additional works in completing the restoration of the Mill Street Bakers Lane car parking area

### **11/83 Introductory remarks and apologies for absence**

The Chair welcomed all to the meeting. Apologies were recorded from Cllr Slater. It was NOTED that the Clerk had written to SCC regarding the deterioration of the road surface on The Street and SCC were monitoring the situation and effecting repairs as necessary. The Clerk was asked to make renewed representations. Following clarification the Clerk was additionally asked to report to SCC the overgrown foliage on a section of the Yoxford Road.

### **11/84 Declaration of interest**

Cllrs Holmes and A Alexander recorded an interest regarding item 11/90 Finance.

### **11/85 Proposed Housing Needs Survey**

The meeting **ADJOURNED** to receive a presentation from Sunila Osborne, Consultation & Community Support Officer, Suffolk ACRE.

Council **RECOVERED** and **AGREED** that a Working Group be formed to review the questionnaire and related documentation and determine the arrangements for conducting the survey. Following a suggestion from the Clerk and after discussion Council **AGREED** that the cost of the survey (and the cost of installing a water supply to the community field) should be met from funds earmarked for unspecified costs related to the Parish Plan. This would exhaust that budgetary allocation.

### **11/86 Minutes of Previous Meeting**

Cllr Swindell proposed and Cllr Paige seconded and Council **AGREED** the minutes of the meeting held on 27 June 2011.

### **11/87 Matters Arising from the Minutes**

#### **• Remedial works to Bakers Lane/Mill Street Car Parking Area**

Cllr Clough confirmed that the top fill had been taken from adjacent bare ground on the Common and that the remedial works were now complete. Mr Tony Ingram was thanked for his continuing assistance. The Chair recorded thanks to all who had worked on this project.

- **Storage Container – Westleton Common/Reckford Road Entrance**  
Council **NOTED** that Cllrs J Alexander, Clough and Mr David Rous had met onsite and were content with the intended location of the container. The matter was now resolved.
- **Village of the Year Competition 2011**  
The Vice Chair reported that Westleton had gained 3<sup>rd</sup> prize and a cheque for £75 in the competition. The Chair expressed thanks to the Vice Chair for the work that had into submitting the entry.
- **Minsmere Sluice**  
The Clerk reported to Dr Coffey MP and the Environment Agency and that substantive replies were awaited. Council **NOTED** that Dr Coffey MP was intending to meet local Parish Council Chairs.
- **Repair to Notice board**  
Cllr Holmes was thanked for securing the notice board to the adjacent wall.
- **Overgrown Foliage – Darsham Road**  
The Clerk reported he had written to the owners who had subsequently been observed cutting back the foliage.
- **Informal Car sharing**  
Cllr Robertson reported 2 meetings had been held and 2 areas of need identified, transport to hospitals and GP surgeries (it was noted the Parish Nurse scheme could help with this) and transport for shopping etc. Following discussion the Clerk was asked to write to the Leiston surgery asking if appointments could be offered to coincide with the arrival time of public transport. Council **AGREED** that contact details for those able to assist with transport could be displayed on the notice board.

## 11/88 Council Finances and Accounts

- **Invoices and Payments**

Following consideration it was proposed by Cllr Paige, seconded by Cllr Turner and **AGREED** that the following be approved for payment –

From	Item	Amount £
Mrs A Freeman	Teak Oil for Village Benches	39.92
Westleton Village Hall	Hire of Hall	40.00
Jims Mowing	Weed kill/Fertiliser Community Field	50.00
Cllr P Holmes	Unleaded Fuel Community Field	25.03
Cllr J Alexander	Collection Box Community Field	50.00
Cllr P Holmes	Cutting of Community Field	30.00
Cllr J Alexander	Catering Supplies Community Field	98.30
Clerk	Fitments Collection Box Community Field	29.51
Leiston Press	Printing of Newsletter	83.00
HMRC	PAYE Income Tax	714.60
Clerk	Salary for July, August & September	515.40

The Clerk drew attention to the fact that two Councillors had had to wait several weeks to obtain reimbursement for cash payments made on behalf on the Council. The Clerk indicated he saw this as less than ideal and drew Council's attention to the provisions within Financial Regulations that empowered the Clerk to make payments, as specified, which would avoid Councillors making any personal payments.

Cllr Holmes indicated he understood the point but could not see a problem with Councillors making cash payments in return for "favours". Cllr J Alexander agreed, indicating such payments meant the Council obtained supplies or services at very favourable prices. Cllr Robertson saw no problem with the practice since the sums were small and receipts were provided.

