



MINUTES

Meeting: PARISH COUNCIL

Date: 6th November 2023

Time: 7.30PM

Venue: PARISH HALL, THORNWOOD COMMON

PRESENT:

Councillors (9) A Buckley (Chairman), T Blanks, B Clegg, R Spearman, Mrs S Jackman*
MBE, A Tyler, N Born, Cllr Mrs Hawkins, N Bedford*

* for part of meeting

Officers in Attendance (2)

Susan Deluca - Clerk

Adriana Jones – Principle Finance Officer

Members of the Public (0)

Members of the Press (1)

C23.093 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (4)

Apologies from Cllr Irvine, Mrs P Etherington, Ms D Wood, C Kinnear.

C23.094 OTHER ABSENCES (1)

Cllr Stroud.

C23.095 MINUTES

Councillors **AGREED** the Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on 4th October 2023.

C23.096 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Cllr Spearman declared an interest in the Local Plan.

C23.097 QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

The Clerk advised that there was due to be member representation regarding the agenda item concerning the Youth Club provision, however they had advised they were unable to attend.

C23.098 REPORT OF THE CLERK

The Clerk provided the following reports:

Weald Common – The Clerk confirmed the site had its official opening, and that the Chairman would raise this under his report. With regard to the Sensory Garden, the Clerk and Senior Admin Officer had been working on the delivery plan, together with liaising with the EFDC Grants Officer and Dementia Officer.

Internal Audit – Collating and preparing documentation for Internal Auditor, but addressed under a separate agenda item later in the meeting.

Cemetery Matters – Clerk dealing with a number of cemetery interments and memorials.

Remembrance Sunday Preparations – Sunday 12th November – Organisation of the event at the Debt of Honour/Norwegian Stone is almost complete. Everything is in place, however it is

expected that lunch numbers will be lower this year due to the numbers from organisations not taking up their regular places. This is possibly due in part to some of the organisations no longer having the numbers, such as RAFA and the RBL, who would normally have large numbers attending. There were 52 confirmed lunch attendees, however a number of Councillors had not yet confirmed if they would be attending. There were 32 wreath layers at the Norwegian stone. The office staff will complete a risk assessment, to include an element concerning the current conflict in the middle east. A representative from Norway was chasing 132 Airwing to see if they would be attending.

Room in Queens Hall – The Parish Council will have a room set up for 1 day a week opening in the Queens Hall Community Centre which is expected to be open to the public from 10am to 1.00pm so as not to clash with the pre-school. A small meeting table will be placed in the room to enable small meetings to be held in there as well. The start date for this will commence after Remembrance Sunday.

All other Administrative & Matters on the Agenda – The Clerk and Office staff have been working on other matters, some of which are not included within the Agenda.

C23.099 REPORTS & MEMBERS REPORTS

- a) **Chairman's Report** – The Chairman confirmed that the official Weald Common opening took place on 9th October and was very well attended with representatives from the Eco-Warriors at St Andrews School in attendance. There was good coverage on Everything Epping Forest. Three information boards have been installed, two near the Copper Beach and one where the children planted the trees. A jubilee plaque has been installed. Weedkilling is planned to take place at the end of February 2024, with a tried, tested, safe and approved weedkiller, with a full cut of the field expected to take place once per year.

[Cllr Bedford arrived]

- b) **Vice Chairman's Report** – No report, however Cllr Hawkins asked that thanks were formally recorded for the work the Cemetery Ground Maintenance contractor does on the Cemetery, as it was looking beautiful during her recent visit. Cllr Hawkins also advised that allotment site visits would stop through the winter months, and would restart in April 2024.
- c) **District & County Councillors Reports** – No reports.
- d) **Parish Councillors Reports** – Councillors **NOTED** the reports of both Cllr Blanks and Cllr Ms Wood tabled at the meeting. Cllr Blanks verbally reported on the difficulty understanding the style of reporting concerning the Qualis accounts, stating it was not user friendly and very confusing, however would report at the next meeting on their continued losses. Cllr Mrs Jackman suggested representatives of Qualis should be asked to attend a Parish Council meeting to answer questions. The Clerk advised that she had previously advised Council on the most appropriate way to address concerns around Qualis, and that this was either by way of setting up a working group to address the matter or raising issues directly with the EFDC Overview and Scrutiny Committee or District Councillors. The most appropriate approach would be for residents to directly express their concerns as they were the tax payers, not the Parish Council. The Clerk again

