

# **BETLEY, BALTERLEY & WRINEHILL PARISH COUNCIL**

## **Minutes of the meeting held on 25th February 2016**

### **39/16 PRESENT:**

Cllrs Robert Bettley-Smith, Seb Daly, Graham Ecclestone, Dave Hales, Richard Head, Terry Townsend, Ian Walton and Chris Watkin.

### **40/16 IN ATTENDANCE:**

County Cllr Loades.

Two members of the public.

Gwyn Griffiths (Clerk).

41/16 Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs Berrisford (family), Speed (health) and Thomas (health).

42/16 Members considered the declaration of interests in agenda items.

Personal interests were declared in respect of the Burial Ground by Cllrs Bettley-Smith (church member), Walton (church member and husband of a Church Warden) and Daly (property overlooking the site). All members declared a personal interest in respect of a planning application to hand at Betley Court Farm as acquaintances of the applicant (who was also a member of the Parish Council) (see Minutes 55 & 56).

**43/16 RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of 28th January 2016 be approved as a true record and be signed by the Chairman.**

44/16 There were no members of the public present who wished to take part in public participation.

45/16 The Chairman reported on his actions since the last meeting. Together with the Vice-Chairman and Clerk he had met the councillor's preferred contractor on-site to discuss works at Laudy Croft. The Rural Transport Scheme had met recently; use of the minibus was slightly down due to a regular user no longer using it. Appropriate community use was to be encouraged.

46/16 The Vice-Chairman reported that in addition to the Laudy Croft meeting he, along with the Chairman, had also met representatives of the Parochial Church Council (PCC) for preliminary discussions regarding the burial ground scheme.

47/16 The Clerk advised that the new contractor for Memorial Garden maintenance had been advised, and that some works had already been carried out. He had also been contacted by a resident of Wrinehill regarding dog fouling in the area. It was agreed that appropriate signage would be provided if possible.

48/16 There was no Borough Councillor report.

49/16 There was no new information from any of the Council's representatives on outside bodies.

50/16 County Cllr Loades presented his report on the following matters.

Pavements. Cllr Loades asked for clarification of the Parish Council putting the County Council “on notice”. The Chairman explained that the purpose was to formally draw the matter to the County Council’s attention and to place on record the potential liability of the County Council should there be no action. Cllr Loades explained the process by which he was responsible for the management of the budget for his area and the difficulty in addressing issues in the rural areas. He had been told in no uncertain terms that there was no budget available until at least April, and the new financial year. He had himself registered a complaint of liability with the County Council.

Church Lane/ Bowhill Lane. The consultation on a proposed scheme to address pedestrian safety had been deferred while Cllr Loades spoke to further residents. His intention now was to provide a website link to what can or cannot be done in the area before summer.

Pavement condition, The Wilderness. Cllr Loades asked for patience as he was confident that a date for necessary work would be fixed by the end of the financial year. The Chairman pointed out that the concern of the Parish Council was that over a period of three to four months the condition of that section had gone from being unsatisfactory to positively dangerous.

Finance. The County Council Tax precept was to rise by 3.95% (1.95% for general expenditure and 2% ringfenced for adult social care). The expenditure reductions required by 2020, previously estimated at £24M, had now been reassessed at £28M, as central government grants to the Council would cease by 2020. The Borough Council precept would increase by 1.99%; the Fire & Rescue Service by 1.95%; the Police precept was unchanged.

General Highways issues. The Chairman expressed the Council’s concerns regarding the ‘Parish Gang’ system of carrying out minor highways works, which the Council felt was ineffective. Cllr Loades indicated that he shared the Council’s concerns, and indicated some specific contacts who could assist with getting work completed. A councillor raised the possibility of using speed sensors to discourage excessive traffic speeds in the area and asked about the County Council’s policy on such sensors and the scale of costs involved. Cllr Loades indicated that he would be able to contribute £1,500 toward the cost of such sensors, which cost around £2,800.

