

**DRAFT MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE PARISH COUNCIL OF LONGDON
HELD IN THE MEETING ROOM OF CHRIST CHURCH, GENTLESHAW, ON
TUESDAY, MARCH 13TH, 2007**

Present: Cllr. S. K. Welch (Chairman); Cllr. B. J. Butler; Cllr. A. J. Juxon;
Cllr. Mrs. H. A. Meere; Cllr. Mrs. M. G. Nichols; Cllr. M. A. W. Parsons;
Cllr. H. M. P. Reynolds; and Cllr. N. Stanfield.

Also present were the Clerk; Cllr. N. J. Roberts; and Mrs. Jane Russell,
Village Correspondent for “The Lichfield Mercury”; and nine parishioners,
all residents of Hill Top, Longdon Green.

1. APOLOGIES

Cllr. The Rev. J. R. Andrews; Cllr. N. J. Bird; Cllr. R. C. Hemmingsley;
and County Councillor F. W. Lewis, M. B. E.

2. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the previous meeting, held in the W. I. Hall, Longdon, on Tuesday, February 13th, 2007, were then read.

The Chairman reported that he had received from Cllr. Hemmingsley a memorandum dated 12th March 2007, in which he expressed his concern that, in section 15 (ii) “Pro-Forma Invoice: Harry Stebbing Workshop”, on pages 07/22 and 07/23, the minutes did not represent an accurate account of the meeting for the following reasons:

1. he had had no opportunity to present his rebuttal to the letter in question;
2. within minutes of the discussion he had been abruptly admonished by the Clerk for, in his opinion, ‘dominating the meeting’, to which there had been no reference in the minutes;
3. although he had withdrawn from the meeting, he had actually spoken to the Chairman, asked to be excused and then walked out of the meeting in sheer disgust.

In responding to these criticisms, the Chairman pointed out that, at the very beginning of the discussion, he had asked Cllr. Hemmingsley if he wished to comment on the letter before withdrawing from the meeting. In addition, Cllr. Hemmingsley had already given his version of events at the meeting of the Council held on 9th January 2007 which had subsequently been recorded in the minutes (07/05).

He reminded the meeting that Cllr. Hemmingsley had withdrawn from the meeting by prior arrangement with the Chairman, who had advised Councillors of the agreed procedure for discussing Mrs. Stebbing’s complaint before the commencement of the discussion.

The Clerk added that he had intervened at a point when Cllr. Hemmingsley had gone beyond challenging the accuracy of Mrs. Stebbing’s account and, by suggesting that it would be a misuse of public funds to pay the revised invoice, he could be perceived as trying to influence the decision of the Council before Councillors had had time to consider the complaint.

On a motion proposed by Cllr. Butler and seconded by the Chairman, the minutes were then approved and signed as a true record without amendment or addition.

3. PARISHIONERS' QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS

The Chairman then asked if any member of the public wished to address the meeting.

Speaking on behalf of his fellow-residents, Mr. Gerald Golding said that they had come to the meeting to express their concern over a proposal by Andrew Wilkes Associates Limited, of Lymington, Hampshire, to site a base station at Hill Top at Hill Top Farm.

He listed residents' objections as follows:

1. As far as they were aware, nothing had changed since the previous proposals for a radio station at this site was abandoned;
2. The perceived health risk was unsettling and worrying for residents, especially those with children;
3. It would present an eyesore and would be prominent from many directions;
4. Several footpaths, all of which were well used, passed close by the proposed site, and there might therefore be health risks to the wider public;
5. The electrical interference caused to such things as car immobilisers would inconvenience and cause problems for residents;
6. There would be no benefit to residents at Hill Top who would be most affected;
7. As Hill Top was a site of historical interest, being the site of an ancient settlement, there was likely to be opposition from interested societies such as English Heritage.

The Chairman thanked Mr. Golding for making the Council aware of local residents' concerns and then asked Cllr. Roberts if he wished to speak.