reiterated that using the Parish Council as a medium to address concerns about Qualis was outside the remit of the Parish Council, however individual Councillors or parishioners could raise any concerns directly with EFDC. The Clerk advised that she had suggested setting up a working group previously. The Chairman stated that this matter was discussed in depth at a previous meeting, and agreed that the Clerk had suggested a working group as a way forward, and asked Councillors directly who had taken her up on the offer. Cllr Born stated that he had sent an email to Cllr Holly Whitbread as she was the portfolio holder for housing, and that he had no complaints regarding Qualis as long as this is supported by feedback. Further discussion ensued on the Parish Councils role regarding this matter.

Cllr Clegg stated that he was getting tired of hearing about this at every meeting, and at each meeting it is decided it's not the Parish Councils role to question the inability of Qualis, and stated that the Council needed to draw a line under this. He further stated that he recalled at least four Councillors at a previous meeting saying they were going to get together and form a group which could analyse what they were going to do to tackle the Qualis problem.

The Chairman stated that it didn't seem as though any action had taken place outside of the meeting, to which Cllr Clegg stated this suggested that people were not interested in doing anything about it. The Clerk advised that the Parish Council did pick up residents concerns, and had raised a number of matters with Cllr Chris Whitbread, and now it was up to Councillors and residents to pick this up. The Clerk stated that there was chat amongst the Clerks Network that 1 in 4 Councils could end up issuing a section 114 notice which was obviously of concern. The Clerk said the Parish Council could provide a room for any Councillors or residents who wished to meet as part of a working group to address the matter. Cllr Bedford suggested the best route would be to raise questions in the appropriate timeframe via the EFDC Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The Clerk stated that Cllr Blanks was very good at posing questions to EFDC, however Cllr Blanks stated the issue was that EFDC would never provide a full answer as they say Qualis is a separate company and residents don't have the right to question them. Cllr Mrs Jackman asked what about the money EFDC gives to Qualis, to which Cllr Blanks stated they would still say Qualis was a separate company. Cllr Bedford stated that he couldn't believe the Parish Council was wasting its time on this matter. Cllr Blanks said that he wanted to make his own position clear in that there was no point asking questions of EFDC, however he reserved the right to advise other members of the Parish Council of the continuing and growing losses of Qualis, so that they can be advised on where their money is going.

After further discussion, it was **AGREED** the Clerk would book a date and time, and contact all Parish Councillors so they could attend to discuss the matter further.

Cllr Spearman reported on the resident homeless individual in Thornwood who had gone missing, and that PC Cook had recently contacted him late at night to ascertain if Cllr Spearman had seen him. Cllr Bedford provided an update in that the police were aware of where this individual now was and were monitoring the situation.

Cllr Bedford advised there had been a lot more fly tipping in the turning head on Vicarage Lane West, and asked if the Clerk could write to EFDC to get more action, suggesting a

covert camera. The Chairman stated that he had raised the matter with Art Nurseries a few years ago, and they felt that the huge mound of dirt that blocks this area off from the A414 was part of the problem as it was providing a visual barrier to the fly tippers. Cllr Bedford stated that most of the fly tipping was done in the dead of night, and the prior week asbestos was dumped here. It was **AGREED** the Clerk would contact EFDC regarding this matter.

