

BETLEY, BALTERLEY & WRINEHILL PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting held on 22nd July 2010

PRESENT

Cllrs Robert Bettley-Smith, Jo Cameron (from min.189), Seb Daly, Dave Hales, Richard Head, John Price and Frank Speed.

IN ATTENDANCE

County Councillor Frank Chapman
Borough Councillor David Becket
One member of the public
Gwyn Griffiths (Clerk)

177/10 Apologies for absence were received and accepted as valid reasons for absence under Section 85 of the Local Government Act 1972 from Cllrs Ball (family commitment), Simon Harrison (work), Mark Morris (work) and Chris Watkin (business). An apology for late arrival had been received from Cllr Jo Cameron.

178/10 Members considered the declaration of interests in agenda items.
There were no declarations made at this point.

179/10 Members noted that a valid apology for absence had been presented on behalf of Cllr Frank Speed to the June meeting but had not been minuted. Subject to this being noted in the current (July) minutes it was RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of 24th June 2010 be approved as a true record and be signed by the Chairman.

180/10 There were no members of the public in attendance to engage in public participation.

181/10 The Chairman reported on his activities since the last meeting.

With other members he had carried out an inspection of the bus shelter adjoining the Village Hall, and would be reporting further at the appropriate stage. He was pleased to report that a gully emptier had been sighted in the village, carrying out work on the A531 and on Church Lane. Work had been carried out to a good standard, with some gullies being cleared which had been blocked for some years.

182/10 The Clerk reported on the following items:

Bus Shelter. During the posting of notices he had inspected the shelter at the Village Hall, and was concerned that the roof and possibly some of the framing had deteriorated significantly. Cllrs Hales, Price and Bettley-Smith had inspected the shelter prior to the meeting and had concluded that although the basic structure was sound a replacement roof was needed (although it was in no immediate danger of posing a hazard in any way).

RESOLVED that Cllrs Hales & Price be asked to draw up a specification for a replacement roof, to be considered at the September meeting.

Common Lane. After a long effort by residents, the Parish Council, and local elected members Common Lane had now been resurfaced.

Dog waste bin, Balterley. The Clerk was pleased to report that the bin requested by the Parish Council had now been installed, though the Council had not been consulted on its precise location.

Balterley Notice Board. The Clerk reported that a notice had been posted on the rear of the Council's noticeboard without seeking permission. The Clerk asked members whether

they wished to reaffirm their existing policy that the noticeboards were not available for use by others, unless specifically authorised by the Council, in view of the space needed for the Council's own material.

RESOLVED that the policy be reaffirmed, and that the Clerk be authorised to remove any unauthorised notices.

Parking of HGVs, Balterley. Members noted that complaints had been received regarding the overnight parking of a HGV at a location in Balterley. It was noted that the land appeared to be in the ownership of the highways authority (i.e. the County Council) and any complaint should be lodged with them. It was, however, noted that such a use has existed for some years.

183/10 County Councillor Chapman reported on the following issues:

Common Lane. He was pleased to hear that the resurfacing work had been carried out, and it appeared that generally there was an improvement in the service provided by highways.

Community Budget. No applications for funding from this budget of £10,000 had been received from the area, and would be welcomed.

Police Authority. Cllr Chapman outlined the structure of the Police Authority, which was based on members nominated from the County Council and Stoke City Council, along with independent members. This raised some difficulties: for example a proposal to suspend the appointment of a new Chief Executive pending the possibility of sharing the role had been voted down by the non-elected members.

County Council. The Council had met that day in Newcastle, the normal venue in Stafford being unavailable as asbestos had been found in the roof. The proposed replacement of the Regional Development Agency by a Local Enterprise Partnership had been debated, and there was support for a change offering a cheaper and more effective alternative. However, there would be substantial one-off redundancy costs, which the government was seeking to place upon the County Councils.

A member commenting on the works carried out on Common Lane, commending the staff who had carried out the work, who had advised residence in advance, completed the works on schedule, and had left the site tidy.