Cllr. Roberts began by stressing that he was only able to speak on the subject because what was being discussed was a pre-application consultation; had it been a formal planning application, he would not have been able to speak on the subject in advance of the District Council's consideration of the application.

Referring to Lichfield District Council's Supplementary Planning Document on Telecommunications, he drew attention to the circumstances under which telecommunications development would be permitted: if masts were sited and designed so as to minimise visual impact; if there was no reasonable possibility of sharing facilities; if, in the case of radio masts, there was no reasonable possibility of erecting antenna on an existing building or other tall building; if it did not lie in an area of special protection referred to in Policy E7 unless the proposed location was constrained by significant technical problems; and if there was no material harm to views from public places protected by Policy C5.

In addition, there would be a prescription against telecommunications development in the following locations unless it could be conclusively demonstrated that the development would not harm the essential character of the area and there were very special circumstance to warrant approval of the proposal:

- where the proposal would lie within or adjacent to a Conservation Area
- where the proposal would lie within or adjacent to a Site of Special Scientific Interest
- where the setting of a Listed Building or an Ancient Monument would be adversely affected
- where the openness of the Green Belt or Rural Area would be compromised
- where the proposal would lie within or close to residential areas, schools, hospitals, children's nurseries and nursing homes
- where the proposal would be within or adjacent to an Area of Local Landscape Value or a Special Landscape Area where the character and appearance of that Area would be adversely affected.

Cllr. Roberts concluded by suggesting that, when all these circumstances were taken into consideration, the residents of Hill Top might well have a strong case for opposing the application when it was submitted.

The Chairman concluded the discussion by thanking Mr. Golding and Cllr. Roberts for their contributions and assuring them that the points which they had made would be taken into account when the Council considered the pre-application later in the meeting.

4. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

(i) Grass Area opposite Gentleshaw School

The Chairman reported that he would be meeting John Smith, Greens and Open Spaces Strategy Officer, and Justine Lloyd, Biodiversity Officer, both of Lichfield District Council, at Gentleshaw on March 23rd to discuss the management of this site.

(ii) Parish Website

The Chairman reported that, in his memorandum of March 12th, Cllr. Hemmingsley had informed the Council that, in the absence of any comments from Councillors, he had decided to upload the new site on 4th March 2007 and it was now fully functional on its original URL.

(iii) Site Meeting with Paul Rochfort

The Chairman reported that the Clerk had received a letter from Paul Rochfort, Rights of Way Assistant, dated 20th February 2007, in which he had asked the Council to clarify what measures it would like to see to improve the right of way between The Croft and the A51, following the site meeting which had taken place on February 6th to consider options.

Cllr. Welch commented that he was surprised that Mr. Rochfort felt that some confusion remained following the meeting, at which the Council's preference for staggered barriers and replacement steps had, in his opinion, been clearly stated.

The Clerk had already replied to Mr. Rochfort confirming the Council's preference.

It was noted that local residents – particularly mothers with prams or push-chairs - were still crossing the road opposite High Street

(iv) Speed-and-Volume Traffic Survey in Upper Way

The Clerk reported that, after consulting Cllr. Butler on the choice of site, he had written to the Divisional Highway Manager, suggesting a site close to North Lodge.

(v) Management of Spinney off Lysways Lane, Longdon Green

The Chairman reported that he would be meeting Clare Waterman, of the Staffordshire Wildlife Trust, in Longdon on April 5th, when they would be looking at ways of managing the spinney, Longdon Green and the brook at Brook End.

(vi) Notice-Boards

The Clerk reported that the notice-boards ordered from Harry Stebbing Workshop had been delivered to his house.

Cllr. Stanfield reminded the Council that planning permission should be sought before the Parish Council's own notice-board was erected.

Cllr. Welch reported that the owners of Crown Bank were still opposed to the siting of this notice-board within sight of their property, and he suggested that, instead, it be erected on the strip of grass between the telephone kiosk and the bus shelter, where it would be better protected from the weather and less likely to be uprooted.

On a motion proposed by Cllr. Butler and seconded by Cllr. Mrs. Meere, it was agreed that the notice-board should be erected at the site suggested by Cllr. Welch and that the Clerk should apply for the necessary planning permission.