Policing. Cllr Loades advised members that he was a member of the Newcastle Policing Panel.

Neighbourhood Planning. Cllr Head outlined the Parish Council’s efforts to update the Parish Plan and asked for guidance on how they could ensure that something meaningful emerged that would have some standing and influence. Cllr Loades emphasised that the Localism Act required any plan to have ratification by the Borough Council and that the alternative methods for preparing such plans could cost in the range of £7,000 to £15,000. However Lichfield had produced a Neighbourhood Plan and Design Statement for £4,500 which might be of interest.

Cllr Loades was thanked for his comprehensive report.

51/16 The Clerk advised members that no urgent business had been dealt with since the last meeting.

52/16 Representatives of the PCC were invited to outline the proposals for an extension to the Betley burial ground, which would be necessary if burials were to continue on the site. Details of the scheme and preliminary costings were placed before members. County Cllr Loades

indicated that the Borough Council had budgetary provision for such purposes and suggested that this might also provide a source of funding.

53/16 Members considered whether the Parish Council should commit funding to support the extension to the Burial Ground.

**RESOLVED** a) that, whilst the Council was supportive of the scheme and would be willing in principle to provide financial support, its decision should be deferred pending the receipt of additional information regarding the scheme, the receipt of appropriate tenders, and clarification of possible further sources of funding;

B) that the PCC be invited to obtain the additional information and tenders identified and to return to the Parish Council with a more detailed request for funding.

54/16 The Clerk advised that although no planning applications had been received at the preparation of the agenda, an application had been received the day prior to the meeting, and members were asked to consider how the application should be handled.

55/16 **RESOLVED** that in view of the minor nature of the application, a detailed alteration to the layout of groundworks and landscaping in a permission already granted, the application should be dealt with at the meeting.

56/16 Members considered the following planning application:

**16/00022/FUL Variation to condition on application 15/00068 Change of Use disused workshop to holiday let, Betley Court Farm, relating to alterations to retaining wall, parking and landscaping.**

**RESOLVED** that the Council does not wish to comment.

57/16 Members noted continuing issues on land at Doddlespool, including the importation of tyres.

**RESOLVED** that the Parish Council remains extremely concerned about the activities at this location, and the adverse impact on local amenity. It notes that the competent authorities have been informed and that the appropriate political representatives have been involved, and that no further action by the Parish Council would be appropriate at this time.

58/16 The Clerk advised members that he had received notice of a proposed discharge of a planning obligation in respect of White House Farm, Deans Lane, Balterley. The circumstances were that a permission granted in 2004 for the conversion of a barn to two holiday lets had been subject to a Sn.106 agreement that separation of the lets from the main property would not be permitted. Subsequently the Borough Council had permitted (in 2015 under permission 15/00682) a stand-alone dwelling in place of the holiday lets, thus creating a separate dwelling, but without extinguishing the Sn.106 agreement from 2004. In order to regularise the current situation, where a separate residential dwelling had been both permitted and prohibited, an application had been submitted to discharge (i.e. extinguish) the 2004 Sn.106 agreement.

**RESOLVED** that the Council does not wish to comment.

[Cllr Daly, having declared a prejudicial interest withdrew during consideration of the above item and took no part in the discussion.]

59/16 The Clerk advised members of an e-mail received by a member from a local resident, relating to pre-application advice given by a representative of the Borough Council Planning Department. The advice related to the possible division of a property into two dwellings (the property having, historically, been two separate premises) and indicated that such an application to create an additional dwelling would not be supported as the location was considered not to be sustainable. Members were surprised by the apparent inconsistency, since permission had been granted nearby for several new dwellings, and new dwellings elsewhere in the parish had been permitted in less sustainable locations.

**RESOLVED** that the Clerk write to the Head of Planning making the following points:

- a) that the advice seemed inconsistent with other granted permissions nearby and elsewhere in the parish;
- b) that clarification was needed on what constituted a “sustainable location” given the limited range of services and facilities within the parish;
- c) that if the response received was considered unsatisfactory a representative of the Planning Department be asked to attend the Parish Council to explain the policy.

