

BETLEY, BALTERLEY & WRINEHILL PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting held on 26th November 2009

PRESENT

Cllrs Richard Head, Steven Ball, David Hales, Simon Harrison, Mark Morris, Frank Speed and Chris Watkin.

IN ATTENDANCE

Borough Councillor Becket
Gwyn Griffiths (Clerk)

275/09 Apologies for absence were received and accepted from Cllrs Berrisford, Bettley-Smith, Cameron, Hales and Price. An apology for late arrival had been received from Cllr Daly. An apology for absence was also received from Borough Cllr Becket.

276/09 Members considered the declaration of interests in agenda items.

Cllr Harrison declared a personal interest in item 11 (as a dogwalker in the area).

277/09 **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting of 22nd October 2009 be approved as a true record and be signed by the Chairman.

278/09 The Chairman adjourned the meeting at this point to allow public participation.

A member of the public indicated that he wished to raise three issues.

1. He asked the Council to bring its influence to bear on the County Council re the light at the top of The Butts, at the steps to the church; part of the light fitting appeared to have been removed, with the possibility of loose wiring creating a hazard. The Clerk undertook to raise the matter with the County Council.

2. He advised members that the residential conversion of the former chapel had created an opportunity for social housing in the village, intended to provide lower cost housing for applicants from within the community. Although the property was managed by the successors to the Beth Johnson Housing Association potential tenants needed to be drawn from the housing list, maintained by Newcastle Borough Council.

3. He understood that the Council was shortly to pay the necessary fee to join the Rural Runabout transport scheme [the Clerk confirmed this would be addressed later in the meeting]; this also gave the Council an opportunity to be involved and to participate fully in the scheme by nominating a Director and Trustee. The commitment would be to attend meetings of the management committee, which met on Friday mornings at intervals of around every six weeks. The Vice-Chairman indicated that the Council would give the matter further consideration.

[Cllr Daly joined the meeting at this point]

279/09 The Vice-Chairman reported that, along with several other members, he had attended the Remembrance Sunday event in the village, and had laid a wreath on behalf of the community, in the absence of the Chairman who was elsewhere on the day.

280/09 The Clerk reported that he had he had been speaking with the County Council regarding the state of the southbound bus shelter at East Lawns, and the lack of northbound facilities at the same location. Ownership of the shelter was unclear. However, Cllr Speed was able to inform the Clerk that the shelter had been provided by the Parish Council, around the late 1980s. This clarified the issue of ownership, and the Clerk would discuss with the County Council the options for repair work. The County Council had agreed to programme some improvements to allow a paved access to the northbound stop, but could give no indication of the timescale which would be involved. The County Council was emphatic that it would not permit the Parish Council to carry out any such work, due to liability issues.

281/09 County Councillor Chapman reported on the following issues:

Local Area Partnerships. He continued to have some concerns regarding this method of working, and felt that LAPs were less relevant in more rural areas. He was, however, happy to help the Parish Council in any way possible in relation to the LAP.

Highways. There was a proposal to close the Newcastle highways depot, with services being instead provided from Leek or Stone. Members expressed concern regarding the likely deterioration in the quality of service.

The Community Engagement Programme was scheduled to be implemented from January, and would allow local member input to prioritisation of work.

He was pleased to note that Gateway markings had been restored at Wrinehill.

In response to a question from a member Cllr Chapman undertook to check on the frequency of planned gutter sweeping and gully emptying; in response to a question about the responsive speed message signs at Audley, which were widely considered to be a significant benefit, and the possibility of such signs being provided in the Betley area he indicated that the prioritisation of such schemes was based upon the records of speeding, speeding complaints, accident rates etc. He drew to the attention of members the county safer roads partnership website www.staffsaferroads.co.uk on which it was possible to report concerns re speeding.

Grant application. Cllr Chapman indicated that the application for funding toward the repaving of the Memorial Garden had been submitted, and he saw no reason to doubt that it would be approved.

[Cllr Daly left the meeting at this point]

282/09 **RESOLVED** that the Clerk write to the County Council expressing the Council's concern regarding the likely impact of closure of the Newcastle highways depot.

283/09 Borough Councillor Becket had advised the Clerk that the new contract for food and green waste would be in place in the New Year, and might lead to further changes in collection days.

284/09 Members considered the following planning application:

09/00651/FUL Conversion of redundant agricultural buildings to form ancillary residential leisure complex, Pear Tree Farm, Balterley Green Road, Balterley
RESOLVED that the Parish Council supports the application.

[Cllr Daly rejoined the meeting]

285/09 Members considered a letter submitted to the Parish Council by a developer interested in pursuing a redevelopment scheme for the site of the Blue Bell public House, Wrinehill and

inviting the Parish Council to meet with the developer to discuss options for the site. Members discussed at length the principle of whether it was appropriate to meet prospective developers under such circumstances and, if such a meeting was to take place, what form it should take.

RESOLVED

a) that the Parish Council would respond by indicating that it was open to a meeting with the developers to discuss their proposals;

b) that such a meeting would be to obtain information and to seek information, and could not commit the Council – or individual members – to supporting any particular proposal or course of action;

c) that at such a meeting the Council would be represented by the Chairman or Vice-Chairman, the three Wrinehill councillors, and the Clerk.