Cllr Clegg updated Councillors on the Community Speedwatch (CSW) programme, stating that as mentioned at the October meeting they had visited Skipps Corner between 10.30am and 11.30am the day after the meeting, and that out of 650 vehicles, 1.6% were speeding, the highest recorded speed being 54MPH. His CSW colleague had visited or leafleted approximately 180 houses along the High Road, North Weald to encourage residents to be part of the CSW team. At the recent speed checks in Upland Road, 15% of vehicles were speeding, the majority of those doing more than 40MPH, with one driver going 43MPH who then turned around and verbally abused Cllr Clegg and his colleague. This individual had been reported to the Extra Eyes scheme. Cllr Bedford advised that the Council should invest in body worn cameras, to which Cllr Clegg confirmed they had one however this was privately owned. This matter was considered by Council some years back, however concerns had been raised by the Clerk concerning a number of matters which had resulted in the Council not moving forward with purchase. After further discussion, it was **AGREED** to put the purchase of body worn cameras onto the Budget / Precept meeting for consideration. Cllr Clegg advised that whilst they don't have an approved CSW location in Woodside, he had recently witnessed two vehicles driving extremely close to each other doing 64MPH.

- e) **Queens Hall Charity Report** – Councillors noted the report of Cllr Ms Wood as tabled at the meeting.
- f) **Neighbourhood Plan Report** – Members noted that the last meeting was cancelled due to staff illness, however a new date will be arranged, and Councillors will be advised accordingly. It was not expected this would take place before Christmas due to the lack of availability at the Thornwood Hall.
- g) **Highways** - The Clerk has had phone communication about the number of times Woodside in Thornwood continues to keep being closed without prior notification. She placed this matter on the agenda so that District and County Councillors were aware of the residents' concerns. Councillors stated this was happening at a number of locations in the Parish.

C23.100 FINANCIAL REPORTS

- a) **Payments and Accounts** - Members **APPROVED** the list of Cheques & Monthly Statement of Accounts up 31st October, which had been circulated prior to the meeting to Councillors via email, including the bank balances.
- b) The interest received on the CCLA account for October was £457.49. Cllr Blanks suggested that perhaps further money should be deposited, and it was **AGREED** this would be fully considered at the Budget / Precept meeting in December.

C23.101 YOUTH CLUB PROPOSAL

Members noted that a joint proposal has been received from Zinc Arts and Essex County Council in relation to assistance and seeking funding for a Youth Project. All the details were on the

documentation attached to the agenda. Members were asked to note that this had not been accounted for in the Budget for 2023-2024, however the Council does hold approximately £500 in Youth Club Funds, and it may be pertinent to consider this item when looking at the Budget for 2024-2025 in December.

Whilst the majority of members supported the need for provision of youth facilities for the Parish, Councillors raised a number of questions regarding if it was exclusively for North Weald residents, and how the programme would operate. It was noted they were looking to run the event in the Queens Hall, however that did not mean that youths from outside the Parish would be prohibited from attending. It was **AGREED** that the Clerk would raise the following matters directly with the proposers of the scheme:

- 1 What exclusivity is there for young people from North Weald Bassett Parish
- 2 As this proposal seems to be provided by ECC, why is it not being funded by ECC
- 3 How many people in the age group you have defined will benefit – how many of these will come from the parish of North Weald Bassett
- 4 How will you target these young people and get them to attend
- 5 Could the money be secured over more funders
- 6 Some Councillors believe 11 – 19 is too wide an age rang – has any work been carried out to define this need
- 7 Is there clarification of any ‘match’ funding
- 8 If the Parish Council did fund some monies towards the project is there the opportunity to monitor the project – if so how could this be carried out
- 9 How do you decide on the success of the project
- 10 How would the project move forward in future years – ie where will the funding come from

Cllr Bedford also suggested further information should be obtained regarding how they discuss or explore antisocial behaviour and its consequences.

C23.102 CONSULTATION DOCUMENTS

a) EPOA Parking Guidance Consultation for Essex – ONLINE SURVEY

<https://consultations.essex.gov.uk/rci/essex-parking-guidance-consultation-2023/>

What are EPOA consulting on?

