

WETHERSFIELD PARISH COUNCIL
REPRESENTING WETHERSFIELD, BLACKMORE END & BEAZLEY END



MINUTES of the Wethersfield Airbase Scrutiny Committee Meeting held at Wethersfield Village Hall on Monday 27 November 2023, commencing at 7:30pm.

Present: Cllr A Hull (Chairman) (Shalford PC)
Cllr R Duffin (Vice Chairman) (Finchingfield PC)
Cllr S Short (Wethersfield PC)
Cllr T Strudwick (Gosfield PC)
Cllr A French (Shalford PC)
Cllr C West (Wethersfield PC)
Cllr J O'Brien (Little Bardfield PC)
Mr R Aggis
D Roder (Clerk and RFO)

In Attendance: Members of the Public: 0

WA60/23-24 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Cllr G Southgate (Castle Hedingham PC), Cllr B Foulkes (Castle Hedingham PC), Mr J Pearce and Cllr N Nicholson (Helions Bumpstead PC)

WA61/23-24 MEMBERS DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS

None declared.

WA62/23-24 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 30 OCTOBER 2023.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 30 October 2023, copies of which had been previously circulated to Members, were confirmed as a true record, and signed by the Chairman. Proposer Cllr A French, Seconder Cllr R Duffin.

WA63/23-24 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

None.

WA/64/23-24 CLERKS REPORT

WETHERSFIELD AIRBASE ASYLUM RECEPTION CENTRE

The judicial review took place at the High Court in London on October 31st and November 1st 2023. An outcome of the hearing is expected by Christmas. Local resident Mr Clarke Hollands KC advised that the district council should serve an enforcement notice to the Home Office to stop all further work at the airbase.

The Home Office are now going for a Special Development Order to continue the Asylum Centre at the airbase for a further 3 years.

Wethersfield PC had a team's meeting with the Home Office on 13 November 2023. They advised that there were 426 asylum seekers at the base now, with 773 available beds which would increase to 1200 by December 2023.

They are converting two three story offices at the airbase which will provide 400 further bed spaces. Cohorts increased from 30 to 40 per day and is going well.

There are covid, strep infections and scabies cases at the airbase. Issues with arguments on site, however there is no major concern.

A virtual tour for residents is currently work in progress. They also advised on James Cleverley's appointment that day as Home Secretary, and advised that under ministerial code, he would not be able to take direct decisions over RAF Wethersfield as it falls within his constituency.

Cllr N Godley asked the Home Office regarding problems at the airbase the previous weekend including a sexual assault. The Home Office said they were not aware of this and would immediately investigate it. The Clerk asked the Home Office if they are now taking asylum seekers previously housed in hotels to RAF Wethersfield. The Home Office confirmed that currently the AS are still coming straight from small boat crossings and that there were 600 crossings last week.

FINANCE

Gosfield Parish Council has kindly donated £250.00 to WASC.

COMMUNICATION

The WPC Clerk has written to Cllr G Butland and Mr Gascoyne at BDC to issue a stop enforcement notice at the airbase.

The clerk has also followed up with Priti Patel, to request an objection to the SDO. A further letter will also be sent to James Cleverly requesting the same support on it.

WA65/23-24 SUB-COMMITTEES.

Cllr A Hull has sent an FOI request to the Home Office asking for the Accounting Officer Assessment and other relevant documents regarding the financial case for an AS centre at Wethersfield. From DPG documents released, value for money is clearly negligible or non-existent. The publication of AO Assessments follows Treasury Guidelines and National Audit Office guidelines Also requested from the Home Office was the proposed business case for purchasing the entire site.

A further FOI was sent to the MOJ asking for details of their facilities maintenance contract with Keir Group who are undertaking building work at Wethersfield under this contract, what building work and at what cost.

A third FOI was sent to the MOD requesting information on the deployment of the Defence Fire Service at Wethersfield, for how many years and at what cost. In other documents it was stated that the MOD hold no records of firefighting training at Wethersfield, we know the DFS was deployed there for several decades up until 1990 and are part of the MOD, so we find it unlikely the MOD have no records or such activities at Wethersfield

Cllr J O'Brien entered the meeting at 7.51pm.

An FOI has been sent for correspondence between the MOJ and BDC, plus environmental report to the MOJ for any further communication.

Cllr C West entered the meeting at 7.55pm.

Water tests results are back which show high levels of PFA's. The Buro Happold report is ongoing.

WA66/23-24 JOINT NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN.

The housing surveys were delivered two weeks ago and so far, there are 167 completed and returned, and the closing date is 8 December 2023. Dr R Sidebottom is engaging with connections involved in the excellent Coggeshall Neighbourhood Plan. Around 121 people attended the drop-in sessions held in September. 51% were from inside the villages and 49% living on the outskirts of the villages.

