

LUDDINGTON PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 17th JANUARY 2017 AT 7.30pm

Present: Councillors Hughes, Nutt, Hegarty, Beeley and Warrender.

In Attendance: J. Madge (Clerk), County Councillor Horner, District Councillor Barnes and 9 members of the public.

Apologies: Councillor Harriott and Payne

1. Public Participation: The Chairman invited a public discussion concerning the proposals for the budget for the year 2017/18. She introduced the draft proposal and outlined the effect it would have on the proportion of Council Tax paid by residents relating to the Parish Council precept. She also outlined the anticipated heads of significant expenditure. Village Design Statement is ready and awaiting adoption, and there is money in hand for its publication. The cost of SpeedWatch equipment can be shared with neighbouring Councils. Traffic Management measures have been obtained for Luddington Village but there remain issues at Dodwell and the Racecourse corner. There are still threats from planning applications including the proposal for the South West Relief Road, although it seems that an Eastern Relief Road is now being considered which would involve a lot less disruption for the District, but proposals for Bordon Hill, the Veterinary site and other possible threats remain. There is a requirement for a noticeboard in the Eastern Ward of the Parish and proposals for ground works to improve the area around the telephone kiosk. The changes to the boundaries and new considerations such as the operation of the Ambleside Care home and its residents justify some increase in the Parish expenditure.

Mr Heyworth questioned whether expenditure on a website was necessary as he had hosted the Luddington site without charge for some years. It was explained that there was a requirement for a bespoke website to comply with the Transparency Code, and hoped that he would continue to provide a resource for the Village rather than for the Council.

It was questioned whether there is a limit to the increase the Parish Council can request to the precept. The Clerk confirmed that the Government had decided not to impose the principle of referendums for increases above 2% on Parish or Town Councils, and therefore provided the budget was justifiable there is no limit.

Mr Robberts questioned whether there should be any direct contribution to the Action Group's funds and suggested that they should raise any necessary funds themselves, as previous groups had done. It was suggested that it was in the interests of residents of the Parish generally for the Parish Council to be able to fund professional research or advice about planning applications or proposals.

There was disappointment expressed at the lack of response to the Parish Council's proposals, and debate as to whether this signified acquiescence or lack of support, or lack of interest.

2. Declarations of Interests by Members: The Clerk had received a request for there to be a dispensation to enable Cllr Beeley to take part in discussions, other than the consideration of any application for planning permission, relating to the proposed development of land at Borden Hill owned by his parents. Cllr Beeley left the room while the matter was considered. It was agreed to grant such dispensation.

3. Minutes of the Meeting held on the 13th December 2016 had been circulated and were approved and signed.
4. Matters Arising:
 - (α) Village Design Statement: A copy of the finalised and completed Statement was available at the Meeting. It is being presented to District Councillors and then has to go before the SDC Cabinet for final approval. A copy will be distributed to all households when it is approved.
 - (β) SpeedWatch: Cllr Nutt confirmed that a request to borrow the Police laser gun again has been made, but he was waiting for a response. If it is available, the volunteers will arrange further sessions. There was a need to communicate to the community that its purpose is to encourage people to be aware of and keep to safe speeds, not to “catch people out”.
 - (γ) Boddington Farm applications for Planning Permission and Listed Building Consent. The Applicant had revised some elements objected to at the previous Meeting. The Chairman has contacted the planning officers to see whether any compromises could be made so that the referral of the applications to the Planning Committee could be prevented. It was agreed to check with the Heritage Officer whether there is a policy that if the barns are not Listed Buildings there should be no conversion as they are in an unsustainable location.
5. County Councillor’s Report: CCllr Horner reported as follows:
 - (α) The County Council is being criticised for delaying planning agreements for developments relating to proposed road designs. WCC has to look at the safety of such designs and will not agree to adopt unsafe designs.
 - (β) WCC has stuck to an increase of 1.99% to its budget together with 2% for adult social care, which is still not going to be adequate to meet the increasing demand and costs. The administration had produced its proposed budget earlier than usual in the hope that it would be supported by one of the other parties, as there is no overall control of the Council, or that the opposing parties would produce an alternative proposal, but there has been no communication from either of those parties to date, so it is unclear whether the budget will be approved on 3rd February, or what will happen if it is not approved.
 - (γ) CCllrs’ grants for local causes will continue, and road maintenance grants have also been retained.
 - (δ) WCC will be closing some under-used children’s centres and using the savings to recruit additional social workers.
6. District Councillor’s Report: DCllr Barnes reported as follows:
 - (α) SDC agreed a 2% increase in Council Tax in addition to having some £7million in reserves. The increase in the number of houses from new developments has put the waste disposal budget under pressure.
 - (β) The Police and Crime Commissioner is consulting on whether his allocation of precept should be increased.
 - (γ) DCllr has obtained a grant from Cllr Brain of £250.00 towards the costs of a speed gun, and he is also making and selling corn dollies to raise further funds.
 - (δ) DCllr Vaudry is looking at the possibility of an Eastern Relief Road. A report in the Cabinet papers for last Monday’s Meeting referred to proposals for a large industrial bio-system at Alscot Park Industrial Estate for the non-chemical