60/16 Members considered works to bring land at Laudy Croft back into community use. The Chairman, Vice-Chairman and Clerk had met with the preferred contractor on-site, and had agreed the detailed layout of the proposed works. Alternative prices had since been obtained for various changes to materials, and additional features.

**RESOLVED** a) that the actions of the Chairman and Vice-Chairman in agreeing the detailed layout of works be endorsed;

- b) that the provision of halfround timber topping to the fencing be approved at a cost of £380;
- c) that the Council is not satisfied with the options for alternative materials for the main gate and posts, and that a price for supply in oak be sought.

61/16 Members considered a paper prepared by the Clerk on the issue of rabbit control on the Laudy Croft site.

**RESOLVED** a) that, in view of the Council’s obligations under the Pests Act (1954) and the need to ensure public safety on the site, the Council recognises the need for effective rabbit control on the site;

- b) that the Clerk be instructed to obtain advice from a minimum of two recognised contractors, setting out their recommendations for action and the cost of such works;
- c) that the Clerk be authorised, in consultation with the Chairman and/or Vice-Chairman, to engage a Contractor if appropriate, subject to a maximum expenditure of £500.

62/16 Cllr Head reported on progress on the review of the Local Plan. A meeting had been held, and had gone through the previous Parish Plan identifying where priorities had been achieved, not achieved, or were no longer relevant. It was felt that the process had two main priorities; to inform the Parish Council of community needs, and to create a neighbourhood plan which was sufficiently robust to influence the emerging Local Plan.

63/16 Members considered potential events to mark the 90<sup>th</sup> birthday of H.M. The Queen.

It was understood that a beacon would be lit on the usual Marl Pit site in April as part of a national chain.

The potential event over the weekend of 11<sup>th</sup>/12th June had run into scheduling problems because of another booking at the Village Hall on the Saturday. Thoughts were now moving to a more informal event on the Sunday, perhaps linked to a big screen showing of the procession in London.

The Clerk had received a commemorative medal produced by a commercial undertaking to mark the event. Members felt that it might be appropriate to provide a commemorative item of some sort to mark the event.

64/16 Members considered arrangements for the Annual Parish Meeting.

**RESOLVED that the Annual Parish Meeting be held on Thursday 19<sup>th</sup> May.**

65/16 In light of the assurances given earlier in the meeting by County Cllr Loades there was a prospect of some progress on the issues relating to pavement conditions and pedestrian safety in Church Lane/ Bowhill Lane.

66/16 It was noted that an e-mail had been received regarding future training for Community Speed Watch volunteers, though the timing and details were unclear.

67/16 Area issues raised by members were considered.

Betley. Members expressed appreciation for the quality of recent gutter cleaning in the area.

It was noted that a bollard had been placed on the Memorial Garden. It was explained that this was a temporary measure following the removal of the Christmas Tree and that it would be removed within the next few days.

68/16 Consideration of the role of the Parish Gang was deferred to the next meeting.

69/16 The Clerk tabled correspondence received since the last meeting, including notice that the Borough Council would be moving to hold all-out elections every four years. There were no matters requiring decision.

70/16 The Clerk submitted to members a list of invoices to hand and payments due, and the Financial and Bank Statements to date.

71/16 **RESOLVED a) that the Council authorises payment of the following:**

G Griffiths	Salary/expenses	£ 410.84	1221
D Hales	Noticeboard repairs	£ 56.05	1222

**b) that the Financial Statement be received;**

**c) that the Bank Statements be noted, and the reconciliation verified and be signed by the Chairman.**

72/16 Members considered any necessary works at Laudy Croft. No immediate works were required.

73/16 Members noted that the new contractor had now started initial work on the Memorial Garden and that they were satisfied with work to date.

74/16 Date of next meeting: Thursday 24<sup>th</sup> March.