

BETLEY, BALTERLEY & WRINEHILL PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting held on 23rd July 2009

PRESENT

Cllrs Robert Bettley-Smith, Sebastian Daly (from min.187), David Hales, Simon Harrison, Richard Head, John Price, Frank Speed (from min.186) and Chris Watkin.

IN ATTENDANCE

One member of the public
Gwyn Griffiths (Clerk)

185/09 Apologies for absence were received and accepted from Cllrs Ball, Berrisford, Cameron and Morris.

An apology for absence was also received from Borough Cllr Becket.

186/09 Members considered the declaration of interests in agenda items. There were no interests declared.

[Cllr Speed joined the meeting during this item]

187/09 **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting of 25th June 2009 be approved as a true record and be signed by the Chairman.

[Cllr Daly joined the meeting during this item]

188/09 **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting of 9th July 2009 be approved as a true record and be signed by the Chairman.

189/09 The Chairman adjourned the meeting at this point to allow public participation. One member of the public participated, referring to the Rural Runabout scheme and comments made by a member of the public at the meeting of 26th March.

He felt that the comments made, as recorded in the minutes of the Council, appeared to be critical of the organisation of the Rural Runabout, and he wished to address what he considered to be errors in the reported comments.

With the consent of the Chairman he wished to highlight comments made at the March meeting, and outline his view of the true facts. [Matters noted in the March minutes are *italicised*; the response at this meeting by the member of the public follow]

That the Council had received very short notice of the scheme – the proposed scheme had been discussed at several meetings of the Parish Council over a period of time of at least two years.

That the then Clerk had been approached with a large sum of money – the then Clerk had been approached with an application form, but not with the grant money itself.

That there was no Business Plan for the project which the scheme organisers were prepared to share with the Council – if members had concerns it was surprising that they had approved an involvement with the scheme without such awareness; members should have been aware that a comprehensive plan and assessment of transport needs was in existence. The Business Plan had been adequate to obtain the grant sought.

That there may have been problems with insurance cover – there had never been any issues or problems over insurance cover.

The member of the public felt that collectively the comments made in March had painted a less than flattering picture of the Rural Runabout, without factual justification.

190/09 The Chairman invited the member of the public present to outline to members the work of the Rural Runabout scheme, and its potential benefits to the local community. The following points were made:

- * The normal contribution required for the Parish to join the scheme would be £2,460; however in view of the Council's past 'in kind' support the Management Committee felt it would be appropriate to offer a 50% discount. Payment could be spread over two years subject to Management Committee approval.

- * The case for the scheme had been made based on a Local Transport Needs Assessment as required by the Rural White Paper, which had identified rural needs unmet by conventional public transport.

- * Examples of the ways in which the bus was used included regular journeys to Morrison (for shopping), to the mobile library, to visit leisure attractions such as Trentham Gardens. Local organisations such as Scouts and bellringers used the facility.

- * In answer to a question raised by a member an assurance was given that capacity existed to meet needs in the Parish. Despite its popularity the vehicle had only accumulated some 26,000 miles to date.

- * There had so far been no need for participating councils to contribute beyond the initial 'joining fee'. The scheme had proved financially viable over its first five years.

191/09 **RESOLVED** that the Clerk be mandated to write to the Chairman of the Rural Runabout Management Committee indicating that the Parish Council would wish to participate in the scheme, and that provision be made for a single payment of £1,230 in the current financial year to be funded from the Council's accumulated reserves.

[County Cllr Chapman joined the meeting at this point]

192/09 The Chairman indicated that he had nothing substantial to report, as he had been absent for much of the month. The Vice-Chairman reported that he had attended a meeting to discuss Locality Area Partnerships in the Newcastle Rural area. It had been an interesting meeting, without universal agreement regarding the system. There was some strength of feeling that these structures could be subsuming the role of Parish Councils, and could lead to a quangoisation of local decision-making. County Councillor Chapman expressed his concern that there was a danger of the democratic process being bypassed. Such structures had originally been created and funded by central government as partnership working for areas of social deprivation, and the model was not necessarily appropriate to areas with active local communities.

The Chairman offered his personal congratulations to County Cllr Chapman on his re-election in June, and placed on record his appreciation of the substantial amount of work done by Cllr Chapman in building dialogue with the County Council.

193/09 County Cllr Chapman reported on recent developments at the County Council. Earlier in the day the Council had met, and discussed the issues facing Stafford General Hospital; the Council had called for a full public inquiry. He reported that a new Chairman, an independent magistrate, had been elected to lead the Police Authority. He also indicated that Mary Ann

Rafferty had now been appointed as the officer responsible for Highways Strategy in the north of the County, and would be willing to attend a future Parish Council meeting.

194/09 The Clerk reported on correspondence received from the County Council, setting out the availability of funding for highways work. He also reported that he had been unable to obtain a quote for the works at The Wilderness, requested at the last meeting, which was within the budget set by the Parish Council. However the funding available from the County Council could be appropriately used for such a purpose.

