

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE PARISH COUNCIL OF LONGDON HELD IN THE MEETING ROOM OF CHRIST CHURCH, GENTLESHAW, ON TUESDAY, MARCH 14TH, 2006

Present: Cllr. S. K. Welch (Chairman); Cllr. The Rev. J. R. Andrews; Cllr. B. J. Butler; Cllr. R. C. Hemmingsley; Cllr. A. J. Juxon; Cllr. Mrs. H. A. Meere; Cllr. Mrs. M. G. Nichols; Cllr. H. M. P. Reynolds; and Cllr. N. Stanfield.

Also present was the Clerk.

1. APOLOGIES

Cllr. N. J. Bird; Cllr. N. J. Roberts, of Lichfield District Council; and County Councillor F. W. Lewis, MBE.

2. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the previous meeting, held in the W. I. Hall, Longdon, on Tuesday, February 14th, 2006, were, on a motion proposed by Cllr. Stanfield and seconded by Cllr. Mrs. Meere, approved and signed after Cllr. Mrs. Meere had pointed out that it was she, not Cllr. Stanfield, who had declared a personal interest as near neighbour in Planning Application No. 06/00076/FUL, relating to the proposal to erect an agricultural building to house water buffalo on land off Malthouse Road, Gentleshaw.

3. PARISHIONERS' QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS

No parishioners were present.

4. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

(i) Planning Application No. 06/00076/FUL; Agricultural Building to House Water Buffalo on land adjacent to Malthouse Road, Gentleshaw

Cllr. Stanfield reported that he believed that the planning officer handling this application was disposed to recommend approval and that there would be no objection from the Cannock Chase Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Unit.

However, in view of the Parish Council's objections, it was likely that the application would be brought before the District Council's Planning Committee.

He was concerned that insufficient weight was being given to the fact that the site was within the Farewell and Chorley Special Area of Landscape Value.

It was agreed that Cllr. Roberts should be asked to ensure that the Parish Council's view was made known to the Planning Committee when it made its decision.

(ii) Speed Watch in Upper Longdon

Cllr. Butler reported that recorded speeds indicated that vehicles were still being driven too fast along Upper Way.

He estimated that the average speed being recorded was between 45 mph and 50 mph.

He had informed the local Police Inspector of the continuing problem and had been advised that a police speed trap would be set up shortly.

(iii) Approval of NatWest Mandate

Cllr. Stanfield reported that he had called at the NatWest Bank at Lichfield with evidence of identity.

(iv) Car Park off Hayfield Hill

The Chairman reported that he had been informed by John Smith, the District Council's Countryside Officer, that money was being made available for improving the carparks on Gentleshaw Common.

(v) Notice-boards

The Clerk reported that he had written to Alan Johnson, of Aqua Jet Services, asking him to carry out a survey of the parish notice-boards and provide the Council with recommendations for their renovation, but had not, as yet, received his reply.

(vi) Auctioneer's Sign on A51

The Clerk reported that no action had as yet been taken by the District Council.

(vii) Advertisement Boards in Upper Longdon

The Clerk reported that no action had as yet been taken by the District Council.

(viii) Tara House, School Lane, Gentleshaw

The Clerk reported that he had been advised that a member of the District Council's Enforcement Team had twice called at the house but had been unable to gain entrance. Her written request to the owner to contact he had so far been ignored.

(ix) Malodorous Surface Water in Smithy Lane

The Clerk reported that he was still awaiting a response from the County Highways Department.

5. DECLARATION OF COUNCILLORS' PERSONAL, PREJUDICIAL AND FINANCIAL INTERESTS

None was declared.

6. PLANNING

(i) For Consideration

06/00127/FUL: Richard Attridge: Erection of garden shed: Buttercup Barn, Horsey Lane Farm, Horsey Lane, Upper Longdon

The Council saw no reason to object to this application.