A draft plan is now being produced and all information can be found on the neighbourhood plan dedicated website which is now live www.fw-np.org.

WA67/23-24 FINANCE

WASC Finance			
Updated 1/11/2023			
Invoices Received			
<u>Date</u>	<u>Supplier</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Amount ex VAT</u>
27/02/2022	Capitall Road Safety	Traffic Monitoring	£ 600.00
10/03/2022	Sedley Place	Prison Model	£ 2,137.50
01/03/2022	CBA	Mobilisation Payments	£ 2,000.00
28/02/2022	Andrew Martin Planning	Briefing note and research	£ 1,000.00
05/05/2022	CBA	Consultancy	£ 2,800.00
15/07/2022	Spectra Studios	Prison Model	£ 1,200.00
01/08/2022	CBA	Landscape assesment	£ 3,895.00
10/11/2022	CBA	Heritage application	£ 5,000.00
15/03/2023	T ROBERTS	WASC POSTAGE COSTS	£ 141.49
20/04/2023	BURO HAPPOLD	WASC DESKTOP CONTAMINATION	£ 4,950.00
20/04/2023	BURO HAPPOLD	WASC DESIGN NOTE ON EIA SCREENING	£ 500.00
04/07/2023	TRANSPORT PLANNING CONSULTANTS LTD	TRAFFIC ASSESMENT	£ 4,750.00
		Total	£ 28,973.99

Income Received			
<u>Date</u>	<u>Payee</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Amount</u>
21/02/2022	Shalford Parish Council	10% Contribution 21/22	£ 2,150.00
14/03/2022	Toppesfield Parish Council	Contribution	£ 500.00
11/04/2022	Little Bardfield Parish Council	Contribution	£ 300.00
08/04/2022	The Fields/SWAP	Grant	£ 5,000.00
05/05/2022	Great Bardfield Parish Council	Contribution	£ 1,000.00
18/05/2022	Finchingfield Parish Council	Contribution	£ 4,474.20
20/06/2022	Sible Hedingham	Contribution	£ 500.00
01/08/2022	The Fields/SWAP	Grant	£ 5,000.00
10/08/2022	Castle Hedingham	Contribution	£ 300.00
25/10/2022	Helions Bumpstead Parish Council	Contribution	£ 100.00
01/12/2022	Finchingfield Parish Council	Contribution	£ 4,748.50
17/06/2022	Shalford Parish Council	10% Contribution 22/23	£ 2,150.00
12/12/2022	Sible Hedingham Parish Council	Contribution	£ 2,375.00
24/01/2023	The Salings Parish Council	Contribution	£ 500.00
28/04/2023	The Fields/SWAP	grant	£ 3,500.00
22/05/2023	Little Bardfield Parish Council	Grant	£ 315.00
11/07/2023	Toppesfield Parish Council	Contribution	£ 500.00
06/10/2023	Shalford Parish Council	Contribution	£ 1,121.00
02/10/2023	Finchingfield Parish Council	Contribution	£ 2,000.00
		Total	£ 36,533.70
		Current Position	£ 7,559.71
		EARMARKED RESERVES:	
		Finchingfield Parish Council balance remaining	2000
		Shalford Parish Council balance remaining	1121
		<i>Wethersfield Parish Council contribution Clerk and Hall Hire (£6500.00)</i>	
		Spending in the pipeline resolved:	
		Water testing	1000
		Photo's	200
		BH report	5000
		Total:	6200
		Current balance	7559.71
		less spending agreed	6200
		Current actual position minus pipeline spending:	1359.71
		Plus 50% of earmarked reserves:	
		finchingfield pc	2000
		shalford pc	1121
		Gosfield PC	250
		Current balance minus pipeline spending plus earmarked reserves	4730.71

WA68/23-24 SPECIAL DEVELOPMENT ORDER (SDO) AT RAF WETHERSFIELD.

RESOLVED. It was agreed to write to the Home Secretary to oppose the SDO. In addition to target Labour MP's, Sir Edward Lee, the cross-party group and the independent select committee. Cllr R Duffin will come with a draft to be finalised with the communications sub-committee. Proposer Cllr R Duffin, seconder Cllr A French.

WA69/23-24 ITEMS FROM COUNCILLORS TO BE ADDED TO THE NEXT AGENDA

All items should be sent to the Clerk by 22 January 2024.

WA70/23-24 NEXT MEETING OF THE WETHERSFIELD AIRBASE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE:

The next meeting of Wethersfield Airbase Scrutiny Committee will be held on Monday 29 January 2024 at Wethersfield Village Hall.

The Chairman thanked everybody for attending and declared the meeting closed at 8.46pm.

Signed:
Chairman

Date:

DRAFT