

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE PARISH COUNCIL OF LONGDON HELD IN THE
W. I. HALL, LONGDON, ON TUESDAY, JANUARY 9TH, 2007

Present: Cllr. R. C. Hemmingsley (Vice-Chairman, who, in the absence of the Chairman, chaired the meeting); Cllr. N. J. Bird; Cllr. B. J. Butler; Cllr. A. J. Juxon; Cllr. Mrs. M. G. Nichols; and Cllr. H. M. P. Reynolds.

Also present were the Clerk; Cllr. N. J. Roberts, of Lichfield District Council; County Councillor F. W. Lewis, M. B. E.; and Mrs. Jane Russell, Village Correspondent of "The Village Mercury".

1. APOLOGIES

Cllr. The Rev. J. R. Andrews; Cllr. N. Stanfield; Cllr. M. A. W. Parsons; and Cllr. S. K. Welch.

2. PRESENTATION BY CLLR. ROBERTS

Before opening the meeting, Cllr. Hemmingsley invited Cllr. Roberts to make a presentation on the West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy Phase Two Revision.

Cllr. Roberts explained that the West Midlands Regional Assembly had just issued a document setting out spatial options for four planning areas – housing, employment, transport and waste.

The main emphasis was on housing, for which a series of tables relating to housing distribution had been set out, together with three options – the first reflecting a continuum of previous figures, the second planning for a 25% increase and the third, the Government's own preferred option, providing for a 50% increase.

The adoption of the third of these options would result in an increase in the Lichfield area of 16,000 dwellings, which would be considerably larger than any other adjoining district except East Staffordshire and might even lead to development on the margins of the Green Belt.

If Birmingham, Burton, Stoke and Coventry could not provide space for the projected number of new houses, then the counties would have to make up the deficit.

Another decision which would have to be taken would be how much land should be set aside for employment; it was being claimed that the choice of sites being offered would reverse the flow of population from town into country.

Waste disposal would continue to remain a huge problem across the region, though Lichfield's record of re-cycling was amongst the best.

Transport was another problematic area: should there be strategic park-and-ride schemes? which road schemes would best de-congest existing roads?

Other areas where decisions had to be made were in air transport and the location of regional casinos.

Cllr. Roberts ended by drawing the attention of the Council to a meeting of the Lichfield District Parish Forum the following evening, at which Craig Jordan, Development Plans and Implementation Officer, would be giving a presentation on the West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy. He urged the Council to give the document its consideration and to make a response to it by completing the pages of a questionnaire contained within it.

The Clerk added that he had already received from Craig Jordan a letter dated 5th January 2007 drawing the Council's attention to the Consultation, as well as a copy of the document itself, sent by the Chief Executive of the West Midlands Regional Assembly.

He further added that he had also received notice of a Consultation Event being held at the Black Country Living Museum, Dudley, on Wednesday, January 24th. A Launch Event had been held the previous day at the Burlington Hotel, New Street, Birmingham.

Cllr. Mrs. Nichols thought that it was important that the infrastructure be sorted out first before any housing development took place, and there was also concern that health requirement had not been addressed.

At the conclusion of the discussion, Cllr. Hemmingsley thanked Cllr. Roberts for his presentation.

3. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

On a motion proposed by Cllr. Butler and seconded by Cllr. Mrs. Nichols, the minutes of the previous meeting, held in the Meeting Room of Christ Church, Gentleshaw, on Tuesday, December 12th, 2006, were approved and signed.

4. PARISHIONERS' QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS

No parishioners other than Mrs. Russell were present.

5. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

(i) Footpath No. 5 – Briertey Hill Lane

The Clerk reported that the hedge whose growth had been obstructing the stile had now been cut back.

(ii) Robinia outside No. 12 Berkeley Way

The Clerk reported that he had received a phone call from Acme Tree Services apologising for the delay in carrying out work on this tree.

The work would now be carried out shortly.

(iii) Spinney at Longdon Green

The Clerk reported that he had, as instructed, written to Rodney Helliwell, the arboricultural consultant, asking him to carry out a survey of this spinney and would be meeting him on site on the morning of Thursday, January 11th.