On a motion proposed by Cllr. Juxon and seconded by Cllr. Mrs. Nichols, it was further agreed that Alan Johnson, of Aqua Jet Service, should be asked to erect both this and the new notice-board in front of Longdon Post Office.

(vii) Posting of draft minutes on Parish Website

On a motion proposed by Cllr. Reynolds and seconded by Cllr. Juxon, it was agreed that the minutes of the latest meeting of the Council should be posted on the Parish Website without previously being approved.

5. PLANNING

(i) Report of Working Group

In the absence of Cllr. Hemmingsley, Cllr. Stanfield reported that the Working Group had considered the following planning applications:

07/00154/FUL: Lichfield Cathedral School: Two-storey and single-storey extensions to form visitors and delivery entrance, classrooms, stores and dining/assembly area: St. John's Preparatory School.

It had been concluded that there was no objection to this application, but the District Council should be urged to ensure that all planning conditions attached to permission granted to earlier planning applications had been fulfilled, particularly as regards landscaping.

The Clerk reported that he had received an email from Abbie Alcock, the School's Development Officer, dated 12th March 2007, in which she had invited a representative of the Parish Council to a presentation which the Headmaster would be making to parents at Longdon Hall on Monday, March 19th.

Cllr. Stanfield agreed to attend on the Council's behalf.

07/00172/FUL: M. Lukeman: Alterations to front elevation including new bay windows, replacement windows and gables: Hillside, Stockings Lane, Longdon.

There had been no objection to this development, which, it was believed, would improve the appearance of the dwelling.

(ii) For Consideration

(a) Pre-Application Consultation

Applicant: AWA Telecommunications Network Implementation & Management, Lymington, Hampshire

Proposal: Proposed Base Station

Location: Hill Top Farm, Longdon Green

Having heard the objections of local residents earlier in the meeting, the Council agreed that the Clerk should inform AWA that the Council had reservations regarding its proposal, to which it would respond in full when consulted by the Local Planning Authority upon submission of the formal planning application.

In particular, Councillors were concerned that the mast would be clearly seen from nearby footpaths, that it would adjacent to a small settlement and between two schools and that no evidence had been presented to support the claim that neighbouring sites would be unsuitable.

Copies of this letter should be sent to Jeff Upton, the District Council's Development Control Manager, and to Mr. Gerald Golding.

(iii) Approved by Lichfield District Council

The Clerk reported that he had received no Notices of Permission for Development from Lichfield District Council since the previous meeting.

(iv) Refused by Lichfield District Council

The Clerk reported that he had received no Notices of Refusal of Permission for Development from Lichfield District Council since the previous meeting.

(v) Other Planning Matters

(a) Unauthorised parking of caravans in field opposite Commonsode, Gentleshaw

Cllr. Roberts reported that he had spoken to Christine Hibbs, the District Council's Enforcement Officer, who believed that, in view of the expense involved, she needed the authority of her Council at its monthly meeting before she could take the next legal step in procuring the removal of these caravans, though Cllr. Roberts believed that she already had sufficient authority to proceed.

He would, however, continue to press for a resolution to the problem.

6. REPORTS OF MEETINGS

(i) "The Last Post", an event held by the Community Council of Staffordshire to highlight the proposed changes to rural Post Office services

The Clerk presented a written report on the above event, which had taken place at The Gatehouse Theatre, Stafford, on Thursday, 1st March 2007.

There had been presentations by Mike Dalton, Head of Communications in the West Midlands, Royal Mail Group (on "Consultation Proposals"), Kenneth Parsons, of the Rural Shops Alliance (on "The Future of Rural Post Offices"), and by Roseleen Bonner, of Postwatch (on "The Postwatch View").

These presentations had been followed by workshops, on whose conclusions the Community Council's response would be based.

(ii) Other Meetings

No other reports were presented.