The Clerk stated that public funds and “favours” made uncomfortable partners and that this was a question of probity and providing a proper audit trail, furthermore that Council invited criticism of itself and the Clerk as Responsible Financial Officer if it wilfully failed to adhere to its own Financial Regulations. The Clerk further indicated that payments for routine services or goods such as catering supplies were non urgent and should be settled by cheque on the basis of a pro forma invoice.

A comment was made that the Regulations should then be changed and the Chair indicated they were not amenable to such change. The Clerk indicated they reflected statutory provisions and respectfully asked Councillors to adhere to them. The discussion continued with Cllr J Alexander reiterating that he saw no need to prevent Councillors making payments in cash. The Clerk stated he would not further debate the matter with Council.

The Chair indicated Council should move to the next business.

### **11/89 Sub Committees**

#### **• Commons Advisory Committee**

Council **ADJOURNED** to receive a report and presentation from Mr Murrell and Mr Ingram.

Council **RECONVENED** and following discussion Cllr Holmes proposed, seconded by Cllr Swindell and **AGREED** –

- To hold a public meeting in the autumn
- That decisions regarding the format and content of the meeting be delegated to the Advisory Committee
- That without prejudice enquiries regarding sources of funding continue to be explored by Mr Ingram in the interim
- That the Advisory Committee determines the appropriateness of inviting representatives of other organisations to the event.

#### **• Car Parking Sub Committee**

Council **ADJOURNED** to receive a presentation from Mr Jones on the recommendation regarding chevron parking. Council **RECONVENED** and following discussion **AGREED** that the Clerk should again contact Mr Stiff of SCC to ask for informal guidance and to establish his preparedness to hold a further on site visit.

Council resumed consideration of the potential acquisition of land from SCDC. Cllr Caines stated the matter required careful consideration, including the funding implications and responsibilities towards adjacent properties. The Chair indicated grant aid may be available for pond maintenance. Cllr Swindell reflected his recollection of the last meeting that Council had been inclined to consider acquiring the Green and the Alley but not the pond, noting that SCDC had indicated “cherry picking” was unlikely to be allowed. The discussion was inconclusive and the Chair indicated this would appear on the agenda for September.

#### **• Community Field**

Cllr Swindell introduced a note of the meeting held on 7 July and drew attention to the following – no further events in 2011, the collection box was now installed, hose shelter not yet complete, an annual inspection of equipment had been arranged, Mr Alan Hargreaves was now a member of the Sub Committee and one vacancy remained.

### **11/90 Planning Matters**

- Mulberry, Darsham Road IP17 3AH – Council **NOTED** that no objections had been raised to the planning application
- Walk Barn Farm, Westleton IP17 3BZ – Council **NOTED** that no objections had been raised to the planning application
- Kings Farm, Westleton IP17 3DA - Council **NOTED** that no objections had been raised to the Land Registry consultation regarding applications to alter the Register and that the Clerk had notified SCC of the applications
- Cllr Paige proposed a motion at the request of Leiston Town Council viz. *“This Council supports the call by Leiston Town Council for applicants of major planning applications (i.e. those above £1m approx.) to pay a proportion of the costs incurred by local councils in drawing up objections to such applications.”* Following discussion Council **AGREED** and asked the Clerk to write accordingly.

### **11/91 Clarification of the Pond with Straw**

Cllr Clough introduced this item and following discussion Council **AGREED**, with Cllr Caines abstaining, to place 2 bales of barley straw in the pond to aid clarification.

### **11/92 Date of Next Meeting**

Council **NOTED** that it next meets on Monday 26 September 2011.

Meeting closed at 9 55 pm

CC/26 July 2011

# ANNEX

## Westleton Parish Council Meeting held on 25 July 2011

### Adjournment Presentations Note of Key Points

#### Housing Needs Survey

- Finding affordable housing is increasing problem – adverse effect on communities
- Suggest form working group of 4 to 6 persons
- Need to confirm questionnaire and cover letter content
- Delivery method – suggest hand deliver
- 2 weeks closing date from delivery
- Return to Suffolk ACRE in prepaid envelope
- ACRE input data, analyse and produce summary report which recommend is delivered to all households
- Confidentiality of respondents is maintained
- Meet with WPC to discuss findings
- Decision to proceed rests with WPC
- To proceed – invite RSL's to present to WPC – Select RSL
- Meet with SCDC et al – walk village – select potential sites
- s106 agreement required
- funding for RSL's recently reduced
- Scheme prepared for WPC to consider
- Recommend hold 2 public events
- WPC not involved in selection of tenets
- Typical schemes – Ufford, Walpole, Wickham Market, Orford
- Time scale 2 years +
- Typical size – 4 to 12 units
- Expect up to 40 response rate – conduct in autumn

