

BETLEY, BALTERLEY & WRINEHILL PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting held on 25th March 2010

PRESENT

Cllrs Robert Bettley-Smith, Steven Ball, Johanne Cameron, Simon Harrison, David Hales, Richard Head, Mark Morris, John Price and Chris Watkin.

IN ATTENDANCE

County Cllr Frank Chapman (part of meeting)
Three members of the public
Gwyn Griffiths (Clerk)

58/10 Apologies for absence were received and accepted as valid reasons under Section 85 of the Local Government Act 1972 from Cllrs Berrisford (work), Daly (holiday absence) and Speed (other community commitment). An apology for absence had been received from Borough Cllr Becket, and for likely late arrival from County Cllr Chapman.

59/10 Members considered the declaration of interests in agenda items.

All members declared a personal interest in the letter received from the proprietors of the Hand & Trumpet as patrons.

Cllrs Bettley-Smith and Head declared a personal interest in the items relating to the church.

Cllr Ball declared a personal interest in planning application 10/00147 (Bowhill Farm) as he was personally acquainted with members of the applicant's family.

Cllr Watkin declared a personal interest in planning application 10/00146 (Betley Hall Gardens) as his parents were resident in the area, though not directly affected.

The Clerk declared a personal interest in planning application 10/00147 (Bowhill Farm) for the following two reasons:

1. As members of the applicant's family were clients of the Clerk's wife's place of employment;
2. As a Borough Councillor in 2008 the Clerk had been lobbied (both for and against) in respect of a broadly similar application within the Borough of Crewe & Nantwich.

60/10 **RESOLVED that, subject to the correction of two typing errors (deleting a superfluous 'and' in the list of those present, and correcting 'proposed' in minute 40/10) , the minutes of the meeting of 25th February 2010 be approved as a true record and be signed by the Chairman.**

61/10 The meeting was adjourned to permit public participation. Three members of the public participated.

The first member of the public requested the Council give favourable consideration to the traditional erection of a cross on the Memorial Garden at Easter. The

Chairman responded by explaining that the Council would be considering its policy on the use of the Memorial Garden later in the agenda.

The second member of the public referred to a planning application which was under preparation, seeking permission to create a further car parking area at the Hand & Trumpet. He indicated that an impression had been created that the scheme was a 'done deal' and would involve the grubbing out of a woodland area to create 32 extra car parking spaces. He did not understand the justification for the scheme as the establishment was frequently full inside with no capacity to deal with extra custom.

Such a development would be in breach of planning policy. As it was within the Green Belt Policy S.3 meant there was a presumption against development unless certain criteria could be met. None of those criteria applied in this case. The site was within an Area of Active Landscape Conservation (Policy N.18), and the building of a car park could not enhance such an Area. The Parish Plan had identified community priorities for the area. These included a wish to protect and manage the ancient landscape including woodland, and to retain separate village identities – the car park would merge Wrinehill with the historically separate Cracow Moss. The Parish Plan had called for the protection of identified areas, and the strict enforcement of planning policies, such as S.3 and N.18.

The woodland was of ecological significance, supporting diverse wildlife, including mammals, birds and reptiles, for example badgers, owls and snakes (the member of the public read out a more extensive list of species).

The third member of the public was also a resident of Cracow Moss, endorsed the remarks already made and wished to add that the introduction of a large area of hardstanding would worsen existing drainage problems in the area by increasing run-off. Although residents were pleased to see the success of the business at the Hand and Trumpet he felt that 'enough was enough', and there had to be a limit to its development.

The second member of the public questioned the purpose of the scheme, expressing concern that once a site within the area had been converted to hardstanding it seemed to be considered suitable for residential development. He referred to the Wrinehill Garage site (where permission for housing had been granted), the woodyard (redeveloped as housing) and the Blue Bell (where a scheme for housing development had been developed, to which the Parish Council had not objected).

A member of the Council pointed out that the Parish Council's view on the Blue Bell site had taken the form of a policy statement which had been submitted to the Borough Council, setting out a sequential approach to the possible future use of the site. No planning application had been received – if and when an application was submitted the Council would respond, but no decision had been made, favourable or unfavourable, in respect of potential residential redevelopment of the site.

The third member of the public indicated that the ecologist who had visited properties in the area had been tasked to draw up a "report to minimise the impact" of the scheme.

The Chairman responded by explaining that the ecologist was employed by the applicant as planning normally required an ecological survey to be drawn up as part of such an application. Any report would be subject to scrutiny by the planning authority, and to challenge by any objectors.

62/10 The Chairman reported on his activities since the last meeting. He had attended the Newcastle Rural Parishes Transport Scheme meeting on 19th March; the next meeting would be on 7th May. There was nothing significant to report: the scheme seemed viable, use was increasing including clients from the parish area.

63/10 The Clerk presented members with a briefing note setting out the level of the parish precept, compared to that set by other parishes, and also indicating why there had been an increase in the basic level of spending in recent years. The Chairman noted that although the parish precept had been unchanged for 2010 the charge per household had decreased by 1.5% owing to an increase in the number of properties.

64/10 Although Borough Cllr Becket was not present, he had spoken to the Chairman prior to the meeting and had given a briefing regarding progress with the new recycling scheme which seemed to be progressing well.

Members considered a number of areas of concern, principally related to the food waste arrangements, and the issue of the availability and cost of the necessary biodegradable bags.

RESOLVED that the progress of the scheme be reviewed at the next meeting.

65/10 The Council considered a policy for the use of the Memorial Garden by outside organisations. Members considered a draft policy prepared by the Chairman.

RESOLVED that the draft policy be approved, and be displayed on the noticeboards within the Council's control.

66/10 Members then considered a request from St Margaret's Church for the use of the Memorial Garden to display the Easter Cross.

RESOLVED that, as the request meets the requirements of the Council's policy, the Church be granted permission as requested.

[Cllr Chapman joined the meeting during consideration of this item]

67/10 The Chairman invited the County Councillor to present his report to members. Cllr Chapman gave an overview of recent work including a meeting of the Audit Committee that morning which had considered the controversial and difficult issue of the use of PFIs (Private Finance Initiatives) for capital works such as school improvements. As Vice-Chairman of the Assets & Budgets Scrutiny Committee he had been involved in reviewing the prospects for post-election pressures on finance. Within the Social Scrutiny area work to integrate health and social care offered opportunities for potential savings.

On Wednesday 31st he would be touring the area with highways officers and the relevant portfolio holder; one initiative he was keen to pursue was to reduce speed limits on the fringes of the area.

68/10 Members considered the following planning application:

010/00146/FUL Erection of replacement agricultural worker's dwelling, Bowhill Farm, Bowhill Lane, Betley.

RESOLVED that the Parish Council has no objection in principle to the application, but would ask the planning authority to consider the following:

a) The planning authority should satisfy itself there is not a suitable dwelling available within a reasonable distance of the site. The Parish Council notes a similar sized house is currently for sale in Ladygates (0.4 miles);

b) If there is not a suitable dwelling within reasonable distance of the site the Parish Council has no objection to the proposed development but is firmly of the opinion that the dwelling should be subject to an agricultural occupancy condition and subject to agreement that the proposed dwelling will not be sold off separately from the agricultural land and buildings in the future.

69/10 Members considered the following planning application:

01/00147/FUL Ground floor side extension, 6 Betley Hall Gardens, Betley.

RESOLVED that the Parish Council has no objection to the application.

70/10 The Clerk reported the following Decision Notices in respect of previous planning applications, some of which had been outstanding for some time. This was because of a change in the Borough Council's policy on advising parish councils of planning decisions which had resulted in some decisions not being forwarded.

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

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

09/00347/FUL Recladding and alterations to existing agricultural building, Land rear of 6 Brassington Terrace, Den Lane, Wrinehill

[Cllr Morris declared a personal interest in the above as the applicant was a close relative; in the event of any discussion of the decision he would declare a prejudicial interest and would withdraw from the meeting. There was no discussion of the decision]

09/00675/LBC Conversion and extension of barn complex to twelve bedroom hotel, function room, restaurant/bar, spa, office accommodation etc, Betley Model Farm complex, Betley – REFUSED

09/00731/FUL Front detached garage, Marsden, Den Lane, Wrinehill – REFUSED

10/00059/FUL Erection of two-bedroomed guest annexe, The Old Wood, Betley Hall Gardens, Betley – REFUSED

In presenting the above decision notice the Clerk reported that, after an initial recommendation of approval, the planning officers had issued an amended recommendation of refusal. This had been prompted primarily by reconsideration of the principles of permitted development under Statutory Instrument 2008 No. 2362 (The Town & Country Planning (General Permitted Development)(Amendment)(No.2) (England) Order 2008), a matter which had been raised in some detail by the Parish Council in its observations on the application. The Clerk indicated that the case illustrated the value of the Parish Council's involvement in the planning process, and reflected the quality of the Parish Council's input.

The Chairman reported that although a notice of approval had been issued in respect of the replacement extension at Betley School (as reported to the February meeting) he had been advised by a Governor that the school had now been notified that the application had been refused, and that a revised application was expected.

71/10 Members considered a letter received from the proprietors of the Hand & Trumpet, indicating that they intended to apply for permission to erect an extension to their car park.

RESOLVED that receipt of the letter be noted.

72/10 Members considered an application received for funding toward the provision of audio equipment at St Margaret's Church.

RESOLVED that a contribution of £150 be made under Sn.137 of the Local Government Act, to be funded from the budgetary provision for support to local organisations.

[Cllrs Cameron & Head declared personal interests as they anticipated using the church's facilities in the future]

73/10 Members considered an approach from a developer with an interest in the Blue Bell Inn who had invited the Council to participate in a Working Group to consider options for possible redevelopment of the site.

RESOLVED that the invitation be declined.

74/10 The Clerk presented members with the outcome of the tendering exercise seeking companies to develop a community website. In view of the low level of interest from tenderers, and questions regarding the specification it was felt that the matter should be considered further by the Website Working Group.

RESOLVED that the Website Working Group meet to discuss options for the way forward and report to an early meeting of the Council.

75/10 The Clerk reported that he had written to Staffordshire Highways regarding drainage issues at Cracow Moss, but that no response had been received to date.

76/10 Members considered the possible extension of the Neighbourhood Watch scheme.

RESOLVED that the relevant officer from Staffordshire Police be asked to attend the next meeting in order to discuss options.

77/10 Members considered the possibility of carrying out environmental works in Balterley and Wrinehill.

RESOLVED a) that clarification of the ownership of the small piece of land identified at Wrinehill be sought;

b) that the Balterley ward councillors be asked to consider options in the Balterley area;

c) that the matter be considered further at the April meeting.

78/10 In the absence of Cllr Daly, who had raised concerns regarding dog fouling in the Balterley area, it was agreed to consider the issue of dog fouling generally at the next meeting.

79/10 Members considered the possibility of altering the Council's agenda or of introducing timed agenda in order to improve the effectiveness of meetings.

RESOLVED that the Clerk be asked to rearrange future agenda by moving Correspondence and Area Issues up the agenda (to follow Reports), and by moving non-key planning applications down the agenda.

80/10 The Clerk reported that two applications under the Community Chest scheme had been received, but that the budget for 2009-10 had already been allocated.

RESOLVED that the Clerk write to the applicants indicating that the Council would be happy to consider applications for funding from the 2010-11 scheme if the applicants so wished, but that the rules set out by Newcastle Borough Council might require new applications on amended forms.

81/10 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	Clerk's salary & expenses	£ 948.27	872
Betley Village Hall	Hall hire	£ 144.00	873
Community Council of Staffordshire	Membership	£ 22.00	874

b) that the Financial Statement be received;
c) that the Bank Statements be noted, and the reconciliation verified.

82/10 Members of the Laudy Croft Maintenance Working Group reported that no further maintenance work was currently required.

83/10 Members considered issues relating to communication.

84/10 The Clerk advised the Council that, in accordance with the resolution from the last meeting, he had secured the maintenance contract for the Memorial Gardens for 2010 at an unchanged rate.

RESOLVED that the Clerk's actions be noted.

85/10 The Council considered area issues raised by members.

RESOLVED that the Clerk be asked to explore ways of securing the clearing of the overgrown pavement opposite the Village Hall.

86/10 The Clerk submitted details of correspondence received since the last meeting.

RESOLVED a) that Cllrs Cameron & Head be asked to examine the correspondence relating to the Community Paths Initiative, and report back to the next meeting;
b) that the Clerk arrange for members of the Transport Working Group to consider the questionnaire re heavy goods traffic, and to provide a summary for decision at the next meeting.

87/10 **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 (2) of the Local Government Act 1972, in that if members of the public were present it could result in the release of confidential information supplied to a third party.**

88/10 **RESOLVED that relevant members sign the necessary paperwork to arrange a security code to access the Council's bank account.**