(iv) Grant Applications

The Clerk reported that he had, as instructed, sent grant application forms to all three applicants – Mrs. Christine Fitter, on behalf of the Gentleshaw Church Flower Festival Committee, the Rev. Michael Jefferson, on behalf of St. James Church, Longdon, and Mrs. Mary Cooke, who was seeking a contribution to the cost of running a Summer Playscheme at Longdon.

Mrs. Woollard had returned a completed form on behalf of St. James Church, and he had received from Mrs. Fitter a letter dated 2nd January 2007, in which she had promised to return the form as soon as she had received replies from potential suppliers to her request for quotes.

Mrs. Cooke had not yet responded.

(v) Village Signs

The Clerk reported that he had spoken to John Roobottom, Technical Assistant, Operational Services, Lichfield District Council, regarding the cost of product and labour incurred in supplying and erecting these signs, which Mr. Roobottom had estimated at £250.00 for each sign.

His Department could carry out this work provided that the cost was fully funded by the Parish Council.

The Clerk added that, under Section 72 of the Road Traffic Regulation Act of 1984, the Parish Council could meet these costs.

On a motion proposed by Cllr. Juxon and seconded by Cllr. Reynolds it was agreed that the Parish Council should order three signs and that the Clerk should request Mr. Roobottom to provide a copy of the new design.

The Highways and Footpaths Working Group would be asked to suggest the location of each of these signs.

(vi) Parking opposite Gentleshaw School

The Clerk reported that he had spoken to Kevin Yates, Park Superintendent, Culture and Leisure, Lichfield District Council, who had confirmed that he no longer had a budget to carry out work on the grassed area opposite Gentleshaw School and had suggested that, instead, the Council spoke to John Smith, now the District Council's Greens and Open Spaces Strategy Manager.

It was agreed that the Chairman should be asked to approach Mr. Smith when he returned from holiday.

(vii) Unstable Litter Bins

The Clerk reported that he had written to Alan Johnson, asking him to secure these bins.

6. PLANNING

(i) Report of Working Party

06/01151/LBC: Mr. and Mrs. I. Morrall: Replacement of fireplaces, windows, new window opening, French doors and roof lights: Horsey Lane Farm, Horsey Lane, Upper Longdon

There had been no objection in principle to this application provided that the replacements and/or alterations were consistent with the status of the building and satisfied the judgment of the District Council's Conservation Officer.

(ii) For Consideration

There had been no further planning applications for the Council to consider.

(iii) Approved by Lichfield District Council

The Clerk reported that, since the last meeting, he had received no Notices of Approval of Planning Permission from Lichfield District Council.

(iv) Refused by Lichfield District Council

The Clerk reported that, since the last meeting, he had received no Notices of Refusal of Planning Permission from Lichfield District Council.

(v) Other Planning Matters

(a) Notice of Appeal

The Clerk reported that he had received from the Development Control Manager, Democratic, Development and Legal Services, Lichfield District Council, a letter dated 8th January 2007 informing the Council that an appeal had been lodged with the Planning Inspectorate by Mr. and Mrs. D. Roe against the decision of Lichfield District Council to refuse planning permission for first-floor and single-storey extensions to form utility, porch, three bedrooms and en suites at 73 Upper Way, Upper Longdon.

Should the Parish Council wish to withdraw or modify its earlier comments in any way or make additional observations or request a copy of the appeal decision letter it should write in triplicate to the Planning Inspectorate at Bristol within six weeks of the appeal date, 2nd January 2007.

However, the Council felt that it had nothing to add to its earlier comments.

7. REPORTS OF MEETINGS

(i) Cannock Chase AONB Partnership: December 13th

In the absence of the Chairman, Cllr. Roberts gave a short report on the above meeting, which had taken place at the Wolseley Centre, Wolseley Bridge, on Wednesday, December 13th, 2006.

The principal business of the meeting had been a survey of issues which had been brought to the forefront by the Management Plan, and it had given an opportunity for the meeting to review it.