(ii) Approved by Lichfield District Council

The Clerk reported that, since the last meeting, Lichfield District Council had issued the following Notices of Approval of Planning Permission:

05/01141/FUL: Mr. and Mrs. R. Allatt: Proposed front and rear extension: 8 Upper Way, Upper Longdon

06/00008/FUL: Mrs. M. Harvey: Replacement of existing garage: 5 Moor View, Commonside, Gentleshaw

06/00033/FUL: Mr. and Mrs. Hardy Keenan: Proposed detached double garage and garden room, including demolition of existing outbuilding: First Cottage, Lower Way, Upper Longdon

(iii) Refused by Lichfield District Council

The Clerk reported that, since the last meeting, Lichfield District Council had issued no Notices of Refusal of Planning Permission relating to the parish.

(iv) Other Planning Matters

(a) Unauthorised Roadside Sign

The Clerk reported that he had received from Mark Patterson, an Associate of Bagshaws, a firm of auctioneers based in Uttoxeter, a letter dated 17th February 2006, regarding the presence of one of the firm's 'For Sale' boards erected at the side of the A51 at Longdon Green, in which he asked for the Council's forbearance while he sought permission from the appropriate source for the board to remain.

He had sent copies of this letter to Mrs. Christine Hibbs, the District Council's Principal Planning Officer responsible for enforcement, and Ken Owen, the County Council's Divisional Highway Manager, for their comment, but, to date, neither had responded.

Since the auction of the property to which it referred was taking place in eight days' time, it was unlikely that any action would be taken now,

(b) Planning Application No. 05/01141/FUL: Proposed front and rear extension and pitch roof over garage: 8 Upper Way, Upper Longdon

The Clerk reported that he had received from Jeff Upton, Development Control Manager, Democratic, Development and Legal Services, Lichfield District Council, a letter dated 13th February 2006, explaining the circumstances which had led to the granting of planning permission for the above development in spite of the Parish Council's concerns.

It had been decided that the proposal would not have a detrimental impact on neighbouring amenities.

(c) Planning Application No. 04/00460/FUL: Demolition of existing dwelling and erection of two detached dwellings and replacement vehicular access: Southdown, Lower Way, Upper Longdon

The Clerk reported that he had received from Jeff Upton, Development Control Manager, Democratic, Development and Legal Services, Lichfield District Council, a letter dated 22nd February 2006, explaining the circumstances which had led to the granting of planning permission for the above development in spite of the Parish Council's concerns.

The District Council had been satisfied that the layout of the site and design and scale of the dwellings was in keeping with the character and appearance of this part of the village and that the development, including the demolition of the existing dwelling, would not materially harm the character of the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty or the amenities of neighbouring residents.

Furthermore, it had been considered that the additional traffic associated with the creation of an additional dwelling would not compromise highway safety.

Cllr. Stanfield pointed out that the District Council had a duty to ensure that any development in or adjacent to an Area of Outstanding Beauty preserved or enhanced its character, not that it did not materially harm it, particularly as the phrase 'materially harm' implied that a measure of harm was permissible, and the Clerk was instructed to write to Mr. Upton, asking him to explain his understanding of the phrase.

(d) West Burntwood Area and Lichfield City Centre Action Plans

The Clerk reported that he had received from Linda Renshaw, Principal Development Plans Officer, Democratic, Development and Legal Services, Lichfield District Council, a letter dated 2nd March 2006, informing the Council that preferred options had been published for the West

Burntwood Area Action Plan and the Lichfield City Centre Action Plan and listing the locations and times when these documents could be viewed.

There was a six-week consultation period when anyone could make representation, and the deadline for submitting comments (which should be sent to Development Services at District Council House, Frog Lane, Lichfield) was Thursday, 13th April 2006 at 1600 hours.

7. REPORTS OF MEETINGS

(i) Cannock Chase AONB Partnership Birdwatch: March 2nd

The Chairman gave a report on a meeting of the Cannock Chase AONB Partnership birdwatch which had taken place at Marquis Drive on Thursday, March 2nd and which he had led.

In spite of a heavy snowfall the meeting had gone well and the group had been able to visit two feeding sites, where they had seen a variety of birds.