RESOLVED that in the interests of safety the Clerk be authorised to commission pavement works on Main Road from the Wilderness to a point opposite Betley Court Farm, subject to a maximum of £250, to be met from the Staffordshire County Council Lengthsman's Scheme.

195/09 Members considered the following planning application:

09/00265/FUL & 266/LBC Infill of gated opening to form additional two-storey accommodation, 6 Balterley Court, Balterley.

RESOLVED that the Parish Council supports the application as it would improve the appearance of the building.

196/09 Members considered the following planning application:

09/00316/FUL Decking in garden, Daisy Cottage, New Road, Wrinehill.

RESOLVED that the Parish Council objects to this application as it has an adverse impact on the residential amenity of two dwellings in the valley below, because of the height of the platform above the neighbouring residences.

197/09 The Clerk advised that there were no Decision Notices to hand, nor other planning matters to be considered.

198/09 The Website Working Group reported that a specification for the community website had been completed, and that an invoice for payment had been issued but could not be presented because of the electronic format in which it had been sent.

**RESOLVED a) that the Working Group be authorised to progress the matter, and to bring a short list to the September meeting for decision;
b) that the Clerk be authorised to arrange for the payment of the invoice when presented.**

199/09 Members considered arrangements for the commemoration of Remembrance Sunday.

RESOLVED that the Clerk be authorised to order a wreath to be laid on behalf of the Parish Council, to be lettered 'Betley, Balterley & Wrinehill Parish Council – on behalf of the community'.

200/09 The Clerk reported that one application under the Community Chest had been received, and that a second was expected shortly.

RESOLVED that the Council consider applications at the September meeting.

201/09 The Clerk submitted to members a list of invoices to hand and payments due and the Financial Statement to date.

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

G Griffiths	Salary & expenses	£640.37	838
TW Heler & Son	Laudy Croft spraying	£ 86.25	839
Betley Vill Hall Cttee	Hall hire	£ 14.60	840
SPCA	Publications	£ 20.00	841

b) that the Financial Statement be received.

202/09 The Clerk submitted to members the Statement of Accounts for 2008-2009, and outlined the steps required to be taken by the Council.

RESOLVED a) that the Annual Statement of Accounts and Statement of Assurance be approved, and be signed by the Chairman;

b) that Mr Thomas Dunlop be appointed to continue as Internal Auditor to the Council;

c) that the Council notes the actions taken in response to last year's External Audit Report in increasing the Council's fidelity insurance cover, and extending internal financial controls by requiring the signing of invoices by cheque signatories.

203/9 Members of the Laudy Croft Maintenance Working Group reported that no further maintenance work was required currently. Cllr Price was thanked for his work in replacing safety signs on the site.

204/09 Members considered issues relating to communication. Cllr Harrison would arrange for copy for the Parish Magazine to be submitted by 10th August for the September issue. It was noted that very little of the material for the autumn Parish Council News promised had been submitted as agreed to Cllr Cameron.

205/09 The Council considered area issues raised by members.

RESOLVED that the issue of affordable housing be considered at the September meeting.

206/09 The Clerk submitted details of correspondence received since the last meeting.

RESOLVED that Cllr Head and the Clerk be authorised to attend the Training Seminar on the new planning framework scheduled for 23rd August.

207/09 Members considered items for the agenda of the next ordinary meeting of the Council.

RESOLVED that the following be included:

Local Area Partnerships

Highways Maintenance Programme

Low-cost housing

Bus shelter/ waiting provision at East Lawns

208/09 The Clerk invited members to consider whether it would be appropriate to exclude the press and public for the next item which was consideration of tenders received to carry out renewal works to paving at the Memorial Garden, Betley. He advised members that such an exclusion might be appropriate in the public interest, as it concerned the negotiation of the terms of a contract into which the Council might enter.

RESOLVED that the press and public be excluded during consideration of this matter under the provisions of the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 and Section 100A (Schedule 12A Part I (8 & 9)) of the Local Government Act 1972, in that it relates to the terms proposed in the course of negotiations for a contract for the supply of goods or services to the authority.

209/09 Members considered a report from the Clerk setting out details of tenders received for the repaving of the path in the Memorial Garden.

RESOLVED a) that a report for decision to be prepared for the September meeting;

b) that the Clerk be asked to investigate any further possible sources of financial support;

c) that the Clerk seek a breakdown of tender prices from each contractor, ensuring that tender prices cover all the works required by the Council.

210/09 **RESOLVED that the press and public be readmitted.**

211/09 Members considered the use of the grant received for enhanced Christmas lighting.

RESOLVED that the Clerk approach the Chairman of the Village Hall Committee to suggest that the Parish Council might be able to provide financial support to reinstate Christmas lighting at the Hall.