

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE PARISH COUNCIL OF LONGDON HELD
IN THE W. I. HALL, LONGDON, ON TUESDAY, JUNE 10TH, 2008

Present: Cllr. R. C. Hemmingsley (Chairman); Cllr. The Rev. J. R. Andrews;
Cllr. B. J. Butler; Cllr. Mrs. G. D. Duckett; Cllr. A. J. Juxon;
Cllr. Mrs. J. A. Russell; Cllr. N. Stanfield; and Cllr. S. K. Welch.

Also present were the Clerk; Cllr. N. J. Roberts, of Lichfield District Council; and County Councillor F. W. Lewis, MBE.

1. APOLOGIES

Cllr. N. J. Bird; Cllr. Mrs. H. A. Meere; and Cllr. M. A. W. Parsons.

2. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS

(i) Minutes of the Annual Meeting

The minutes of the Annual Meeting, held in the W. I. Hall, Longdon, on Tuesday, May 15th, 2008, were, on a motion proposed by Cllr. Welch and seconded by Cllr. Juxon, approved and signed.

(ii) Minutes of the previous meeting of the Council

The minutes of the previous meeting of the Council, held in the W. I. Hall, Longdon, immediately following the Annual Meeting, were, on a motion proposed by Cllr. Welch and seconded by Cllr. Juxon, approved and signed.

3. PARISHIONER' QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS

No parishioners were present.

4. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

(i) Footpath across Glebe Field

The Clerk reported that he had written to the Secretary of the Diocesan Glebe Committee, giving details of the Council's proposal to improve the surface of the footpath across the Glebe Field.

He had sent a copy of his letter to the Secretary of St. James Parochial Church Council.

(ii) Village Nameplates

The Clerk reported that he had written to John Roobottom, Technical Assistant, Operational Services, Lichfield District Council, re-iterating the Parish Council's willingness to fund the provision of village nameplates in the parish and asking for a copy of his Council's approved design.

(iii) Village Lengthsman Agreement

The Clerk reported that he has applied to the County Treasurer for the first half-yearly payment under this agreement.

(iv) AONB Signing

The Clerk reported that, after consultation with the Chairman, he had signed on behalf of the Parish Council the agreement required by the County Council before the above signs could be erected.

(v) Remembrance Day Open Air Service

The Clerk reported that he had written to Mrs. Woollard, advising her to write to Lichfield District Council, owners of the grassed area in Brook End where the Longdon Branch of the Royal British Legion would like to hold an open air service on Remembrance Day, requesting the District Council's consent.

(vi) Hedgerow outside "The Kennels", Upper Longdon

The Clerk reported that this hedgerow had now been cut.

(vii) Solidifying Lime in Brereton Hill Lane

The Clerk reported that this had now been cleared.

(viii) Trout Lodge, Beaudesert Park

The Clerk reported that he had written to Christine Hibbs, Lichfield District Council's Enforcement Officer, asking her to investigate recent developments at the above site.

(ix) Newly-parked Horse Box and Container in Field at side of Commonsie, Gentleshaw

The Clerk reported that he had written to Mrs. Hibbs, asking her to investigate this apparent infringement of planning regulations.

5. PLANNING

(i) Report of Working Group

08/00516/FUL: Mr. William Tyler: New vehicle access: "Giddies". Hay Lane, Longdon Green

Cllr. Stanfield reported that the Working Group had considered this application and had raised no objection to it.

(ii) For Consideration

No further planning applications were considered.

(iii) 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:

08/00210/LBC: Mr. M. Hammersley: Creation of new opening between Waggon's Rest and Rafters Cottage: Former holiday cottages, Gorton Lodge Farm, Gorton Lodge Lane, Longdon

08/00286/FUL: Mr. Bradbury: Conservatory to rear: The Bungalow, Commonsides, Gentleshaw

08/00289/FUL: Mr. & Mrs. D. Hopley: First-floor extension and loft conversion with dormer windows to form bedrooms, en suite and study: 3 Church Way, Longdon

08/00349/FUL: Mr. & Mrs. W. Robinson: Conservatory: 52 Upper Way, Upper Longdon

(iv) 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 Longdon.

(v) Other Planning Matters

(a) Locally Listed Buildings Survey

It was agreed that an invitation to parishioners to nominate buildings in Longdon for inclusion in this survey should be posted on the Parish Website.

Amongst buildings suggested by Councillors were "The Swan with Two Necks", the W. I. Hall (formerly the village smithy) and Longdon Village Hall (a Victorian building which was formerly the village school).

(b) Stables in Borough Lane

The Clerk reported that he had received from Christine Hibbs, Principal Planning Officer, Democratic, Development and Legal Services, Lichfield District Council, a letter dated 2nd June 2008, confirming that, as permission had not been granted for the change of use of the land off Borough Lane to the keeping of horses, these shelters, whilst not constituting development, also required planning permission as they related to an unauthorised use.

