

BETLEY, BALTERLEY & WRINEHILL PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting held on 26th March 2009

PRESENT

Cllrs Robert Bettley-Smith, Steven Ball, Mandy Berrisford, Jo Cameron (from min.67), Richard Head, Mark Morris, John Price, Frank Speed and Chris Watkin.

IN ATTENDANCE

County Councillor Chapman
Borough Councillor Becket
Three members of the public
Gwyn Griffiths (Clerk)

64/09 Apologies for absence were received and accepted from Cllrs Daly and Hales.

65/09 Members considered the declaration of interests in agenda items. Cllr Ball declared a personal interest in planning application 09/00125 as an occasional user of the Hand & Trumpet. The Chairman questioned whether use of the establishment would constitute a requirement for a declaration of interest and sought the advice of the Clerk, who indicated that although such declarations were a matter for members, he did not feel that being a customer in itself constituted a need to declare an interest.

66/09 Members considered the position regarding co-option of a member to fill the vacancy in the Betley Ward. The Clerk reported that the vacancy had been advertised, no poll had been requested, and that the Council was now empowered to fill the position by co-option. Two expressions of interest had been forthcoming.

RESOLVED a) that co-option be deferred to the April meeting to allow members further time to consider the procedure;

b) that the vacancy be further advertised within the Ward;

c) that applicants be given the opportunity to submit a written expression of interest, and to address the April meeting prior to members voting to fill the vacancy.

(Cllr Cameron joined the meeting at this point)

67/09 **RESOLVED that, subject to the corrections listed below, the minutes of the meeting of 26th February 2009 be approved as a true record and be signed by the Chairman:**

a) minute 49/09 – correct Okd Wood to read Old Wood;

b) minute 38/09 – spelling correction of interest;

c) minute 38/09 – the addition of the name of Cllr Head to that of Cllr Price, in declaring a personal interest in respect of planning application 09/00054.

68/09 The Chairman adjourned the meeting at this point to allow public participation. One member of the public participated.

He expressed concern that at the February meeting another member of the public was permitted to speak during the meeting, with the permission of the Council. However, when he had raised a point of order the Chairman had ruled this to be out of order and had denied him the opportunity to speak without reference to the Council.

He was also concerned that an item relating to the Rural Runabout scheme had been listed on the Agenda as "Rural Rider" and it was therefore impossible for a member of the public to know the subject under consideration in advance of the meeting.

Returning to the point of order which he had sought to raise at the meeting, this would have related to the Code of Conduct relating to the declaration of interest, which required members in declaring an interest to declare the nature of the interest, which he did not believe had happened at the February meeting. Members should have realised this, and their failure to report the member for failing to declare the nature of his interest was itself a breach of the Code of Conduct, which required them to report any breaches. His concern arose from an alleged statement made by a member that the Council was deliberately obstructive to his interests.

The member of the public was also concerned that members reporting on planning application 08/00390 had stated that a site visit had taken place, when in fact they had not visited the site.

He advised members of the background to the Council's previous consideration of the Rural Runabout scheme. He recalled that the Council had been given only very short notice of the scheme, and that the Chairman at the time had been approached with a large sum of money which she had rightly refused. [Clerk's note: the approach appears to have been made to the then Clerk, not Chairman; this seems to have been a slip of the tongue by the member of the public] At the time the Council had considered the scheme, but had a number of concerns, principally the lack of a business plan which the Rural Roundabout organisers were prepared to share with the Council, and suggestions that there may have been problems with insurance cover which may have led to a potential liability for the Parish Council.

Although the Rural Runabout was a good scheme it did not appear to be as good as the Cheshire Dial a Ride scheme, and other voluntary schemes were also available.

The Chairman responded to the points raised. He indicated that he had refused to allow the member of the public to raise a point of order, as these could only be raised by members of the Council. As far as public contributions outside the period of public participation were concerned these were only permitted for clarification of fact, as had been applied during consideration of the gentleman's own application some months earlier. He tried to apply this in a consistent fashion, and apologised if there had been any inconsistency.

The reference to a "site visit" may have been a case of loose language, with a visit being made to the proximity of the site rather than physically on the application site.

As far as any possible breach/breaches of the Code of Conduct were concerned it might be appropriate for the Council to consider the issues raised at the next meeting.

Turning to the question of the Rural Runabout the presentation received had not been as anticipated, and members shared the difficulty in understanding exactly what facility was being offered to the community.