7. NOTICE OF MEETINGS

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

(i) Cannock Chase AONB Partnership – Parish Councils' Meeting: Wednesday, 14th March 2007, at Walton Village Hall, commencing at 7. 30 p.m.

The Chairman intended to be present at this meeting.

(ii) Staffordshire Police Authority – Community Consultation Committee for Burntwood and District Neighbourhood Policing Unit: Public Meeting at Alrewas Village Hall, Wellfield Road, Alrewas, on Thursday, 15th March 2007, commencing at 7. 00 p.m.

The Clerk hoped to attend this meeting.

(iii) Community Learning Workshops: 4th April, Kings Bromley Village Hall; 18th April, John O'Leary Centre, Cannock Chase; 27th April, Whitmore Village Hall; 3rd May, Brewood Village Hall; 8th May, The Community Council of Staffordshire; 14th May, Leigh Village Hall.

They would all take place between 9. 30 a.m. and 3. 00 p.m., and lunch would be provided.

Presentations would include funding advice and information on parish plans, Local Strategic Partnerships, Local Area Agreements, and the Rural Access to Services Partnership.

The Clerk hoped to be able to attend one of these workshops.

8. HIGHWAYS AND FOOTPATHS

(i) A51 Traffic Management Scheme at Longdon

The Clerk reported that he had received from Will Rose, of The Croft, Longdon, an email dated 20th February 2007 in which he reported speaking to an engineer installing monitoring equipment in the box which controls the traffic-light crossing on the A51 at Longdon, the purpose of which was to inform control at Stafford by radio if the lights become faulty.

He had asked the engineer if any monitoring equipment had been or could be installed to count use of the crossing; none had been, but it could be. Moreover, the engineer had thought that it would be easy to monitor the speed of vehicles using the existing loops in the road, and, while it would not be able to provide registration numbers, it would provide information on average speeds.

Mr. Rose added that, living alongside the A51, he was aware that the 40 mph speed limit was, at times, being exceeded, and he asked if the Parish Council would be prepared to ask the Highways Department to install such equipment and report on its findings.

It was agreed that the Clerk should write to the Divisional Highway Manager, asking him if this would be possible.

9. GREENS AND OPEN SPACES

The Clerk reported that he had received from Graham McCulloch, mowing contractor, a letter dated 3rd March 2007, in which he said that he was happy to carry on with the mowing contract for another year on the same terms as the last two years.

He had also asked whether the Council would like him to treat the church carpark with herbicide again this year, at last year's price of £70. 00, and it was agreed that the Clerk should write to Mr. McCulloch asking him to carry this out.

10. COMMUNITY HALLS

(i) Longdon Village Hall

The Clerk reported that he had received from Neil Vyse, Chairman of the Longdon Village Hall Management Committee, an email dated 9th March 2007, in which he had informed the Council that he had been unable to secure the stands discarded by his office for displaying journals and documents in the Village Hall.

(ii) Longdon Memorial Hall

The Clerk reported that he had received from Tracy Fellows, co-ordinator of the Longdon Memorial Hall Refurbishment Fund, an email dated 6th March 2007, asking to be informed of the problems which the Parish Council was having with regard to the way in which the Refurbishment Fund had been set up.

The Clerk was instructed to explain to Mrs. Fellows the problem over contributing public funds to the appeal while uncertainty continued to exist over the ownership of the Hall, an uncertainty which would be removed if the Council were to receive an unequivocal assurance from the Club and Institute that it made no claim to the ownership of the Hall.

It was also the view of the Council that any internal works such as the updating of the electrical system should not be included in the appeal, which should rather focus on the fabric of the building and the proposed Peace Garden.

11. BEST KEPT VILLAGE COMPETITION 2007

It was agreed that both St. James School and Longdon Pre-School should be asked to provide posters for the Competition.

The Clerk presented the results of a survey of street furniture which he had just carried out and on which he had recorded the maintenance work which he believed needed carrying out.

Cllr. Mrs. Nichols commented that priority should be given to the replacement of dilapidated flower tubs and the repair of bus shelters.