184/10 The Clerk reported that although the Council no longer seemed to receive written copies of decision notices he had learnt through various sources that the following decisions had been reached: Application 10/00223 Rear conservatory, The Rosary, Main Road, Betley - PERMITTED

Application 10/00263 Detached double garage, The Estate House, Main Road, Betley - PERMITTED

185/10 The Clerk reported that following the request from the last meeting he had contacted Staffordshire County Council regarding the revised application for Betley School, who had advised that a copy of the application had been sent to the Parish Council for its views (though the Clerk had no record of same being received). The Clerk advised that the only changes from the scheme previously considered by the Parish Council were the substitution of a pitched roof for a flat roof on the extension, and minor changes to the windows. Members discussed the broader issue, of the sometimes erratic receipt of planning applications from the Borough Council.

RESOLVED a) that the Borough and County Councils be asked whether it would be possible for advice of the despatch of applications to be sent to the Clerk by e-mail;

b) that the Clerk write to the County Council asking for a copy of the letter sent to the Clerk.

186/10 The Council considered area issues raised by members.

A member advised members that a local resident had contacted him regarding a break-in at the Blue Bell. He had passed this information on to the Clerk, who had advised the owner's agent.

187/10 Members considered highways issues, including potential use of the highways funding delegated to the Parish Council by Staffordshire County Council.

RESOLVED a) that the Clerk be authorised to engage the usual contractor to carry out work in trimming epicormal growth on the trees adjoining the Wilderness, together with clearing back of the vegetation growing across the pavement;

b) that members be invited to consider other possible items of work, to be considered at the September meeting;

c) that the Clerk be asked to clarify the legal position regarding the use of these monies to clear growth obstructing The Butts.

188/10 The Clerk submitted details of correspondence received since the last meeting.

189/10 Concern was expressed regarding information issued under the Owl neighbourhood watch scheme, which seemed to be based on a widely-discredited 'urban myth'; members also felt that the quality and relevance of messages had deteriorated recently.

RESOLVED a) that the Clerk write to the co-ordinator of the scheme, with a copy to a senior officer, expressing the Council's disappointment that what seemed to be erroneous information was being circulated;

b) that the scheme be reviewed at the September meeting.

(Cllr Cameron joined the meeting during consideration of the above item)

190/10 Members considered a letter from Professor Tringham of Keele University, asking for permission to use aerial photographs (the copyright of which was held by the Parish Council) in a forthcoming Victoria County History publication.

RESOLVED that permission be granted, subject to an appropriate acknowledgement of the Council's copyright.

191/10 Members considered a poster regarding anti-social behaviour, numerous copies of which had been supplied to the Council for its use.

RESOLVED that the Clerk be asked to write expressing the Council's view that it was unconvinced that the posters were anything other than a waste of money, and that given the current constraints on local and central government expenditure it would wish to see the business case for this project, and to be advised what alternatives were examined in addressing the issue.

192/10 Members considered an invitation to a Local Councils Day sponsored by the County Council. Concern was expressed that as a daytime event it discriminated against councillors who were in full-time employment, particularly affecting a council such as Betley, Balterley & Wrinehill where only one councillor was in retirement. A member enquired about a letter which had been sent to the Clerk, seeking permission for the Horticultural Society to place material advertising the Betley Show on the Memorial Garden. The Clerk advised that he had received no letter of that nature. In view of the timescale members considered it necessary to consider the request as a matter of urgency.

RESOLVED that permission be granted under the standard conditions.

193/10 Members noted that the replacement bench for Church Lane could now be ordered; Cllrs Hales and Price would co-ordinate its installation.

194/10 The Clerk advised members that no objections had been received to the suggestion of installing a bench close to the pillar box on the A531 at Balterley, but that formal permission from Staffordshire Highways had yet to be received.

RESOLVED that the siting of the bench and arrangements for installation be considered at the September meeting.

195/10 Members considered progress on the development of a community website. The Clerk advised that the domain name had now been registered, and the next stage would be to develop the content and layout the Council required for each page.

RESOLVED that the Website Working Group meet in order to draft the relevant details for consideration and approval at the September meeting; the Vice-Chairman would co-ordinate arrangements.

196/10 Members considered the registration of its land holding at the Memorial Garden, Betley with the Land Registry.

RESOLVED that the Parish Council register its interest in the land identified in the Report of 8th April 2006 (appended as Annexe 1a), without ownership of any of the site boundaries.