(ii) Cannock Chase AONB Partnership Visit to Beaudesert Park: March 14th

The Chairman gave a report on a visit by the Cannock Chase AONB Partnership to Beaudesert Park which had taken place earlier in the day.

The Beaudesert Trust had just published a Conservation Management Plan for the Park as part of a bid for Lottery money; this included maintaining the gardens, providing interpretation rooms and building an observatory, the first in Staffordshire.

It was also hoped to open up the ruins, which, for health and safety reasons, first needed stabilising.

At present, the only funding the Trust received was from visitors, predominantly Guides, Scouts, and Brownies (in 2005 there had been a total of forty-one thousand visitor-days).

8. NOTICE OF MEETINGS

The Clerk reported that he had received notice of the following meetings:

(i) 'Linking Lichfield District' - Lichfield District Strategic Partnership Event: Tuesday, 28th February 2006, at the Lichfield Garrick from 3 p.m to 5 p.m.

Notice of this meeting had been too short to enable anyone to attend.

(ii) Cannock Chase AONB Partnership – Parish Councils' Meeting: Wednesday, 15th March 2006, at the Acton Trussell, Bednall and Teddesley Hay Community Centre, commencing at 7. 30 p.m.

The Chairman would not be able to attend this meeting, but had sent a written representation.

(iii) Lichfield Area Committee, Staffordshire Parish Councils' Association: Thursday, 6th April 2006, in the Council Chamber, District Council House, Frog Lane, Lichfield, commencing at 7. 00 p.m.

Both Cllr. Andrews and the Clerk expected to be attending this meeting.

(iv) Lichfield District Parish Forum: Wednesday 12th April 2006, in the Committee Room, District Council House, Frog Lane, Lichfield, commencing at 7. 15 p.m.

Cllr. Mrs. Nichols and Cllr. Stanfield hoped to attend this meeting.

9. HIGHWAYS AND FOOTPATHS

(i) 'Three Longdons' Walk – Replacement of Stiles with Kissing-Gates

The Clerk reported that he had received a catalogue advertising a range of stiles, gates and kissing-gates from Centrewire, of Wymondham, Norfolk, which he had passed on to Cllr. Mrs. Meere.

It was agreed that a meeting of the Working Group should be convened at which the choice of kissing-gate should be made.

This meeting would take place at the home of Cllr. Mrs. Meere on Tuesday, March 21st, at 5.00 p.m.

On a motion proposed by Cllr. Stanfield and seconded by Cllr. Mrs. Nichols, the Working Group was empowered to place an order for kissing-gates up to the value of £500.00.

(ii) Catmeadow Lane – Erection of Gate and Stile at Entrance

The Chairman confirmed that the height of the stile could present difficulties for the less agile walker, and it was agreed that the problem should be referred to the County Ranger Service.

(iii) Report of Land Registry

The Clerk reported that he had received from the Land Registry at Birkenhead the results of the Parish Council's enquiry into the ownership of the land forming the embankments on either side of Grange Hill, Upper Longdon.

In each case, the Land Registry had established that the land was not registered and therefore the Land Registry held no information regarding its ownership.

The Clerk further reported that he had received a phone call from Mark Lewis, the owner of No. 2, The Grange, who was concerned about the stability of the embankment below his property.

Mr. Lewis had received the advice of an engineer, who had recommended that the embankment be restrained with a mesh and had offered to maintain the ground if the Parish Council were prepared to meet the cost of laying the mesh.

However, the Clerk had had to advise him that the Parish Council could not use public funds to pay for work carried out on private land.

It was agreed that the Divisional Highway Manager should be made aware of the concern being felt locally over the continuing stability of these embankments.

10. GREENS AND OPEN SPACES

(i) Longdon Green

(a) Arrangements for Photo-call on Wednesday, March 29th

The Clerk reported that Helen Bowman, of English Heritage, would be arranging the photocall.

He had sent invitations to Alison Richards, of Lichfield District Council, who had accepted; and to Tim Johnston and Alan Taylor, of English Heritage, and Ted McAvoy, of Leander Architectural, whose replies he awaited.