Mrs. Hibbs had added that, under the circumstances, she would be taking up this matter with the landowner.

Cllr. Stanfield pointed out that the implication of Mrs. Hibbs' letter was that horse shelters were not, in planning terms, buildings, and he suggested that some guidance was needed in understanding when and by what criteria shelters became recognisable as buildings.

The Clerk was instructed to write to Mrs. Hibbs asking for such guidance.

(c) Redhill Barn, Bardy Lane, Upper Longdon

The Clerk reported that he had received from Dr. Richard Totty, of Rock Cottage, Bardy Lane, Upper Longdon, a letter dated 4th June 2008, informing the Parish Council that the appeal by Mr. Willows against the Enforcement Notice served on him regarding commercial activities being pursued at Redhill Barn had been heard by a Planning Inspector, who had upheld the appeal and given consent for the use of the premises in the course of the business being carried out there by Mr. Willows.

However, this consent had been hedged around by a number of conditions designed to protect the environment and the well-being of neighbours.

Dr. Totty had expressed satisfaction with the outcome of the appeal and had thanked the Parish Council for its support.

The Clerk confirmed that he had not yet received a copy of the Inspector's report.

Cllr. Stanfield was concerned that, now consent had been given for the premises to be used for business purposes, Lichfield District Council should levy a business rate from the owner.

His recent research had suggested that Lichfield District Council was lax in collecting business rates from businesses being run in the parish, and he suggested that the Clerk should write to the District Council's Rating Officer, asking for a list of these businesses.

The Clerk was instructed so to do.

6. REPORTS OF MEETINGS

(i) Lichfield District Parish Forum (Gold Report Presentation): June 9th

The Clerk reported that there had been a meeting of the Lichfield District Parish Forum in the Council Chamber, District Council House, Frog Lane, Lichfield, on Monday, June 9th, 2008, at which the "Gold Report", a report on last year's flooding, had been presented.

However, the notice given of the meeting had been so short that neither Cllr. Hemmingsley, Cllr. Stanfield nor he had been able to attend.

Cllr. Roberts said that a lot had been learnt from last year's experience and, fortunately, no lives had been lost locally as a result of the flooding.

(ii) Cannock Wood & Gentleshaw Village Hall Management Committee AGM: June 4th

Cllr. Hemmingsley reported that the Annual General Meeting of the Cannock Wood and Gentleshaw Village Hall Management Committee had taken place at the Village Hall on Wednesday, June 4th, 2008, and had been attended by himself and three others, including the Committee's Chairman and Treasurer.

He was pleased to report that bookings had increased markedly and that, as a result, the Committee's financial position had improved, but it still faced substantial expenditure on repairs and improvements.

7. NOTICE OF MEETINGS

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

- (i) Lichfield District Parish Forum: Monday, June 18th, 2008, in the Council Chamber, District Council House, Frog Lane, Lichfield, starting at 7. 00 p.m.

(ii) National Association of AONBs Annual Conference: Wednesday, July 9th, to Friday, July 11th, 2008.

Cllr. Welch said that he would be making a presentation at one of the sessions.

(iii) Visit to Beaudesert Park Farm: Monday, July 21st, 2008 from 9. 30 a.m. to 1. 00 p.m.

Cost (including barbecue): £5. 00 (cheques made payable to “Staffordshire County Council”)

(iv) Walk around Birches Valley led by Andy Coggins, of the Forestry Commission: Thursday, August 7th, 2008, from 9. 00 a.m. to 12 noon.

There is no charge for this event.

8. HIGHWAYS AND FOOTPATHS

(i) Report of Meeting of Highways and Footpaths Committee

Cllr. Stanfield presented a written report on a meeting of the Highways and Footpaths Committee which had taken place on Tuesday, May 20th, 2008 (*Appendix A*), and at which he had been elected chairman.

At this meeting it had been reported that fifty-one of the parish’s footpaths and bridleways had been surveyed and complaints relating to fifteen of them received. These had been forwarded to Paul Rochfort, the Principal Rights of Way Officer of Staffordshire County Council.

The Clerk had subsequently received a letter from Caroline Watterson, Rights of Way Assistant, dated June 3rd, 2008, acknowledging receipt of the reports and informing the Council that a Ranger inspection of each of the Public Rights of Way mentioned would be requested and the appropriate action taken following the investigations.

There was still concern over Footpath No. 33, where public access remained permanently restricted by wire and a padlock.

An application had been submitted under the County Council’s Community Paths Initiative for a grant towards the cost of upgrading the surface of the footpath across the Glebe Field.

Cllr. Mrs. Duckett had made an offer on behalf of the Longdon Village Hall Management Committee to contribute towards the cost of a glass-fronted notice-board in the Village Hall car park which the Parish Council was considering replacing.