(ii) Longdon Village Hall Management Committee: January 8th

Cllr. Bird gave a short report on a meeting of the Longdon Village Hall Management Committee which had taken place at the Hall the previous evening.

The Committee believed that they had received a letter from the Council agreeing to fund the cost of a noise attenuation system up to £1200. 00, and this was confirmed in the minutes of the meeting of 14th February 2006.

The Committee had also been advised by the Charity Commission that there was no need to seek three quotations before purchasing the system.

On a motion proposed by Cllr. Mrs. Nichols and seconded by Cllr. Juxon, it was agreed to meet the full cost of purchasing the system, which was believed to be £942. 00, but to advise the Committee that, no matter what the Charity Commission had said, the Parish Council would in future insist on three quotations before agreeing to fund expenditure of a similar magnitude.

On a motion proposed by Cllr. Reynolds and seconded by Cllr. Mrs. Nichols, it was also agreed to meet the full cost of refurbishing or replacing the notice-board in the grounds of the Village Hall.

Cllr. Bird said that the Committee were agreeable to the suggestion of setting up an information centre in the Hall and were looking for a suitable place for it.

The Committee planning a fund-raising event in June.

8. NOTICE OF MEETINGS

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

(i) Lichfield District Parish Forum: Wednesday, January 10th, 2007, in the Council Chamber, District Council House, Frog Lane, Lichfield, commencing at 7. 15 p.m.

Cllr. Hemmingsley and the Clerk expected to attend.

(ii) Invitation to Lichfield Cathedral School's Founders' Day Breakfast and Founders' Day Service: Tuesday, 30th January 2007, the first in the Bishop's Palace at 7. 50 a.m., the second on the Palace Steps (or in the Cathedral, if wet), at 8. 50 a.m.

No Councillor present expressed an interest, but the Clerk said that he might attend the Service.

Absent Councillors would be notified of the invitation and asked to indicate as soon as possible whether they wished to attend.

(iii) Staffordshire Police Presentation on the Force's Performance and the Authority's Medium Term Financial Strategy, including a budget forecast for 2007/08 and the likely precept level: Monday, 15th January 2007, in the Council Chamber, District Council House, Frog Lane, Lichfield.

The Clerk hoped to attend this meeting.

(iv) Staffordshire Parish Councils' Association – Lichfield Area Committee: Wednesday, February 8th, 2007, 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 present at this meeting.

9. HIGHWAYS AND FOOTPATHS

(i) Evaluation of A51 Traffic Management Scheme

It was agreed that, generally, the scheme had been well-received; the reduction in the speed of passing traffic had led in turn to a fall in the volume of noise, and turning into the main road opposite Borough Lane was no longer hazardous.

However, one or two limitations had been noted: there appeared to have been insufficient space allowed for vehicles approaching from the direction of Lichfield and wishing to turn off the main road into Brook End; and the broken lines below the dual carriageway should be replaced by solid lines in order to discourage injudicious overtaking.

In addition, Cllr. Juxon felt that there was now too much signage and asked when signs advising motorists of a new traffic system ahead could be removed, though Cllr. Hemmingsley suggested that they might have to be there for a pre-determined period.

It was also agreed that advice needed to be taken about improving access through the kissing-gate for prams and push-chairs, and Cllr. Reynolds suggested that railings should be erected on the corner of Brook End to discourage mothers from crossing the road opposite High Street.

It was agreed that these lingering concerns should be made known at a site meeting, and the Clerk was instructed to contact the County Highways Department at Stafford to arrange one.

(ii) Speed Management – Upper Way

Cllr. Butler reported that his survey of households in Upper Way had now been completed, and it was agreed that he should hand its findings to the Clerk for forwarding to the County Highways Department.

Cllr. Lewis asked that a copy be sent to him.

(iii) Notice-Boards

Cllr. Hemmingsley gave an account of two abortive attempts by TNT to deliver the two notice-boards to be erected in Brook End to his home.

He had agreed with the manufacturer that they should be delivered on Thursday, December 21st, but in the event no delivery had been made that day, it transpired because the notice-boards had been put on the wrong delivery-van.