#### Commons Advisory Committee

- Background - on January 20<sup>th</sup> public meeting held to discuss issues connected with Westleton Common. SCDC suggestion that the Council should apply for Higher Level Stewardship status and funding - implied there was little time to think about it.
- Some villagers concerned that not enough was known about implications. WPC agreed.
- Advisory Committee formed consisting of most of the members of the Commons Management Committee, plus Councillors and village volunteers - met 3 times
- three options emerged -
  - 1) Apply for a HLS scheme
  - 2) Carry on as we are currently
  - 3) Do nothing.
- In reverse order of complexity
  - Do nothing - the Common would gradually change to scrub - possibility (only if registered as a SSI site) of prosecution of WPC under the NERC Act for neglecting its environmental duty.

- Carry on with existing arrangements - the Common is currently signed up to a Stewardship Management scheme which is under the guidance of SCDC who provide £700 worth of work value (not money) each year. Agreement comes to an end in September 2013 - there would be no further funding on this basis.
- Apply for Higher Level Stewardship Scheme -
  - a) Natural England administers this Government funding scheme
  - b) Any application for HLS must meet Natural England's environmental targets
  - c) Westleton Common was likely to attract HLS funding of £200 per hectare, which would be around £3600 per annum total. In addition other funding might be obtained for specific work, e.g. bracken clearing.
  - d) An agreement would be for 10 years, with the possibility of opt out, in a narrow window, at year five.
  - e) For any funding to be obtained, Westleton Common would have to be managed to become 'Lowland Heath' with a plan of vegetation clearance agreed with Natural England.
- No time pressure (other than possible government funding cut-backs) on any HLS application, but the existing funding runs out in 2013. SCDC were hoping that the agreement would involve them, and that the HLS funding would go directly to them. WPC could make the agreement direct with Natural England and thus be funded direct.
- More needed to be learnt on HLS - meeting held - advised that government cuts were already taking place, Money for 2012 was already allocated, so approved funding would only be likely after our existing scheme ended in 2013. Likely that Natural England would require up to 80% of tree and shrub clearance across the site - minimum figure was likely to be 50% clearance. If HLS is to be sought then the first action is to seek funding (£555) from Natural England to produce a 'Farm Action Plan' (FEP) which is a ten year plan of what will happen on the Common in order to convert it to the status of Lowland Heath. This plan then forms part of the HLS application. Make the application by September 2012 to make sure it is available for 2013.
- Two key issues were to report to the PC and the need for a subsequent Open Village meeting on how to proceed with the management of the Common.
- Funding alternatives to HLS – talked to Suffolk ACRE, Suffolk Foundation, EDF, HLF, Biffa Awards, Viridor – set out possible amounts of grants and potential for successful application.
- Conclusion - there may be alternative sources of funding that we could use fully under WPC control, and for a management plan that the Village decides.
- David Rouse has produced visual images that show how areas of the Common look at present, what will happen in 25 years' time if we do nothing at all, and what the same view could look like at the end of a HLS scheme.
- The advisory committee unanimously urge WPC to arrange the Open Meeting consultation to consider two options -
  - Option 1: To agree a programme of management with the District Council and Natural England that would continue the progressive restoration of the heathland habitat on the common and would be eligible for funding through a 10-year Higher Level Stewardship Scheme. This Scheme could be operated by either WPC or SCDC and delivered in part at least by the Common Sub Committee.**

**Option 2: Following the end of the current Countryside Stewardship Scheme in 2013, WPC would take on the future management of the**

**Common with the District Council delegating the Scheme for Regulation & Management. WPC would not necessarily continue with the restoration of the heathland habitat if that was the consensus of the Parish and would seek alternative sources of funding to implement an agreed plan.**

- The advisory committee were unanimous that 'Do Nothing' was not an option as it denied the Village's responsibility for the Commons management.

#### **Car Parking – Recommendation on Chevron Parking**

- Set out background including meeting with Mr Stiff, SCC
- Described fully original Plan 4 and context – potential medium term development
- Tabled and spoke to revised plan
- Creation of village hub adjacent to Hall etc.
- Avoidance of reversing into The Street
- Increase in number of places
- Discussed cost implications – scope for grant funding related to Sizewell development – greater potential for success if well consider plans already available
- Need for informal advice from SCC and site meeting

CC/27 July 2011