The member of the public responded to the Chairman's comments by pointing out that the Clerk could have advised the Chairman to close the meeting to allow him (the member of the public) to make his point but chose not to do so. Had he been given the opportunity to explain his point of order members could have dealt with it, and would have understood that his concern was the need to declare the nature of the interest declared.

69/09 The Chairman presented a report on his activities since the last meeting, which had been primarily the development of a Neighbourhood Watch programme in the parish.

70/09 The Clerk reported that he had investigated possible liabilities in respect to the closure of Betley Old Churchyard. The procedure required the PCC to serve notice on the Parish Council, which could then itself serve notice on the Borough Council to accept responsibility for future maintenance. An officer of the Borough Council had indicated that authority would be willing to accept liability.

RESOLVED that the Clerk liaise with the Parochial Church Council (PCC) to ensure that the necessary procedures could be carried out in a proper manner to avoid future liability falling on the Parish Council.

71/09 County Councillor Chapman updated members on a number of issues.

Trespassing signs. Cllr Chapman had taken up with the County Council the appearance of Trespass warning notices on the playing field. Such signs were being erected across similar sites across the authority because of difficulties experienced elsewhere, and it was not intended to extinguish any existing rights to cross the land. Members expressed concern that the approach was 'heavy handed'.

A531. It seemed unlikely that the A531 could be reclassified as a B road, but it might be possible to deprime the road (as had occurred with the A525 in Audlem, Cheshire) which might lead to a long-term reduction in through traffic.

Back Lane / B5500 Stop Sign. Members expressed continuing concern at the failure to re-erect the Stop sign at this junction. The Clerk reported that the road markings appeared to have been relined, but as a Give Way junction rather than as a Stop junction; members felt this would be unsatisfactory and potentially hazardous. Cllr Chapman undertook to continue to press the matter, but indicated that the Highways department was currently in a state of dislocation because of reorganisation.

Community Gangs. There continued to be some controversy over the way in which the work programme should be prepared. In particular Cllr Chapman was uncomfortable with any suggestion that he should prioritise work between parishes, instead suggesting that each parish should be allotted a fixed number of days and parish councils could then prioritise work locally. The Chairman indicated that he thought this a very good idea, a view which was supported by members.

Leycett Civic Amenity Site. Cllr Chapman reported that consideration of the application for a new access had been deferred as members were unhappy with the whole situation. The application would be considered again on 2nd April.

72/09 Councillor Becket presented his report to members.

Leycett Civic Amenity Site. Although primarily a County Council issue, the problems at the site also involved the Borough Council, the Waste Board, and the Environment Agency. The site was inadequate and potentially hazardous, and would require substantial investment which was difficult to justify on an inappropriate site. No alternative site had been identified.

Trespassing signs. Cllr Becket indicated that he was appalled by the County's approach and felt that commonsense had gone out of the window.

Blue Bell tollboard. Cllr Becket had approached the appropriate officers in the past to secure the preservation of the tollboard, when Punch Taverns had indicated their intention to preserve the board as a feature in the refurbishment of the premises. With doubts over the future of the Blue Bell having re-emerged he would raise the issue again.

73/09 The Parish Council considered the following planning application.

08/00125/FUL Covered smoking shelter, The Hand & Trumpet, Wrinehill.

RESOLVED that the Parish Council has no objection to the application, subject to the Planning Authority ensuring that the structure is used only for the stated purpose, and is not used for the consumption of food or drink.

74/09 The Parish Council considered the following planning application.

09/00114/FUL Ground floor link extension, Turner House, Main Road, Betley.

RESOLVED that the Parish Council has no objection.

75/09 The Council received Decision Notices in respect of the following planning applications:

09/00002/FUL Amendment to planning application 08/00884, new dormer in place of roof light in extension, Chamberlain House, Chamberlain Court, Betley – PERMITTED

09/00007/FUL Erection of summerhouse (retrospective), Beech Cottage, The Butts, Betley – PERMITTED

09/00004/PLD Certificate of lawfulness (permitted development), two storey rear extension, Holly Mount, Deans Lane, Balterley – GRANTED

76/09 The Chairman reported receipt of a copy letter from a resident sent to the Borough Council, complaining that certain landscaping and other works required by the grant of planning permission at Ivydne, off Main Road, Betley had not been carried out.

RESOLVED that the receipt of the copy letter be noted, and the Clerk be asked to clarify the issue with the Planning Authority.

77/09 The Clerk had submitted to members a list of invoices to hand and payments due and the financial statement to 16th March 2009.