Essex Planning Officers Association (EPOA) has been leading work to revise the parking standards guidance to inform new development across Essex. Parking guidance is referred to in policy in the district Local Plans and the County’s Local Transport Plan. The guidance sets parking for different vehicle types, design and location, dimensions for parking and a suggested quantum for different types of development. The PFO read out a very interesting statement from the consultation paperwork that stated it had been recognised that restricting car parking spaces does not result in people not buying cars. She also stated that the parking requirements would be based on a three-tiered categorisation of areas, and that from what she had ready so far it generally seemed to be a good document. Councillors **AGREED** the Parish Council should respond supporting the recognition statement, and the need for parking provision.

b) Public Spaces Protection Order

Members noted that EFDC was proposing to introduce a Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO) for dog control, making it an offence for a person in charge of a dog to:

- Fail to remove dog faeces deposited on any publicly accessible land within the district
- Fail to put a dog on a lead when directed to do so by an authorised officer, on any publicly accessible land within the district
- Fail to limit the number of dogs which a person may take onto publicly accessible land within the district to four dogs
- Fail to produce a receptacle (i.e. dog poo bags) for picking up dog faeces when requested to do so by an authorised officer, while walking any dog on any publicly accessible land within the district
- Fail to exclude a dog from specified fenced areas within the district

Councillors discussed this consultation, but raised the matter of who and how would this be enforced. The Chairman raised the matter of the prolific dog pooper at the garden outside North Weald Shops, saying so far nothing had encouraged the dog owner to pick up the mess. Cllr Born suggested that rather than bringing in a rule that penalises people, perhaps a ‘Considerate Dog Owners Scheme’ could be introduced, with badges available so people could wear these to show support for the scheme. It was **AGREED** to respond to the consultation supporting the introduction of this order, asking how it would be enforced, and also suggesting a considerate dog owners’ scheme be introduced.

c) ECC Recycling Centre Booking Systems - Trial period

Members were reminded that a trial booking system was introduced at 9 of the recycling centres in February 2022 for vans and large trailers. The trial was extended to all vehicles across all 21 recycling centres in March 2023 following a successful pilot at the centre in Rayleigh. A current consultation was open with the suggestion that this booking system be made permanent. Councillors **AGREED** to respond to the consultation supporting the booking system being made permanent, however adding comments from Cllr Spearman that you should be able to take a tipper truck into recycling centres.

C23.103 PRE-APPLICATION ENQUIRY FOR NEW CONTROL TOWER & FIRE STATION NORTH WEALD AIRFIELD

Councillors noted that a pre-application enquiry for a New Control Tower Building (CTB) and Rescue and Fire Fighting Service Building (RFFS) on North Weald Airfield had been received for Council comment. As observations were due by 07/11/2023 it had been necessary to place this item on the Parish Council Agenda for comment. A live presentation was given at the meeting to provide full information on the application to Councillors. Following considerable discussion, it was **AGREED** to respond to the pre-application enquiry as follows:

- The Parish Council are not experts regarding the operational aspects of an Airfield, and thus the suitability of locating a control tower in the location proposed. However it is expected that professional advice has been sought by the applicant to ensure the proposed location does not pose any safety risk to aircraft using the Airfield, and that all legislative requirements in this regard have been complied with. This should be checked by the Planning Officer.
- The proposed location of the building is close to the B181 and is expected to be visible from the road given the proposed height, creating a visual impact. Due consideration should be given specifically to the colour palette used to ensure the Control Tower does not create a distracting physical feature in the landscape.

- The material palette suggests an element of red to be used. Consideration should be given restricting the use of red (synonymous with fire stations) to the northern and lower elevation of the building, so it is not visible from the B181.
- It is unclear why the 'Potential Airfield Land for New Control Tower' included within the Airfield Masterplan is now no longer deemed suitable. The Citing Rationale Summary attached to the pre-application assessed the 'masterplan identified land' as being both constrained by development land and carrying tower height restrictions, deeming this area unsuitable to locate the new control tower. Surely this would have been identified and clear as part of the detailed Masterplan process, and if this was the case the land should not have been identified? There has been no clear rationale presented as to why the new control tower cannot be located in the area proposed within the North Weald Airfield Masterplan.
- It is unclear what the ATC element to the right of the building is. Is this a training centre? Would it be for external training? Training of fire staff, etc. This should be clarified, as it will have an impact on operational use and the parking provision provided.
- There was no safety assessment submitted as part of the pre-application. The only indication given as to the suitability of the proposed location was that the 'Location has been tested and approved by the control tower operations staff'. Is this sufficient to evidence the proposed location is the right location?
- Whilst located on the airfield, consideration should be given to the proximity of the Control Tower to the SSSE adjacent to Woodside, and any potential visual impact this would have.