12. ANNUAL ASSEMBLY 2007

It was agreed that this should be held on Monday, April 30th, and should commence at 7.45 p.m.

The Clerk was instructed to write to the Head Teacher of St. James School to ask whether it could be held in the School Hall.

It was agreed that the programme should be the same as last year and that PC Andy Brown, the Local Community Beat Officer, should be invited to give a talk or presentation or to be present to answer residents' questions.

The ladies of Longdon W. I. would once again be asked to serve refreshments.

13. PARISH WEBSITE

The Clerk reported that he had received from Eric Roy, of Eric Roy Consulting, Abbots Bromley, a letter dated 28th February 2007, in which he offered to continue the existing arrangements for hosting the Parish Website for a further twelve months for a fee of £130.00.

On a motion proposed by Cllr. Juxon and seconded by Cllr. Mrs. Meere, it was agreed to invite Mr. Roy to continue with the present arrangements at the required fee of £130.00.

14. CHURCHYARDS

(i) St. James, Longdon

The Clerk reported that he had received from the Rev. Michael Jefferson, Vicar of Longdon, a letter dated 24th February 2007 in which he had thanked the Parish Council for its donation of £500.00 towards the cost of maintaining the churchyard, which had last year cost in excess of £1000.00.

He had, in addition, informed the Council that the damaged post at the entrance to the car park had been reported to the Parochial Church Council, and he would endeavour to see that something was done about this in the near future.

The Clerk asked whether the Council would consider providing the car park with a kissing-gate, but it was felt that the Council should wait until it was known how the P. C. C. intended to resolve the matter.

15. FINANCIAL MATTERS

(i) Payment of Accounts

On a motion proposed by Cllr. Juxon and seconded by Cllr. Stanfield, payment of the following accounts, received since the previous meeting, was approved:

Christ Church, Gentleshaw	Hire of Room	£ 10.00
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W. B. Sullivan	Clerk's Salary: £300.00	
	Photocopying: £122.18	
	Postage: £ 16.29	
		£438.47

LCR	12 subscriptions	£144.00
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(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: £2346. 94 (less uncleared cheques: £1751. 52)	The Halifax d/a: £10562. 52
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(iv) Appeals for Grant Aid(a) Lichfield District Council Summer Playscheme

On a motion proposed by Cllr. Mrs. Nichols and seconded by Cllr. Stanfield, it was agreed that the Council should make a grant of £150. 00 towards the cost of this year's Summer Playscheme.

(b) Christ Church, Gentleshaw, Flower Festival

On a motion proposed by Cllr. Butler and seconded by Cllr. Mrs. Meere, it was agreed that the Council should make a grant of £50. 00 towards the cost of the above Flower Festival.

(v) Intermediate Internal Audit 2006/2007

The Clerk reported that he had received from John Blount a letter dated 23rd February 2007, enclosing his Interim Audit Report.

The general tenor of his report had been positive, but he had made a number of constructive suggestions for improving the Council's financial procedures.

It was agreed that the Finance and General Purposes Sub-Committee should consider these suggestions at its next meeting.

16. CORRESPONDENCE SINCE LAST MEETING

(i) The Clerk reported that he had received from Sue Shiel, Senior Assistant (Electoral Services), Democratic, Development and Legal Services, Lichfield District Council, a letter dated 19th February 2007, in which she had drawn the attention of the Council to a resource pack, "All about parish and town councils", which the Electoral Commission had produced in partnership with the National Association of Local Councils.

The booklet detailed the roles of parish and town councillors and answered frequently-asked questions on candidacy, and the information was available to download on the Electoral Commission's website (www.dopolitics.org.uk) and on NALC's website www.nalc.co.uk

(ii) The Clerk reported that he had received from Andy Halden, Village of the Year Organiser, Community Council of Staffordshire, a letter dated 26th February 2007, drawing the Council's attention to the Calor Village of the Year Competition which was being organised throughout Staffordshire this year and which was open to villages with a population of less than 5000.

Cllr. Mrs. Nichol's suggested that the Council might think of entering Longdon in this Competition next year instead of in the Best Kept Village Competition.