Then, even though Cllr. Hemmingsley had made it clear that he would not be home the following day, an attempt was made to deliver them – without prior notice – the following morning at 8.00 a.m., while he was showering preparatory to going out.

Not being in a fit state to inspect the notice-boards, having just emerged from the shower, he refused delivery, and delivery was arranged for the next day, Saturday, December 23rd.

However, an attempt was then made to make the delivery at 7.15 a.m. the next morning, before Cllr. Hemmingsley, not expecting a delivery before 8.00 a.m., had risen. In response to Cllr. Hemmingsley's remonstrations, the driver had adopted a truculent attitude and, as a consequence of this, Cllr. Hemmingsley had accepted the driver's offer to return the notice-boards to the depot.

The unfortunate consequence of all this had been tension between Cllr. Hemmingsley and Mrs. Pam Stebbing, of H. & A. P. Stebbing, the Norfolk company which had manufactured the notice-boards and arranged their despatch and who now feared that TNT would return the goods to her company, thus incurring a second delivery charge.

The notice-boards had indeed been returned to Norfolk, the Clerk having been too late to intercept them when he called at the TNT depot at nearby Rawnsley.

The Clerk said that he understood that the notice-boards would now be despatched a second time, this time to his address.

He added that the failure to deliver on the appointed day appeared to be because the address labels had omitted "Gentleshaw", but they had included the post-code and had been accompanied by a map showing the intended destination.

He felt that the manufacturers had done everything possible to ensure safe delivery and could not be held responsible for the ensuing confusion.

It was agreed that there should be no question of the Council's paying a second delivery charge; in the view of the Council, TNT had not fulfilled its contract with H. & A. P. Stebbing, having failed to

deliver on the agreed date and thereafter attempting to deliver at unreasonable times. Any dispute, therefore, would, in the opinion of the Council, be between TNT and H. & A. P. Stebbing, whom the Council would be prepared to support in any complaint.

(iv) Other Highway Matters

The Clerk reported that he had received from the Divisional Highway Manager, Development Services, Staffordshire County Council, a letter dated 14th December 2006, in which Mr. Owen had dealt with a number of highway issues brought to his attention by the Clerk's letter of 31st October 2006.

They were as follows:

(a) Road markings in Upper Way and Darlings Lane

Mr. Owen had confirmed that a white line adjacent to the coloured surfacing had not been included in the original traffic management scheme, but he would ask the Local Transport Officer to look into the feasibility of adding in a road marking.

He had looked at the existing access protection mark at "Bleakhurst" and considered it appropriate.

He would arrange for the zigzag lines in Darlings Lane to be extended to include the junction of Darlings Lane and Chapel Lane.

(b) Embankments of Grange Hill

Mr. Owen was aware of the problems with the embankments on Grange Hill, and his Assistant was discussing options with Mr. Mark Lewis, whose property in The Grange adjoined the embankment.

However, any works would have to be financed from Mr. Owen's maintenance budget and this would result in a minimalistic scheme.

(c) Cleat Hill Layby

The problems of lewd behaviour at the Cleat Hill layby were known to the Police and Mr. Owen had been in discussion with Inspector Mike Kozam and his team.

However, from a highway maintenance point of view he was unable to offer any help.

On hearing this, Councillors agreed that the Clerk should write to Inspector Kozam asking him how he proposed dealing with the problem which, Cllr. Butler assured the Council, was on-going.

(d) Ford Lane

Mr. Owen had looked at Ford Lane with his Local Highway Officer and had agreed with his view that the current width of the lane was metalled and surface-dressed, but the areas on either side were verge, and at the present time he could not fund their removal and construction as carriageway.

However, the Clerk pointed out that the edge of the carriageway next to the W. I. Hall was crumbling and needed patching, at the very least.

(e) New Access at Fir Tree Cottage

Mr. Owen had asked the Network Inspector to look into this new access.

(f) Shaw Lane, Gentleshaw

The Local Highway Officer would look at Shaw Lane and take appropriate action, possibly through the District Council, who had the responsibility for street cleansing.