Cllr. Mrs. Duckett had reported that she had spoken to Ocean View Properties about the problem of school traffic lining up in Church Hill at the entrance to Longdon Hall each morning, but the company had seemed unwilling to take any action, since access was already adequate for its own purposes.

Elaborating on Cllr. Stanfield’s report, Cllr. Mrs. Duckett said that the Village Hall Management Committee was prepared to contribute up to £200. 00 towards the cost of the replacement notice-board, but the Chairman pointed out that the cost of the kind of notice-board preferred by the Management Committee could be as much as £1000. 00.

It was agreed that the provision of a notice-board in the Village Hall car park should be discussed at the next meeting of the Highways and Footpaths Committee, which would be taking place on July 29th.

(ii) Stockings Lane, Upper Longdon

The Clerk reported that he had received from Glen Ogden, Street Scene Supervisor (Street Cleaning), Operational Services, Lichfield District Council, a letter dated 28th May 2008 informing the Council that this area had received a full road sweep on Wednesday, 28th June, and Thursday, 29th June.

The Clerk further reported that he had received from Ken Owen, Divisional Highway Manager, Development Services Directorate, Staffordshire County Council, a letter dated 2nd June 2008, in which Mr. Owen had suggested that a site meeting be arranged with Richard Harris, the Assistant Divisional Highway Manager, to consider the options available for dealing with the problem of an apparent reduction of the width of the road at its junction with Catmeadow Lane.

The Clerk was instructed to agree with Mr. Harris and Cllr. Lewis a convenient time for such a site meeting

9. GREENS AND OPEN SPACES(i) Mowing Contractor's Report

The Clerk reported that he had received from Graham McCulloch, the Council's mowing contractor, a report dated 16th May 2008, in which he had drawn the Council's attention to a depression in front of the bench outside "Kosikot", Brook End, which was making mowing difficult.

The Council agreed to monitor the situation.

On a motion proposed by Cllr. Juxon and seconded by Cllr. Andrews, the Council confirmed that it wished Mr. McCulloch to apply herbicide to the church car park on his next visit to the parish.

(ii) Location of Benches on Highway Verge at Various Junctions of A51

The Clerk reported that he had received from Ken Owen, Divisional Highway Manager, Development Services Directorate, Staffordshire County Council, a letter dated 2nd June 2008, confirming that he would support the installation of benches at the four locations listed in the Clerk's letter of 12th May 2008 and that Staffordshire County Council would issue the Parish Council with a licence

He stressed, however, that this would be on condition that the Parish Council indemnified the County Council against any third party claims.

Cllr. Welch said that he would now seek estimates for the manufacture and erection of the benches.

(iii) Play Area or Playing Facilities for Longdon Children

The Clerk reported that he had received from Chris Wardle, Chairman of Governors of St. James C. E. (V. C.) School, Longdon, a letter dated 23rd May 2008 in reply to the Council's letter of 30th January 2008, rejecting the Council's proposal that the School play area might be made available for recreational use by local children when the School was not in session.

Mr. Wardle had cited a number of reasons for rejection under health and safety, vandalism, security, insurance and replacement of equipment.

Councillors were greatly disappointed by Mr. Wardle's delayed response to the Clerk's letter, which had not gone so far as to make a firm proposal but had simply asked for a meeting between the Governors and the Parish Council to explore the

possibility that these publicly-funded facilities could be more widely used to the benefit of the community.

It was felt that all the Governors' objections could have been addressed at such a meeting, and it was pointed out that, in any case, local children were already using the School field unofficially in out-of-school hours.

It was agreed that the absence of a play area for local children and the efforts of the Parish Council to address the problem should be the subject of an article in the next issue of "Longdon Life", which would also invite comment and suggestion from local residents.

10. BEST KEPT VILLAGE COMPETITION

The Clerk reported that, while the villages were looking well maintained, there were three black-spots which should be looked at – the ford, to whose condition the Council's attention had already been drawn; Ford Lane, where weeds were growing alongside the W. I. Hall and the against the Village Hall wall; and the church car park.

The condition of the ford was already under review and the church car park would shortly be treated with herbicide.

Cllr. Stanfield said that he held a licence to use weed-killer and would treat the weeds in Ford Lane the next day.

Cllr. Mrs. Duckett confirmed that she had been into St. James School to present the Council's prizes to the winners of the children's poster competition and to give the Council's cheque for £60. 00 to the Headmaster.

It was agreed that the Council would enter posters in the BKV Children's Poster Competition, subject to the consent of the Head Teacher.

11. GENERAL ADMINISTRATION

(i) Minutes of the Annual Assembly

The minutes of the Annual Meeting of the Parish Assembly, held in the Hall of St. James School, Longdon, on Thursday, May 15th, 2008, were, on a motion proposed by Cllr. Welch and seconded by Cllr. Stanfield, approved and signed.