286/09 The Vice-Chairman and Clerk reported on a meeting they had held on 24th November to discuss the implications for the Council of changes in the framework surrounding the planning process. The key changes for the Parish Council were likely to be:

a) the replacement of the Borough Local Plan with a portfolio of local planning documents;

b) the integration of broader policy and strategy documents with planning policies into broader documents setting out aspirations for the area;

c) a greater degree of pre-application consultation;

d) a possible stronger role for national and regional players in determining the content of local planning policies.

287/09 The Vice-Chairman reported on progress re the development of a community website. The Clerk reported that the advertisements seeking expressions of interest in constructing a website in line with the specification previously agreed had produced no response.

RESOLVED that the Clerk be asked to draw up a Tender List composed of the two names identified by the Vice-Chair together with six other appropriate companies to be drawn up by the Clerk, to be submitted to the January meeting.

288/09 The Clerk reported that he had now received written confirmation that the Parochial Church Council intended to give the Parish Council adequate notice of any changes related to the formal 'closure' of Betley Old Churchyard.

289/09 Members considered issues arising from the use of footpaths off Common Lane, and the use of the public right of way along Common Lane, Betley. The Clerk reported to members that the query regarding the route, and possible diversion, of Footpath 19 had been directed to the appropriate authority (Staffordshire CC, Public Rights of Way Unit). It was also noted that there had been a good take-up of the advisory leaflets obtained by the Parish Council.

RESOLVED that it was felt it would be inappropriate for the Parish Council to involve itself further, and that therefore no further action be taken.

290/09 Members noted that the application to join the Rural Runabout scheme had been accepted, and that the Parish Council had been invited to nominate to the management committee.

RESOLVED that consideration of any nomination be deferred to the next ordinary meeting.

291/09 Members considered the use of grant monies provided by the Bonfire Committee. It was noted that a grant of £500 had been obtained from Staffordshire County Council via County Cllr Chapman to further offset the cost of repaving at the Memorial Garden. The Village Hall Committee had decided to reuse existing lights in order to provide Christmas lighting; the funding obtained by the Parish Council from the Bonfire Committee would therefore not be used.

RESOLVED that, subject to the views of the Bonfire Committee, the funding received should be returned and that the Village Hall Committee be advised that it would be more appropriate for them to apply directly to the Bonfire Committee for assistance in future years, rather than through the Parish Council.

292/09 The Clerk reported that a request for assistance under the Community Chest scheme had been received from Keele & Madeley Guides.

RESOLVED that the Clerk be asked to seek the following further information regarding this application:

- a) the element of involvement from within Betley, Balterley & Wrinehill within the group, and the project for which funding was sought;
- b) a breakdown of the costs involved;
- c) what other grants had been secured/ were being sought?

293/09 The Clerk submitted to members a list of invoices to hand and payments due, and the Financial Statement to date. He noted that only two councillors who were signatories to the account were present.

RESOLVED a) that on this occasion the Clerk be authorised to act as a signatory to cheques 853, 855-862; and that the Clerk be authorised to obtain a third qualified signatory for cheque 854;

b) that the Council authorises payment of the following:

DT Askey	Meml Garden maintenance	£ 100.00	853
G Griffiths	Clerk's salary & expenses	£ 637.71	854
Newcastle under Lyme Rural			
Parishes Transport Scheme	Subscription	£1,230.00	855
Keele University	Printing	£ 175.00	856
C P R E	Subscription	£ 29.00	857
MTM Construction			
(Wrinehill) Ltd	Memorial Garden repaving	£2,875.00	858
Audit Commission	Audit fee	£ 155.25	859
DT Askey	Meml Garden maintenance	£ 140.00	860
MTM Construction	Christmaslight bulbs	£ 79.06	861
Denmor Building	Plants for winter bedding		
	(Memorial Garden)	£ 100.63	862

c) that the Financial Statement together with appropriate bank statements be received;

294/09 The Clerk reported that the External Audit for 2008-2009 had now been completed. It was a 'clean' audit, except for concern expressed by the Auditor that the Council's Risk Assessment was inadequate.

RESOLVED that the Clerk be asked to clarify what further steps were necessary to meet the Auditor's standard in terms of Risk Assessment.

295/9 Members of the Laudy Croft Maintenance Working Group reported that no further maintenance work was required.

296/09 Members considered issues relating to communication. It was noted that the Parish Magazine feature on the review of the Parish Plan had prompted two responses. Distribution of Parish Council News had been completed, but it was noted that certain addresses within the village had been missed. It was also suggested that distribution should also include the relatively small number of business premises in the parish.

RESOLVED that the Clerk be authorised to meet the cost of distribution up to a figure of £200.

297/09 Members considered the winter bedding of the Memorial Garden which had now been completed. Concern was expressed that a very poor Christmas Tree had been supplied this year by Newcastle Borough Council, and the possibility of receiving a payment in lieu of the tree was suggested. The Clerk would investigate.

RESOLVED a) that the actions taken to ensure that winter bedding was in place were approved;

b) that the actions taken to obtain replacement Christmas lighting bulbs were approved;

c) that authority be granted to obtain 100 spare bulbs for future needs.

298/09 The Council considered area issues raised by members.

RESOLVED a) that the Clerk be instructed to contact Staffordshire County Council regarding the proposed closure of the Newcastle Highways Depot, stressing that the proposed sites are anodal; that Leek is readily cut-off during severe weather; and that Newcastle is better served by major highways;

b) that the difficulties created by the inconsiderate parking of the speed camera van be considered at the next scheduled meeting.

299/09 The Clerk submitted details of correspondence received since the last meeting. There were no matters requiring decision.

300/09 That the next meeting of the Council be held on 28th January 2010.