RESOLVED a) that the Council authorises payment of the following invoices and payments due:

G Griffiths	clerk's salary	£465.41	824
Inland Revenue	tax on above	£116.35	825
G Griffiths	expenses	£ 32.50	826
Community Council			
of Staffordshire	subscription	£ 20.00	827
Staffordshire Parish Councils			
Association	subscription	£324.00	828
Keele University	printing	£145.00	829
NLH Exp Deliveries	delivery	£180.00	830

b) that the Financial Statement be received;

c) that the draft out-turn for 2008-2009 be noted.

78/09 The Clerk reported that the Horticultural Society had approved the following grants to the Parish Council:

Christmas lighting	£181.00
Community website	£358.00
Repaving of Memorial Garden	£842.00

Cllr Head advised members of the procedure adopted in determining the grants to be paid, and that there had been a substantial oversubscription for the total funds available.

79/09 Members considered the Council's policy towards involvement in the Locality Action Group.

RESOLVED that the Council should participate, with Cllr Cameron (or another member in her absence) nominated to attend the next two meetings, and to report back at that point.

80/09 Members considered the position regarding the availability of the Rural Runabout and Cheshire Dial a Ride schemes to provide transport in the area.

RESOLVED a) that the Council respond favourably to any proposal by Cheshire Dial a Ride to extend their service to the area, and that a representative be invited to attend the Annual Parish Meeting on 21st May;

b) that the Clerk seek further information regarding exactly how the Rural Runabout could be extended to serve the area, with details of budgets, demand management, likely uptake and how participation in the scheme could be moved forward.

81/09 Members considered the development of Neighbourhood Watch in the parish. The Chairman submitted a suggestion of how the matter could be taken forward.

RESOLVED a) that material be prepared and distributed for Stage 1 of the proposal, in accordance with the advice received from the police;

b) that the Council facilitate a public meeting to launch Stage 1, to be held on Tuesday 21st April at The Swan, with light refreshments (tea/coffee and sandwiches).

82/09 The Clerk reported on the progress of the Core Strategy Inquiry Process, and that discussion of Rural Issues had now been rescheduled for the afternoon of Wednesday 29th April.

RESOLVED a) that the Clerk be mandated to formally represent the Parish Council at the hearing, and be remunerated as additional duties under the terms of his employment;

b) that Councillors Berrisford, Daly and Price be authorised to attend on behalf of the Council;

c) that any other member who wishes to attend may do so.

83/09 Members considered further arrangements for the Annual Parish Meeting, and co-ordinating invitations to appropriate organisations.

84/09 The Clerk reported that he had now received clarification from the Borough Council that it would be possible for the Parish Council to use the Borough's O.S. licence to obtain detailed local mapping.

RESOLVED a) that the Clerk progress the matter as necessary in consultation with the Chairman and Vice-Chairman;

b) that the detailed terms and conditions be presented to the next meeting for decision.

85/09 Members considered issues relating to communication. It was agreed that the Neighbourhood Watch initiative would be the major feature in the next Parish Magazine. There was nothing to report regarding Parish Council News. Progress on the website was to be the subject of a substantive discussion at the April meeting.

86/09 The Council's Contractor had been notified of the award of the maintenance contract for the Memorial Garden in 2009. He would be asked to carry out work to prepare the area for the Easter weekend events.

87/09 Members noted with concern the encroachment of vegetation and mud across pavements between Betley and Wrinehill. This would be reported to the County Council.

88/09 Members considered area issues raised by members.

Betley. The damaged grassed area at the entrance to East Lawns following work on the Ivydene site. **RESOLVED that the Clerk contact Aspire regarding reinstatement.**

Wrinehill. Concern that the car park at the Blue Bell could be attractive to travellers. **RESOLVED that the Clerk contact Punch Taverns asking them to secure the car park area.** A member reported a recent incident at Cracow Moss where a car had been broken into. **RESOLVED that the Council is concerned that such incidents are still occurring, and urges residents to maintain vigilance.**

89/09 The Clerk submitted details of correspondence received since the last meeting. **RESOLVED that the Council notes the invitation to nominate to the governing body of Betley School, but declines to submit a nomination.**

90/09 Members considered future agenda items.

RESOLVED that the following items be included in the Agenda of the April meeting:

- * website
- * Clerk to report on the Code of Conduct, and members' requirement to declare the nature of any interest, and to report any breaches
- * management of the grants approved by the Horticultural Society
- * playing field signs
- * closure of churchyard