Mr. Owen had ended his letter by informing the Council that he had recently supplied a grit bin at the bottom of Shavers Lane at the request of the Lichfield District

Council's Refuse Department, but one of the residents had raised objections to it.

He did not propose to provide a further bin at the top of Shavers Lane, since, in times of adverse weather, Lower Way provided a level route onto gritted routes.

Upper Way was currently treated on one of his Department's routine gritting routes, together with Grange Hill.

(v) Tree in Ford Lane

The Clerk reported that he had also received an email, dated 4th January 2007, from Mr. Owen advising the Council of his intention to remove a tree in Ford Lane, one of whose branches was rubbing on the apex of the W. I. Hall, and asking for the Council's comments.

The Clerk was instructed to inform him that the proposal had the Council's full support.

(vi) Highway Maintenance Agreement – Programme of Work

The Clerk reminded Councillor that, under the existing Highway Maintenance Agreement, the Council received £1040. 00 per annum to carry out minor maintenance work and asked whether a programme of work should be drawn up for implementation during the coming months.

He was instructed to circulate to all Councillors the list of tasks drawn up at the recent meeting of the Highways & Footpaths and Green and Open Spaces Working Group so that it could be implemented under the Agreement.

(vii) Community Footpaths Initiative – Submission of Bid

The Clerk said that he believed Cllr. Mrs. Meere was preparing a bid for funding for a descriptive leaflet in relation to the "Three Longdon Walk".

10. COMMUNITY HALLS

It was agreed that the meeting at which the Council's response to the request for a grant towards the cost of refurbishing the front of Longdon Memorial Hall would be considered would take place in the W. I. Hall, Longdon, on Monday, January 22nd, 2007, commencing at 8. 00 p.m.

The meeting would not be open to the public, but the Council's decision would be reported and recorded at the next full meeting of the Council.

11. FINANCIAL MATTERS

(i) Accounts for Payment

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

Longdon W. I.	Hire of Hall	£ 12. 00
H. & A. P. Stebbing	1 Single-doored Post-Mounted Notice-Board	
	20 Hand-carved Letters	
	1 Open-fronted Wall-Mounted Notice-Board	
	18 Hand-carved Letters	
		£1591. 66

It was agreed that this payment should be made only when the goods had been safely delivered.

(ii) Payments Received

The Clerk reported that, since the last meeting, the following payments had been received:

B. & E. Overton	Advertisement: "Longdon Life"	£ 8. 00
Aqua Jet Services	Advertisement: "Longdon Life"	£ 6. 00
P. J. Adams	Advertisement: "Longdon Life"	£ 8. 00
W. Rose	Advertisement: " Longdon Life"	£ 8. 00
W. B. Sullivan	Refund	£19. 30

(iii) Current Balances

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

NatWest c/a: £897. 40 The Halifax d/a: £14062. 52

(iv) Appeals for Grant Aid(a) St. Giles Hospice, Whittington

On a motion proposed by Cllr. Juxon and seconded by Cllr. Mrs. Nichols, it was agreed that, in response to its appeal last September, when the Council decided to postpone its response till the New Year, a cheque for £100. 00 should now be sent to the Hospice.

Cllr. Hemmingsley asked that his objection to the Council's decision not to require a completed grant application form from the Hospice before making the donation be recorded.

(b) St. James Church, Longdon

On a motion proposed by Cllr. Butler and seconded by Cllr. Juxon, it was agreed that, having received a completed Grants Application Form from the P. C. C. Treasurer, the Council should now make a grant of £500. 00 towards the cost of maintaining Longdon Churchyard.

(v) Presentation of Financial Statement

The Clerk presented a Financial Statement for the third quarter of the current financial year ending on 31st December 2006, which was accepted by the Council.

It showed income at £15333. 14 and expenditure at £9806. 35 and an overall balance of £14959. 92.

(vi) Appointment of Independent Internal Auditor

It was agreed that John Blount, Clerk to Stowe-by-Chartley Parish Council and Staffordshire Branch Secretary of the Society of Local Council Clerks, should once again be invited to act as Independent Internal Auditor.

(vii) Increase in Fidelity Guarantee

The Clerk reported that he had spoken to Allianz Cornhill about raising the level of the Fidelity Guarantee from £10, 000 to £20, 000 and extending the cover to all Councillors.

He had been advised that, were the increase to cover only the Clerk, that element of the premium would simply be doubled in line with the new figure, but, since the Council intended to extend the cover to other signatories, that is, to all Councillors, the company would need to know more about the Council's arrangements, such as estimated income, total balance, system of check, and computer security.

In addition, the premium was likely to be substantially increased.

The Council decided that the Council's own checks were adequate and that the District Auditor's advice could be safely ignored.

12. CORRESPONDENCE SINCE LAST MEETING

(i) The Clerk reported that he had received from Mrs. L. M. Foster, of St. James Close, Longdon, a letter dated 3rd January 2007, in which she had voiced her concern over a number of local issues.

These included perceived inadequacies in the A51 traffic management scheme, the state of Church Hollow and of the bottom end of St. James Close, the presence of an untaxed vehicle in Brook End and the proposal to introduce traffic-calming in Upper Way.

Copies of this letter were distributed to Councillors at the meeting and Mrs. Foster's concerns discussed

The Clerk was instructed to write to Mrs. Foster assuring her that her concerns had been given serious consideration and appropriate action would be taken.

(ii) The Clerk reported that he had received an email dated 7th January 2007 from Julie Watson, who had recently arrived in the area and had asked what the function of a Parish Council was.

He had replied by inviting her to the present meeting and advising her where the minutes of the Parish Council's meetings could be consulted.

13. OTHER COMMUNICATIONS

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

- (i) From Beth Harris, Solicitor, Democratic, Development & Legal Services,
Lichfield District Council:

Executive Arrangements – Forward Plan 2006/07 – December – Version 1
(published 15th December 2006 – effective from period from 1st January 2007
to 30th April 2007);

Calendar of Meetings, fortnight ending 1st January 2007;

Calendar of Meetings, fortnight ending 21st January 2007.

- (ii) From The Licensing Officer, Democratic, Development & Legal Services,
Lichfield District Council:

Licensing Applications registered during week ending 22nd December 2006;

Licensing Applications registered during week ending 29th December 2006;

Licensing Applications registered during week ending 5th January 2007.

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

Register of Electors 2007 – Monthly Applications for 2nd January 2007.

- (iv) From The Administration Team, Organisational Development,
Lichfield District Council:

Christmas and New Year Refuse/Recycling Collections Arrangements 2006.

- (v) From The Staffordshire Parish Councils' Association:

Leaflet: How to become a Parish or Town Councillor (12 copies);

Leaflet: Making an impact – The promotion of participation in local community
democracy (one copy)

- (vi) From The Community Council of Staffordshire:

“Rural News and Views”: Christmas 2006;

Best Kept Village Competition 2007 – entry form;

2007 Diary of Village Festivals and Events – entries form.

(vii) From The Chief Executive, West Midlands Regional Assembly:

West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy – Phase Two Revision: Spatial Options.

(viii) From Matta Products Ltd., Sudbury, Middlesex:

Advertising Material: Safety Mattas (the perfect solution for providing maximum safety and encouraging grass growth in play areas).

In addition, the Council had received Christmas greetings from the Divisional Highway Manager, the Chief Executive of Lichfield District Council, and the Staffordshire Parish Councils' Association.

14. ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS

(i) The Clerk drew the attention of the Council to the award of the M. B. E. in the New Year Honours Lists to a Gentleshaw parishioner, Terry Burns, for service to the community.

He was instructed to write to Mr. Burns sending the Council's warmest congratulations.

(ii) Cllr. Hemmingsley advised the Council that the website was being re-designed in order to make it more user-friendly, especially for the partially-sighted.

It would also be compatible with the new operating systems being released such as Microsoft Vista.

He appealed to Councillors to provide him with new photographs of the parish to replace those currently being used.

He assured Councillors that they would have the opportunity to view the new system before he introduced it.

15. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Tuesday, February 13th, 2007, in the W. I. Hall, Longdon, commencing at 7. 30 p.m.