Cllr. Roberts and Cllr. Lewis had already indicated that they would be there.

Kevin Pearson, licensee of "The Red Lion", had quoted £7.50 per head for sandwiches and £10.00 per head for a buffet; on a motion proposed by Cllr. Hemmingsley and seconded by Cllr. Andrews, it was decided that a buffet should be provided.

It was further agreed that Councillors could invite partners on payment of the cost.

(b) Request by Licensee of "The Red Lion" for Hitching Post on Longdon Green

The Clerk reported that he had received a request from Kevin Pearson, the licensee of "The Red Lion", for permission to erect a hitching post on Longdon Green facing his premises to which horses could be tied while their riders refreshed themselves.

On a motion proposed by the Chairman and seconded by Cllr. Andrews, it was agreed that permission be given for rings to be fastened to the posts on the edge of the Green in such a way that the horses would be standing at the side of the track, not on the Green itself.

(ii) St. James Churchyard, Longdon

The Clerk reported that he had received from Graham McCulloch a letter dated 5th March 2006 in which he agreed to treat the car park at the top of Church Hollow with herbicide at a cost of £70 when the weeds were at the correct growth stage, probably in April. This offer was accepted.

(iii) Gentleshaw Common

(a) Damage to surface being caused by horse-riders

The Clerk reported that he had received a complaint from a resident of Buds Road, Cannock Wood, that horses being ridden along the track at the far side of the grassed area opposite Gentleshaw School were causing damage to the grassed surface, soft after recent rain.

He had pointed out that this area was, in fact, part of Gentleshaw Common, and therefore riding on it was perfectly legal and could not be prevented, a view with which the Council concurred.

(b) Abandoned Wheelie-Bin

The Clerk further reported the presence on this same grassed area of an abandoned wheelie-bin belonging to Cannock Chase Council which was now more than half full of dead leaves.

He was instructed to contact Cannock Chase Council and ask for its removal.

11. STANDING ORDERS

Following a full and detailed discussion, it was, on a motion proposed by Cllr. Stanfield and seconded by Cllr. Mrs. Meere, unanimously agreed that the Standing Orders drafted by Cllr. Hemmingsley and presented to Councillors for their scrutiny should, subject to the amendments subsequently approved at the meeting, be adopted.

It was further agreed that the Standing Orders should be published on the Parish Website and in the form of a booklet which would also include the Council's Financial Regulations.

A vote of thanks to Cllr. Hemmingsley for his work in preparing the draft was proposed by the Chairman and unanimously agreed by the rest of the Council.

12. BEST KEPT VILLAGE COMPETITION

The Clerk reported that he had received a request from Mr. Michael Richards, of Hawcroft, Longdon, for a flower tub to replace one which he maintained in Brook End and which was now in poor condition.

The Clerk was authorised to find a suitable replacement.

The Clerk further reported that he had received from the Community Council of Staffordshire details of a Children's Poster Competition to be run as part of the Best Kept Village Competition.

It was agreed that a selection should be made from the posters which it was hoped St. James School would once again provide in support of Longdon's entry.

13. ANNUAL ASSEMBLY

It was agreed that this year's Annual Assembly should take place in St. James School, Longdon, on Tuesday, April 25th, starting at 8.00 p.m.

The Chairman would invite either John Smith, the District Council's Countryside Officer, or Ruth Hýtch, of the Cannock Chase AONB Unit, to give an address.

The Clerk would write to all local organisations, inviting them to submit a report on their year's activities.

14. CHAIRMAN'S BADGE

The Chairman reported that the Council had now received the Chairman's Badge, which he had brought to the meeting.

The Council was delighted to accept the Badge as a gift from the Clerk on condition that it was appropriately engraved.

It was agreed that the Badge should be included in the Council's insurance policy.