(iii) The Clerk reported that he had received from Eva Antao, Referrals Case Manager, Standards Board for England, a letter dated 2nd March 2007, enclosing the Board's decision on an alleged breach of the Code on the part of Cllr. Hemmingsley which had recently been reported to the Board by Mrs. Pam Stebbing.

The decision of the Board had been that there had been no evidence to support the alleged breach and the Board would not be taking any action.

The Chairman suggested that the incident had been a reminder to all Councillors that, when acting in their role as public servants, they should aim for an unimpeachable standard of behaviour, which might mean responding differently from the way they might otherwise respond in a situation which only involved them as a private individual.

He was anxious that Cllr. Hemmingsley should not think that he was being discriminated against in this instance; indeed, the Council recognised and appreciated his invaluable contribution to the work of the Council.

He felt that the matter had now run its course and should now be considered closed.

(iv) The Clerk reported that he had received from David Ward, Chair of the Black Country Core Strategy Steering Group, a letter dated 2nd March 2007, informing the Council that the Launch Event on 6th December 2006 had been very successful, and the discussions and views at the event were available to view in the event report at
<http://blackcountrycorestrategy.dudley.gov.uk>.

He had concluded by inviting the Council to contact the Steering Group by the end of March 2007 if the Council wished to provide any relevant information or discuss any matters that it wished to consider.

(v) The Clerk reported that he had received from A. P. Harris, Environmental Supervisor, Operational Services, Lichfield District Council, a letter dated 5th March 2007, informing the Council his Department was making some changes to wheeled bin collection days about which affected residents across the district were being informed through the delivery of calendars and the attaching of stickers on their black bins.

It was agreed that the District Council should be congratulated on its record for waste collection.

(vi) The Clerk reported that he had also received, by email from Spencer Duval, Leisure Officer, Democratic, Development and Legal Department, Lichfield District Council, an undated letter informing the Council that Lichfield District Council was currently undergoing a tree survey throughout the district and offering parish councils the opportunity to 'piggyback' onto it so as to benefit from the excellent price the District Council had managed to arrange with the surveyors.

However, the Parish Council had already commissioned a survey of the trees in the spinney on Longdon Green, which, together with the trees which it had already planted on the Green itself, were the only trees within its ownership.

17. OTHER COMMUNCIATIONS

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

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

Calendar of Meetings, fortnight ending 18th March 2007.

(ii) From The Licensing officer, Democratic, Development and Legal Services, Lichfield District Council:

Licensing Act Applications registered during w/e 23rd February 2007;
 Licensing Act Applications registered during w/e 2nd March 2007;
 Licensing Act Applications registered during w/e 9th March 2007.

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

Register of Electors 2007 – Monthly Applications for 1st March 2007

<i>Abigail C. Clark</i>	<i>Moat Farm, Borough Lane, Longdon</i>	<i>Addition</i>
<i>Paul C. Clark</i>	<i>Moat Farm, Borough Lane, Longdon</i>	<i>Addition</i>
<i>Caroline Hudson</i>	<i>2 Hay Lane, Longdon Green</i>	<i>Addition</i>
<i>Z. Charles W. Price</i>	<i>2 Hay Lane, Longdon Green</i>	<i>Removal</i>

(iv) From The National Association of Local Councils:

“LCR”: Volume 58, No. 6 – March 2007.

(v) From The Open Spaces Society:

“Open Space”: Volume 28, No. 8 – Spring 2007.

(vi) From The Sustainable Staffordshire Forum, c/o Development Services Directorate, Staffordshire County Council:

“Sustainable Staffordshire”: Issue 20, Spring 2007.

(vii) From St. Giles Hospice, Whittington:

St. Giles Hospice News: Spring/Summer 2007.

18. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

(i) Cllr. Juxon notified the Council of his intention to produce the next issue of “Longdon Life” in time for Easter and invited Councillors to contribute.

19. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Tuesday, April 10th, 2007, in the W. I. Hall, Longdon, commencing at 7. 30 p.m.