

# **WETHERSFIELD PARISH COUNCIL**

**REPRESENTING WETHERSFIELD, BLACKMORE END & BEAZLEY END**



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

Present: Cllr A Hull (Chairman) (Shalford PC)  
Cllr S Short (Wethersfield PC)  
Cllr N Nicholson (Helions Bumpstead PC)  
Cllr A French (Shalford PC)  
Cllr C West (Wethersfield PC)  
Cllr J O'Brien (Little Bardfield PC)  
Mr R Aggis  
Cllr G Southgate (Castle Hedingham PC)  
D Roder (Clerk and RFO)

In Attendance: Members of the Public: 0

### **WA49/23-24 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies were received from Cllr P Kennedy (Great Bardfield PC), Cllr R Duffin (Vice Chairman) (Finchingfield PC), Cllr B Foulkes (Castle Hedingham PC) and Mr J Pearce.

### **WA50/23-24 MEMBERS DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS**

None declared.

### **WA51/23-24 MINUTES OF THE EXTRORDINARY GENERAL MEETING HELD ON 4 SEPTEMBER 2023.**

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the EGM held on 4 September 2023, copies of which had been previously circulated to Members, were confirmed as a true record, and signed by the Chairman. Proposer Cllr N Nicholson, Seconder Cllr S Short.

### **WA52/23-24 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

None.

### **WA/53/23-24 CLERKS REPORT**

#### **WETHERSFIELD AIRBASE ASYLUM RECEPTION CENTRE**

The Home Office has agreed to monthly zoom call meetings with the PC every month till end of March'24 which commence in September. The initial zoom meeting was cancelled due operational reasons and rescheduled for 2 October 2023. On the call the Home Office

confirmed there were now around 130 Asylum seekers at the site (previous visit was 148). They further confirmed that protests had taken place including hunger strikes as they want to be moved to London. There is also a new menu which includes a salad bar and fruit. The contents of the Chapel were confirmed as being in safe storage. Plus corrected the amount per person spent on health services which Cllr N Godley had previously queried, which was correct. The Home Office could not give us any numbers on costs to date as this is commercially sensitive material. There are currently three buses operating per week to take asylum seekers to the nearest towns and cities. The plan is to ramp up the cohorts this month up by around 400.

The Clerk visited the Asylum centre again in September, together with the Home Office and local businesses. There were reportedly around 148 asylum seekers on site. The tour included the Chapel, accommodation blocks, medical centre, and communal areas. Plus, from a distance the new facilities being stalled for further accommodation in portacabins which will sleep 6 people per cabin.

### **JOINT NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN**

The Clerk grant application made by the Clerk was approved and a further application to receive the funds submitted. The grant of £10K was received in our account on 6 October 2023. Another application will be submitted beginning of 2024 for a further £8K which is the maximum for one fiscal year (£18K). The drop-in sessions have since been organised for October and promoted throughout both parishes.

### **FINANCE**

Finchingfield PC have kindly donated 50% of the monies earmarked for WASC.

Shalford PC have kindly donated 50% of monies earmarked for WASC.

The Clerk discovered that the Buro Happold figures had been incorrectly entered as Gross and not Nett. This has since been corrected and added a further £1090.00 to the WASC current balance position. This is the amount of VAT for both invoices which will be later reclaimed by WPC.

### **COMMUNICATION**

The clerk wrote to the head of BDC on 12 October 2023, regarding facilitating the ownership of the land where the Grade II listed weapons store sits at the airbase. No response.

The Clerk wrote to the Home Office on 7 September following up on our visit on 25 August 2023. 12 questions were raised. An acknowledgement of the email was received however no further answers to any of the questions.

### **WA54/23-24 SUB-COMITTEES.**

Cllr J O'Brien gave an update on the Judicial Review hearing on 31 October and 1 November 2023 against the Home Office. Lady Justice Thornton heard the cases brought by a local resident, Braintree District Council and West Linsey District Council. A decision could take up to a year but it is expected in the next couple of months.

At 7.35pm Cllr G Southgate entered the meeting.

Grounds raised at the JR by the claimant's include Class Q planning grounds, argued this was not a national emergency. The scoping EIA report and Equality Impact Assessment were insufficient.

The Home Office announced they will now apply for a Special Development Order as the facility will be needed for 3 years now and not 12 months. Cllr N Godley (Wethersfield PC Chairman) was notified of this by the Home Office on the previous Friday.

The Levelling Up Regeneration Bill was given Royal Assent on 26 October 2023.

Cllr A Hull gave a further update. The Buro Happold report is on-going. The PFA results should be available later this week. An enforcement notice to stop work at RAF Wethersfield has not been issued by BDC because it says it is unenforceable.

#### **WA55/23-24 JOINT NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN.**

The drop-in sessions have been completed, there were approx. 130 attendees. Housing needs survey is in development and should be circulated to all residents by end of November 2023. An analysis will be completed on the survey early January 2024. The NP working group will also speak with other groups and businesses on the plan.

#### **WA56/23-24 FINANCE**

The clerk amended the Buro Happold costs to net of VAT, as previously entered including VAT. The VAT will be reimbursed to Wethersfield Parish Council on the next VAT return.

<b>WASC Finance</b>				
<b>Updated 9/10/2023</b>				
<b>Invoices Received</b>				
<u>Date</u>	<u>Supplier</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Amount ex VAT</u>	
27/02/2022	Captial 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
		<b>Total</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>28,973.99</b>

<b>Income Received</b>			
<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
		<b>Total</b>	<b>£ 36,533.70</b>
		<b>Current Position</b>	<b>£ 7,559.71</b>
		<b>EARMARKED RESERVES:</b>	
		<b>Finchingfield Parish Council balance remaining</b>	2000
		<b>Shalford Parish Council balance remaining</b>	1121
		<i>Wethersfield Parish Council contribution Clerk and Hall Hire (£6500.00)</i>	
		<b>Spending in the pipeline resolved:</b>	
		Water testing	1000
		Photo's	200
		BH report	5000
		Total:	6200
		Current balance	7559.71
		less spending agreed	6200
		<b>Current actual position minus pipeline spending:</b>	<b>1359.71</b>
		Plus 50% of earmarked reserves:	
		finchingfield pc	2000
		shalford pc	1121
		<b>Current balance minus pipeline spending plus earmarked reserves</b>	<b>4480.71</b>

**WA56/23-24 RAF WETHERSFIELD HERITAGE CENTRE.**

**RESOLVED.** It was agreed for each PC to write to BDC to initiate discussion with the DIO. Proposer Cllr A French, seconder Cllr C West.

**WA57/23-24 HIGHWAYS APPRAISAL**

The report was distributed prior to the meeting to all WASC members by Mr J Pearce. It was discussed by members present that the report contained a fair assessment and that there was no other precedence to compare. ECC net zero by 2030 would be very difficult to achieve as due the remoteness of the site, transportation would need to be by road.

**WA58/23-24 ITEMS FROM COUNCILLORS TO BE ADDED TO THE NEXT AGENDA**

*All items should be sent to the Clerk by 17 November 2023.*

**WA59/23-24 NEXT MEETING OF THE WETHERSFIELD AIRBASE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE:**

The next meeting of Wethersfield Airbase Scrutiny Committee will be held on Monday 27 November 2023 at Wethersfield Village Hall.

The Chairman thanked everybody for attending and declared the meeting closed at 8.24pm.

Signed: .....  
Chairman

Date: .....