C23.104 DEFIBRILLATOR

Members **NOTED** that the Defibrillator had now been re-sited at the North Weald Village Hall, from its site at the Methodist Church. The Clerk had advised the Community Heartbeat Trust. She had also advised North Weald Village Life as they advertise the location of the Defibrillators in the Village within the magazine. Councillors **AGREED** to the installation of a solar panelled light to assist with visibility if needed. Cllr Born suggested a location sign directing people to defibrillator should be located at the entrance to the access road off the main road, to which the Clerk confirmed she would see if a sign could be located on the Village Hall Notice Board.

C23.105 OFFENSIVE SMELLS FROM THE BIOGEN SITE AT ASHLYNS

Councillors noted following on from the last meeting where this Parish Council agreed to support residents concerns in relation to writing to our MP Alex Burghart, the Clerk had received a response from the MP confirming he was in the process of arranging a meeting with residents to hear more about the impact the smell has had on their lives in the last three years, and will be inviting representatives from the local parish councils to attend. He would also invite the Environment Agency to attend to outline what it is doing to address the problem. Cllr Born advised that around 5 years ago they had agreed to put some form of deodoriser on the mounds and asked if this had taken place. The Clerk suggested Cllr Born attend the meeting and ask this of Alex Burghart MP.

C23.106 RIDE LONDON ROUTE

Members noted that the Ride London route had been confirmed for the next three years from 2024. Next year's event will be held on Sunday 26th May 2024. The route will go through, Essex, taking in Epping, Ongar and North Weald. Chris Davy, the organiser, had written to the Chairman of the Parish Council and offered to come along and speak with Members regarding any concerns they may have regarding access arrangements. Cllr Born asked if cyclists could

trigger speed cameras, which it was confirmed they could, however they have no number plates and were not insured. No agreement was made to invite Mr Davey to address the Council.

C23.107 LATTON PRIORY DESIGN CODES

Councillors **NOTED** the draft Latton Priory Strategic design code was now available to download and the digital survey was live. The consultation will be open until midday on Monday 11th December 2023. Members were advised that the Parish Council had placed the details of this consultation, together with the opening times of public forums, on its Facebook Page and also its Parish Council Website. Cllr Blanks advised that he had attended one of the public sessions, where there were around 15 people in attendance, stating he felt that it was poorly organised with some of the representatives unable to answer questions. Of the public that were there, they were quite knowledgeable and were asking questions about hospitals and doctors, and were told these had not been planned yet, and they may be if enough houses were built. It was spotted that the proposed Gypsy and Traveller site had been located at the main entrance to the site.

C23.108 CUMULATIVE IMPACT ON TRAFFIC AND DEVELOPMENTS SURROUNDING NORTH WEALD

Following on from the last meeting, members noted that the Parish Council had contacted ECC as agreed regarding the above, and a response had been received, details of which were included within the agenda. The Clerk tabled for members a summary of the current position in terms of the Local Plan Development sites for North Weald Bassett Parish given the flurry of activity for each site. Cllr Blanks advised that the point of the letter was to establish if traffic was being considered across all the sites and not just on a site by site basis, stating that from the response from ECC it appeared that nobody had looked and thought about the traffic on the three main sites. Cllr Blanks stated that it was amazing ECC had not yet seen sight of the transport assessment, however all these houses would soon be coming to the Parish. He further stated that nobody in authority was going to confess to seeing the possibility that will mean rather too many cars on the road. Consequently in the end this Parish will end up with 2500 new homes and 5000 cars and nobody will be able to do a thing about it as it will be too late. Cllr Bedford stated that he had listened to everything Cllr Blanks had said and that these sites had all been accounted for in the EFDC Local Plan, including information concerning traffic infrastructure. Cllr Bedford continued stating that ECC was consulted on all the sites contained within the Local Plan, and that the money that comes forward from the developers will fund the infrastructure improvements that are required. In addition, EFDC had an air mitigation strategy in place to address with SAC issues. Cllr Blanks stated that he felt Cllr Bedford and his cohort were keeping deliberately quiet about this matter to get the applications through, and then people will be out of office by that time and nobody will be able to do anything about it. Cllr Bedford stated that houses need to be built, to which Cllr Blanks said why were 2400 them in North Weald.