production of linseed oil, which added to the proposal for businesses from Western Road and Masons Road to relocate to the Estate would make the proposed South West Relief Road inadequate to cope with the increase in traffic from such proposals.

- (e) There is concern that the delays in finalising Section 106 Agreements for developments in Long Marston, Shottery and Southam caused by WCC concerns about road proposals could mean that there is no longer a 5 year housing supply, and could therefore open the door to appeals by developers again.

7. Finance:

- (α) The Community Account stood at £7,377.51
- (β) The following bills were passed for payment:
 - ⌘(⌘) £45.00 for Luddington Village Hall for meetings between October and December 2016
 - ⌘(⌘) £11.79 for stationery folders
 - ⌘(⌘) £688.34 for Clerk's salary for the period from 1st October 2016 to 31st January 2017.
- (χ) 2016 Audit: The Clerk confirmed that he had failed to file the Annual Return for the external Audit of the Council for the year ending 31st March 2016 by the audit deadline. This was due to difficulty in contacting the internal auditor and consequent failure to arrange an internal audit to be undertaken. As a result the external Auditor is considering whether to issue a Public Interest Report concerning the failure to complete the audit. The Clerk apologised to the Council for this failure and assured Cllrs that there were no irregularities in the Council's financial affairs. The Chairman has appointed Mr W Robinson as a new internal auditor, and the Clerk has passed the books over for the internal audit to be done urgently so that the Annual Return could be filed as quickly as possible. Despite this lapse, and as this was the Clerk's last Meeting in the Council's employment, the Clerk was asked to minute and record the appreciation of the residents and Cllrs for his work on behalf of the community for the past 13 years.
- (δ) Budget for 2017-18. The proposed Budget was discussed further. It was agreed that adjustments were needed to ensure all parts of the extended parish received equal and appropriate benefit. It was agreed to make reductions in some of the heads of proposed expenditure and to delay any costs concerning the Village Green. A final precept of £13,885.00 was agreed.

8. Specific Agenda Items:

- (α) Appointment of new Clerk: It was agreed to appoint Darryl Armstrong as the Clerk and Responsible Finance Officer.
- (β) WALC Courses – Cllr Nutt had identified and recommended a one day course and workshop for Cllrs to consider and will circulate details.
- (χ) Distribution of Planning Notifications for Councillors consideration – to be considered at the next Meeting with the new Clerk. In terms of communication generally Cllrs were asked to consider arranging an open meeting with other neighbouring Parish Councils, and also a Local Assembly inviting local organisations to attend and publicise themselves.

9. Correspondence:

- (α) WALC – no introduction of referendum principles to Parish Councils for 2017/18
- (β) Stratford & District CAB – Annual Review 2015/16
- (γ) BT Wholesale & Venture – Acknowledgement of adoption notice
- (δ) Western Power Distribution – Invitation to Stakeholder Workshops
- (ε) WALC – 100 Years of Remembrance Tributes – 11th November 2018
- (φ) WALC – Nominations for Attendance at a Royal Garden Party
- (γ) NALC – Consultation on draft Public Service Ombudsman Bill

10. Planning:

May (16/03997/FUL) Avon Hill Luddington – first floor extension and erection of new conservatory to replace existing; external alterations to consist of replacement windows and replacement of existing brick external materials with render on all elevations. Comment that in accordance with VDS the Council was not keen on the proposal to render the exterior and would prefer the design to include bricks matching the existing, especially on the front elevation.

11. Business for Future Consideration:

- (α) Litter Day on 4th March 2017 in aid of Keep Britain Tidy
- (β) Further debate regarding a possible Neighbourhood Plan or improving the Parish Plan
- (γ) Fundraising for Action Groups
- (δ) Website and Communication Strategy
- (ε) Preparation of a Planning Checklist
- (φ) Quotations for mowing and maintenance.

Next Meeting scheduled for Tuesday 21st February 2017 at 7.30pm.

Meeting closed at 9.58pm.