(Cllr Cameron declared a personal interest in the above item of business as her home adjoined the Memorial Garden, but without any dispute regarding boundaries)

197/10 Cllr Daly outlined to members the opportunity of applying for a grant under the Community Wildlife Funding Initiative. It was suggested that funding might be sought to provide enhancements to the wildlife potential at Laudy Croft, together with some signage to provide interpretation of the site.

**RESOLVED a) that the Clerk write to the Staffordshire Wildlife Trust asking for advice on ways in which the wildlife potential of the site might be enhanced;
b) that Newcastle Borough Council be advised that the Parish Council would be interested in enhancing the area by developing a wildflower meadow, and be asked to advise on any implication regarding the area's status as contaminated land.**

198/10 Members considered the future of the publication Parish Council News.

**RESOLVED a) that the Council would wish to see its communication in the future being based on the community website, supplemented by use of the Parish magazine;
b) that the next issue would therefore be the last issue of Parish Council News;
c) that draft copy be available for the October meeting, to be approved at the November meeting, with a view to distribute before Christmas;
d) that the final issue would include information regarding alternative sources of information for residents unable to access the website directly.**

199/10 The Clerk submitted a report setting out issues and options relating to the Council's insurance cover. He was concerned that the existing policy might not provide an appropriate level of cover, in view of the Council's potential liabilities associated to land ownership and property provided by the Council (e.g. bus shelters). He was also aware of an alternative potential provider of insurance cover who had, in other cases, offered significantly lower premium costs.

**RESOLVED a) that the Clerk be authorised to arrange appropriate cover, up to a figure of the existing premium +50% (£429);
b) that an emergency meeting be arranged if necessary to ensure the Council is adequately protected;**

c) that the Clerk be authorised, in consultation with the Chairman/ Vice-Chairman, to review and amend cover and insurance provider as appropriate.

200/10 The Clerk submitted to members a list of invoices to hand and payments due, and the Financial and Bank Statements to date. The Council's contractor for maintenance of the Memorial Garden had requested payment for two months' work, as otherwise he would have to wait until the September meeting for payment. He also advised that one payment authorised at the June meeting had not been completed, as a third councillor signatory had not been present.

RESOLVED a) that a third signatory complete the signing of the following, carried forward from the June meeting:

G Griffiths	salary & expenses	£788.10	906
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b) that the Council authorises payment of the following:

DT Askey	Memorial Garden maintenance	£270.00	908
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Doddington Park Furniture Ltd

Bench (Church Lane)	£341.00	909
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Mike Henson Presentations Ltd

Website	£ 18.78	910
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c) that the Financial Statement be received;

d) that the Bank Statements be noted, and the reconciliation verified.

201/10 Members of the Laudy Croft Working Group reported that little further maintenance work was currently required, but that the site would benefit from some spot weed treatment, which it was felt could be carried out by members.

RESOLVED that the works outlined be authorised.

(Borough Cllr Becket joined the meeting at this point)

202/10 Members considered issues relating to communications.

203/10 At the invitation of the Chairman, and the approval of the Council, Borough Councillor Becket presented his report. The Borough Council was reviewing its financial position in the light of the likely pressures on expenditure. Though challenging, the position of the Borough Council was stronger than many other authorities. Recycling seemed to be working well, and a recycling rate of 57% had been achieved. The Councillor's attention was drawn to the poster viewed earlier in the meeting. Cllr Becket commented that he shared the concerns expressed, but felt it was unlikely that the poster had been approved, or even seen, by any elected member prior to approval.

204/10 Members considered progress on the provision of a water supply to the Memorial Garden. The Clerk advised that he had met a representative of the water company 'on site' and had received a quotation of £902.25 (+VAT) for the works required. In addition the Parish Council would need to install a standpipe and pipework to the boundary with highway land.

RESOLVED a) that the quotation be accepted, and the Clerk authorised to make all necessary arrangements by placing an order and arranging payment;

b) that the Memorial Garden Working Group be authorised to arrange necessary works on the Council's own land, to be carried out by suitably qualified members of the Council with the help of other residents, subject to a maximum budget (for materials 'at cost') of £400;

c) that the Clerk be formally notified of any and all works to be carried out under b) above.

205/10 Date of next meeting Thursday 23rd September