Cllr Blanks stated that developers only care what's within their development, not how people are going get to or from the development. The Clerk stated she understood Cllr Blanks concerns, however the Local Plan had been adopted and as such these sites would now be developed, and all this Council could do was try and work as best it could with the developers to get what we can from the development for the benefit of local residents.

Cllr Clegg stated he had sympathy for Cllr Blanks comments, stating he too had no confidence in Essex Highways when they say that Junction 7 of the M11, the B181 and the A414 are not going to be affected by the extra traffic, especially as they are considered the experts. Cllr Clegg

gave the example of when he attended a consultation on Latton Priory and they advised that the B1393 would be turned into a cycle superhighway, and that last Friday the queue went from the M11 all the way through to Epping. Cllr Tyler concurred, describing the difficulty of getting to Epping in the mornings via the Plain junction.

The Clerk stated that residents were able to review all the comments made by this council over recent years concerning the issue of infrastructure, and confirmed that we had raised these concerns directly with ECC, EFDC, Highways, and the Developers. Until the Corporation of London release land at the Plain, there will always be problems.

Cllr Spearman raised the matter of Shared Ownership being part of any affordable housing, and the Clerk confirmed she would look into this.

C23.109 ROYAL BRITISH LEGION

The Chairman reported on his recent attendance at the Royal British Legion (NW Branch Meeting) where it was considered whether or not the branch would continue in its current format. He advised the Councillors in attendance were himself, Cllr Blanks, Cllr Ms Wood, Cllr Kinnear, and Cllr Etherington. The Chairman of the RBL inferred at the start of the meeting that the Parish Council was not helpful at all, and that he then addressed this directly with the RBL Chairman. The meeting was co-chaired by an Essex County RBL Official who expanded on what would happen if no further interest could be secured for the NW Branch, with three possible outcomes. It was left with the County Official to write to each individual member of the RBL NW Branch advising them of these three options, and that he would then advise on the outcome.

It was stated that because many members of the NW branch were of an older demographic, they may not want to go to the pub to meet, and that there had been changes as to how the North Weald Village Hall operated which affected how the meetings took place. The branch had lost both their Treasurer and another officer who had moved out of the area.

There had been some discussion as to if the Parish Council could take over elements of running the RBL rather than let it close, and the Chairman was waiting for further information on this. Cllr Tyler stated that he felt it would be best to let it close, and that interested parties could join the Epping Branch if they wanted to. The NW Branch does not have the same attraction as other larger RBL groups, and this would always be a problem. The Chairman stated that North Weald was unique in that it housed a wartime airfield, and that this was very relevant.

It was noted there would be a RBL Church Service on Remembrance Sunday, however it has been inferred by the RBL Chairman that due to the recent timing move of the Annual Act of Remembrance to 12.15pm at the Debt of Honour, this had caused the RBL a problem. The Clerk confirmed that she had looked at the Parish records and that this service had been held at 12.15pm for 52 years, so she was unsure what the RBL Chairman was referring to. The Clerk advised that this Parish Council held the General Power of Competence so could do anything a normal person could do. There was some discussion concerning the old control tower and how this could potentially be used as a meeting place for the RBL. The Chairman advised he would provide a further update when he had one.

[Cllr Mrs Jackman left].

C23.110 EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC AND THE PRESS

The public and press were excluded from the meeting, the Council believing that publicity would be prejudicial to the public interest by reason of the confidential nature of the business about to be discussed.

C23.111 NORTH WEALD METHODIST CHURCH

Councillors **NOTED** no further action had taken place regarding this matter.

C23.112 FUTURE PREMISES FOR PARISH COUNCIL OFFICES

Councillors **NOTED** the contents of the Clerk's report included within the Agenda, and that discussions and investigations were ongoing.

Meeting closed: 9.10pm

Signed

Date