15. FINANCIAL MATTERS

(i) Accounts for Payment

On a motion proposed by Cllr. Hemmingsley and seconded by Cllr. Andrews, payment of the following accounts was approved:

Christ Church, Gentleshaw	Hire of room	£ 10. 00
W. B. Sullivan	Salary: £187. 50; Photocopying: £100. 24; Postage: £ 18. 85	£306. 59
Headley Brothers	“Local Council Review”: Renewal of 12 subscriptions at £12. 00 each	£144. 00
Eric Roy	Hosting and support of Parish Website	£130. 00

(ii) Payments Received

The Clerk reported that no payments had been received since the last meeting.

(iii) Current Balances

The Clerk reported that, currently, the Council’s balances stood as follows:

NatWest c/a: £876. 87; The Halifax s/a: £10357. 91
(there were no uncleared cheques)

(iv) Appeals for Grant Aid

(a) Open Spaces Society

The Clerk reported that he had received from the Open Spaces Society an appeal for a donation towards the cost of legal representation in the House of Lords on behalf of The Friends of Trap Grounds, who were seeking to save an open space in North Oxford by registering it as a village green.

It was agreed that, while the outcome of the case might have implications for areas beyond the area which was the subject of litigation, it remained too peripheral to justify the Council in making a contribution towards the costs of the case.

(v) Interim Report of Independent Internal Auditor

The Clerk reported that he had received the Interim Report of the Independent Internal Auditor, copies of which had been distributed to Councillors prior to the meeting.

Mr. Blount had identified one error in the accounts – a payment of £160 to Graham McCulloch made in August 2005 had been omitted from the minutes, though it had appeared on the agenda of the meeting and in the account book.

In his supporting remarks, he had, however, commented on the clarity and organisation of the Council’s documentation.

16. CORRESPONDENCE SINCE LAST MEETING

(i) The Clerk reported that he had received from Katharine Robb, Technical Assistant – Flood Risk Management, The Environment Agency, a letter dated 13th February 2006, asking the Council to support its campaign to encourage households and businesses to sign up to its Floodline Warnings Direct Service by displaying its poster on parish notice-boards.

(ii) The Clerk reported that he had received from the Rev. Martin Butt, Priest-in-Charge of Christ Church, Gentleshaw, a letter dated 20th February 2006, thanking the Parish Council for its donation of £150. 00 towards the cost of the church's new oil tank.

(iii) The Clerk reported that he had received from Gill Wyatt, Chief Officer, Carers Association Southern Staffordshire, a letter dated 20th February 2006, asking the Council to display enclosed information about the Association, which was a registered charity providing free and confidential advice, information and emotional support to carers of all ages living in East Staffordshire, Stafford, Cannock, South Staffordshire, Lichfield and Tamworth.

The Clerk suggested that, in view of the number of information leaflets, official reports and consultation documents which he was now receiving, a useful way of disseminating all this information more widely might be to set up an Information Corner in Longdon Village Hall.

He was instructed to write to the Chairman of the Village Hall Management Committee asking for the opinion of his Committee.

(iv) The Clerk reported that he had received from Janet Allen, Clerk to the Trustees of the Longdon Cotton Almshouses, a letter dated 26th February 2006, copies of which he had sent to Councillors prior to the meeting.

In it, she had informed the Council that the recent opening of the Beacon Park Retirement Village in Lichfield had caused a surplus of bungalows for the elderly in the Lichfield District, and the Trust now had two void properties.

The Trustees were now intending to widen the search for tenants and were also considering filling the voids by letting the properties on a shorthold tenancy of six months.

Mrs. Allen had applied to the Rent Service for a pre-tenancy determination and had been advised that the proposed rent of £72. 00 a week was a reasonable market rent, particularly as a maximum of £68. 08 was payable from Housing Benefit.

With her letter to the Council, Mrs. Allen had also enclosed a copy of the reply which she had received from the Rent Service and a copy of the Scheme regulating the Charity, which obliged the Trustees to obtain the best rent possible for the properties.

Cllr. Mrs. Nichols reported that both vacancies had now been filled.

(v) The Clerk reported that he had received from Richard Barton, of "Southdown", Lower Way, Upper Longdon, via the Parish Council Website an email dated 27th February 2006 asking if the Council was aware of any planning applications relating to the piece of land in Upper Longdon owned by the Meynell Hunt.