The Chairman expressed himself disappointed at the number of Councillors absent from the meeting, though he conceded that this might in part have been due to the fact that there had been shorter notice than in the past of the date of the meeting.

However, to rectify this, he proposed that the date of next year's Annual Assembly should be fixed at the Council's September meeting.

He thanked the Chairmen of the two new Committees for having given a detailed report on their Committee's activities.

12. LAW AND ORDER

(i) Joint Operations Group Updates

The Clerk reported that, since the last meeting, he had received by email three reports from Bob Haynes, Community Safety Officer, Lichfield District Council, of meetings of the Joint Operations Group dated May 23rd, June 6th and June 9th, 2008.

At the first of these meetings, PC Bestwick had reported that an increase in under-age drinking on a Friday evening had been mainly due to a party held on

Gentleshaw Common by Year 11 school-leavers to celebrate the end of exams, when 43 items of alcohol had been confiscated.

Over four hundred youths were reported to have been on Gentleshaw Common, and Inspector Staite had suggested that, prior to the next year-end exams, letters would be sent to parents in conjunction with a campaign of “Where is your Child?”.

13. FINANCIAL MATTERS

(i) Accounts for Payment

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

*G. C. McCulloch	Mowing – May	£215. 00
Longdon W. I.	Hire of Hall – May 20 th : £ 12. 00 June 10 th : £ 12. 00	£ 24. 00
W. B. Sullivan	Clerk’s Salary: £300. 00 Photocopying: £107. 19 #Laminating children’s posters: £ 12. 40 Postage: £ 32. 56 Annual Assembly Reports: £ 90. 80 #BKV prizes: £ 40. 00	£582. 95
Aqua Jet Services	Cleaning roadside signs and repairing notice-board:	£183. 00
(* confirmation	#payment under Section 137)	

(ii) Payments Received

The Clerk reported that no payments had been received since the last meeting, but there were two payments outstanding for advertisements in the March issue of “Longdon Life”, though both debtors had been sent a reminder.

Cllr. Juxon said that he would pursue payment.

(iii) Current Balances

The Clerk reported that, on June 4th, 2008, the Council’s balances had stood as follows:

NatWest c/a: £294. 93

The Halifax s/a: £24320. 23.

(iv) Appeals for Grant Aid

(a) Lichfield and Cannock Cruse Bereavement Care

The Clerk reported that he had received from Josie Boughton, Funding and Bereavement Officer, Lichfield and Cannock Cruse Bereavement Care, a letter dated 21st May 2008, asking for financial support to enable the charity to continue to provide bereavement support.

On a motion proposed by Cllr. Welch and seconded by Cllr. Juxon, it was agreed that a donation of £50. 00 be made to the charity.

Payment of this donation would be under Section 137 of the 1972 Local Government Act.

(b) Mencap

The Clerk reported that he had received from Phil Hetherington, Fundraising Executive, West Midlands, Mencap, a letter dated 29th May 2008, asking the Council to consider making a donation to the charity.

It was decided, however, that the appeal was not sufficiently localised for the Council to be justified in making a donation under Section 137.

(v) Arrangements for Second and Final Independent Internal Audit

The Clerk reported that the second and final independent internal audit of the Parish Council's accounts for the financial year ended 31st March 2008 would take place at his house on Tuesday, June 24th, at 10. 30 a.m.

14. CORRESPONDENCE SINCE LAST MEETING

(i) The Clerk reported that he had received from Olwen Dutton, Chief Executive, West Midlands Regional Assembly, a letter dated 16th May 2008, informing the Council that the consultation on the West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy Phase Two Revision Draft had been extended further to 8th December 2008 in the light of recent discussions with the Government office for the West Midlands.

(ii) The Clerk reported that he had received from Mrs. Val Shand, Secretary of the Parochial Church Council of St. James Church, Longdon, a letter dated 22nd May 2008, thanking the Council for its very generous grant to the chancel roof restoration fund.

(iii) The Clerk reported that he had received from David La Trobe, Assistant Honorary Secretary, Longdon Cricket Club, a letter dated 24th May 2008, apologising for not submitting a report in time for the Annual Assembly, which was due to the fact that he had been away on holiday at the time.

(iv) The Clerk reported that he had received from Vanessa Day, Patient Public Involvement Lead – East, South Staffordshire NHS Primary Care Trust, a letter dated May 2008, in which she had enclosed a brief consultation paper and a public information poster about the Trust's plans to build a Health and Wellbeing Centre in Chase Terrace.

The Clerk added that he had duplicated the poster and placed a copy on each of the Parish Council's notice boards.

(v) The Clerk reported that he had received from Gill Wyatt, Chief Officer, