

BETLEY, BALTERLEY & WRINEHILL PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting held on 25th January 2018

1/18 PRESENT:

Cllrs Robert Bettley-Smith, Seb Daly, David Hales (from min.5), Richard Head, Frank Speed, and Ian Walton.

2/18 IN ATTENDANCE:

County Cllr Northcott (from min.).

Four members of the public.

Gwyn Griffiths (Clerk).

3/18 Apologies for absence had been received from Cllrs Berrisford, Ecclestone, Townsend and Watkin.

The Clerk advised members that no apologies had been received from the County or Borough Councillors.

4/18 Members considered the declaration of interests in agenda items. There were no declarations of prejudicial interests; Cllr Daly declared a personal interest in the consultation on library services as a school governor, noting that pupils made regular use of the mobile library.

5/18 Members considered the co-option of members to fill the two vacancies on the council. No firm expressions of interest had been received.

RESOLVED a) that the vacancies be advertised on the parish noticeboards;
b) that interested parties be advised to contact the Clerk for further information;
c) that the forthcoming elections be publicised through the Parish News.

[Cllr Hales joined the meeting during the above item]

6/18 **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meetings of 23rd November and 21st December 2017 be approved as a true record and be signed by the Chairman.

(It was subsequently noted that an apology for absence had been received from County Cllr Northcott in advance of the December meeting but had not been recorded in the minutes.)

7/18 The Chairman outlined the procedure for public participation, and the meeting was adjourned to allow the public to speak. Two members of the public wished to raise concerns regarding the intention of Aspire Housing to dispose of land on Church Lane currently used for residents' parking and for access to their properties. The one remaining Aspire property had been sold twice at auction but on both occasions the purchasers had withdrawn on legal advice given the maintenance responsibilities included.

The Chairman explained that the Parish Council had met with a representative of Aspire in July 2017 and had expressed its concerns regarding Aspire's policy on the management of its holdings in the area but that Aspire seemed determined to continue with sale of the Church Lane property despite the Parish Council's wish to see it retained as social housing. There appeared to be nothing further within the remit of the Parish Council.

A third member of the public wished to comment on the issue of mud on the roads at Main Road and Waybutts Lane on behalf of the landowner. They advised that they had purchased a tractor-mounted brush and collection box to minimise mud deposited on the road. In addition they were looking at an alternative access which would allow them to move between their landholdings in a way which would reduce traffic on public roads and past Doddlespool Barns.

8/18 The Chairman presented his report on matters dealt with since the previous meeting. As previously advised the trustees of the Rural Transport Scheme were reviewing the future of the scheme and a meeting with the Newcastle Transport Scheme was to take place shortly. No firm decision had been taken but the discussions to amalgamate with the Newcastle Scheme were underway.

[County Cllr Northcott joined the meeting at this point.]

Concern was expressed by members that although the Rural Transport Scheme was not widely used it was still a valuable resource for the rural area, and that it could be lost to the area if it were to be subsumed within a Borough-wide scheme. It was important that all options should be considered, including retaining a separate scheme specifically for the rural community.

RESOLVED: a) that the Parish Council express concern at the potential loss of an asset to the rural area;

b) that the Trustees be urged to consider all potential options for the future of the scheme;

c) that the scheme should either continue in its present form with rejuvenation by the recruitment of additional support or the terms of any amalgamation should maintain the current level of provision to the communities it currently serves.

He had received further communication with Claude Bailey regarding the twinning link with Agny, France. There was still an enthusiasm to engage further and Agny were planning an English weekend in April and were keen to attend the Betley Show in August. Cllr Daly advised that the school were investigating further interest.

9/18 The Vice-Chairman had nothing specific to report.

10/18 The Clerk advised members of correspondence from the Cricket Club indicating that they wished to relaunch the youth section and would welcome support from the Parish Council.

RESOLVED: that the Parish Council warmly welcomes the Cricket Club's initiative and would welcome further information.

11/18 The Chairman welcomed County Cllr Northcott and invited him to present his report, which covered the following areas.

Mykin. The County Council had launched a new app on wellbeing for the over-forties and were seeking volunteers to test it.

Highways. 232 carriageway repairs had been completed in the previous week, but 298 new reports had been received.

Libraries. A consultation was underway on the provision of both static and mobile library provision in the county.

A member pointed out that the mobile library was regularly used by the school, which only had a limited library itself and therefore depended heavily on the variety offered by the mobile library. Whatever claims might be made for internet-based resources children learn to read by holding a book and reading it, not by reading on a screen.

Bus Services. The County Council still intended to withdraw support for the 85 bus service as it was considered poor value for money against other calls on their resources (e.g. social care and children's services). It appeared that support from Keele University could maintain the Sunday and Bank Holiday service, but the weekday evening services were likely to be withdrawn.

Blue Bell site. Highway officers had confirmed that the new wall at the Blue Bell site was within the boundaries of the property despite the impression that there had been encroachment onto highways land. The Clerk suggested that the highway might have encroached in the past as this often happened on roads without kerb lines when roads were resurfaced.

In the absence of both Borough Councillors Cllr Northcott provided an update on Borough Council business.

Change of Administration. Following the resignation of the previous Labour administration a minority Conservative administration had taken over from 5th December. The size of the Cabinet had been reduced by amalgamating the Housing and Regeneration portfolios; the Borough's problems were worse than had previously been thought with inadequate staffing and the Chief Executive and Head of Elections currently under suspension; Castle House was unlikely to be available until April/May.

Joint Local Plan. There had been further slippage in the preparation of the JLP. He was concerned that the growth ambitions underpinning the Draft JLP were wishful thinking, and that the JLP should serve the interests of the Borough and its residents and not be developed. It was important that the public take every opportunity to challenge the JLP.

Recycling. A task and finish group had been set up to review the current recycling arrangements which were ineffective and overspending to the tune of £500,000.

12/18 In view of the time and the length of the remaining Agenda members considered whether an adjournment would be appropriate.

RESOLVED: that urgent items be dealt with and that an adjournment be then considered.

13/18 The Clerk advised members that since the last meeting he had arranged payment of an account from Swarco (speed monitoring equipment) under the Council's provision for Urgent Business. This had been paid from his own account and would be reclaimed as part of his salary/expenses claim later in the meeting.

14/18 Members considered the Council's Budget and Precept for 2018-19.

RESOLVED that the budget set out in the Clerk's report be approved, subject to the transfer of £1,000 from the Sandy Croft earmarked reserve to the general balances and that the precept be set at a figure of £10,235.

15/18 The Clerk submitted to members a list of invoices to hand and payments due, and the Financial and Bank Statements to date.

RESOLVED a) that the Council authorises payment of the following:

G Griffiths	Salary & Expenses #	£838.92	1332
G Griffiths	Sal & Exps (Neighbourhood Plan) #		
		£196.36	1333

AM Leafleting & Distribution Ltd

Leaflet distribution (Neighbourhood Plan)

£120.00 1334

Shires Pay Services Payroll £ 25.50 1335

c) that the Financial Statement be received;

d) that the Bank Statements be noted, and the reconciliation verified and be signed by the Chairman;

e) # that the Chairman and Vice-Chairman have each seen a bank statement confirming that a payment of £32.40 to Swarco Traffic Management and of £11.50 to St Margaret's PCC (hall hire for Neighbourhood Plan meeting) were made from the Clerk's personal account and could be reimbursed through part of cheques 1332 and 1333.

16/18 Members considered arrangements for the Annual Electors' Meeting. As elections had now been scheduled for May 2018 it was felt that the meeting should be brought forward to allow the retiring Council to report to residents.

RESOLVED that the meeting be brought forward to a date in April to be arranged by the Clerk.

17/18 In view of the progress made members considered whether an adjournment was appropriate.

RESOLVED that the meeting continue.

18/18 There were no planning applications, planning decisions, or other planning matters to consider.

19/18 Members reviewed their response to the consultation on library services.

RESOLVED that Cllr Daly be asked to draft a response to be considered at the February meeting.

20/18 Members considered progress on the Joint Local Plan.

RESOLVED that the Clerk be asked to draw up a response to the current consultation process based on the principles listed in his report to members to be considered at the February meeting and to be circulated a week in advance of that meeting.

21/18 Members considered the Council's property and assets.

22/18 In respect of the Memorial Garden members reviewed the maintenance contract and the need to prune the conifer in the centre of the Garden.

RESOLVED a) that the Clerk test the market by issuing an invitation to tender for maintenance in 2018 based on the programme of work in 2017;

b) that the condition of the conifer be reviewed at the February meeting.

23/18 Members considered suggestions for potential “feelgood” initiatives in the parish. Cllr Daly advised that the Horticultural Society had reviewed its policy in respect of the bunting which had traditionally been used on the main road in the centre of the village. The existing bunting was in poor condition and there were significant Health & Safety issues relating to the placing of the bunting. The Society was investigating the use of brackets on properties as an alternative with the possibility of flags and Christmas Trees being mounted thereon.

24/18 The Clerk advised that the grant application for further speed monitoring equipment had failed but would be considered again in the next funding round.

25/18 Members considered area issues raised by members. There were no matters requiring decision.

26/18 Members considered issues relating to council communication.

27/18 Date of the next meeting: Thursday 22nd February 2018.