In reply, he had sent Mr. Barton an email explaining that a representation had been submitted on behalf of Fisher German asking for the proposed Lichfield District Local Development Plan to be modified so as to allow that piece of land to become available for development, and that this representation would, along with the many others also received, now go before the public enquiry.

(vi) The Clerk reported that he had received from Pam Bassi, Event Co-ordinator, Central Midlands Energy Efficiency Advice Service, a letter dated March 2006, enclosing a selection of posters and leaflets for public display.

17. OTHER COMMUNICATIONS

The Clerk reported that, in addition to the above, he had received the following communications:

(i) From Beth Harries, Solicitor, Democratic, Development and Legal Services,
Lichfield District Council:

Executive Arrangements – Forward Planning 2005/2006 – February – Version 1
(to take effect on 1st March 2006);

Executive Arrangements – Forward Planning 2005/2006 – February – Version 2
(to take effect on 1st March 2006).

(ii) From Elaine Shone, Policy & Performance, Organisational Services Directorate,
Lichfield District Council:

Parish Forum Questionnaire

(Cllr. Mrs. Nichols and Cllr. Stanfield had both received copies of this questionnaire, which they had completed and returned)

(iii) From The Electoral Registration Officer, Lichfield District Council:

Register of Electors – Monthly Applications for 1st March 2006.

(iv) From The National Association of Local Councils:

“Local Council Review”: Volume 57, No. 6 – March 2006.

(v) From the Open Spaces Society:

“Open Spaces”: Spring 2006 – Volume 28, No. 5.

(vi) From the Cannock Chase AONB Officer:

Countryside Events: 2006 to December 2007.

(vii) From the Staffordshire & Stoke-on-Trent Archive Service:

“From Time 2 Time”: Issue 11, Spring 2006.

(viii) From the Burntwood and District Local Policing Unit:

Minutes of meeting of 9th February 2006.

(ix) From St. Giles Hospice, Whittington:

St. Giles Hospice News: Spring 2006.

(x) From GOPAK, Hythe, Kent:

Promotional Card.

(xi) From Wicksteed Leisure Ltd., Kettering, Northants.:

Brochure: “Wicksteed Their World”.

(xii) From Wood & Wood, Crawley, West Sussex:

Promotional Card.

(xiii) From The Chief Executive, The Local Channel, Salisbury, Wilts.:

Application Form.

18. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

(i) Cllr. Butler reported that, notwithstanding the apparent completion of the traffic management scheme in Upper Way, speeding was still a problem in Upper Longdon.

There was disappointment with some of the features of the scheme: the gateway opposite North Lodge did not, as expected, reduce the flow of traffic to a single lane, and the coloured strip laid alongside part of Upper Way to encourage the impression of a narrowing of the road was, in Cllr. Butler’s view, insufficiently pronounced.

The Clerk was instructed to write to Simon Edwards, the Project Officer overseeing the scheme, asking him to give it further consideration.

(ii) Cllr. Hemmingsley reminded the Council that an enforcement notice had been issued to the owner of the caravan in the field alongside Commonsides eleven months ago, yet the caravan was still there.

It was observed that this was only one example of the tardiness with which enforcement action was taken, and the Clerk was instructed to compile a list of planning issues previously referred to the District Council's Enforcement Team and send it to the Corporate Director, asking him to initiate action.

(iii) The Clerk reported that he had spoken to Mrs.Hibbs, the Principal Planning Officer (Enforcement), about the number of developer's direction signs which still remained after the completion of development in Upper Longdon and, at her request, would be sending her details so that she could take appropriate action.

(iv) Cllr. Stanfield reported that the blocked ditch in Shaw Lane, Gentleshaw, which had been causing flooding had now been dug out.

(v) It was reported that there was local concern that excess building material was continuing to be stored at North Lodge and that it was being used as a place of business.

The Clerk was instructed to make this concern known to the District Council.

19. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Tuesday, April 4th, 2006, in the W. I. Hall, Longdon, commencing at 7. 30 p.m.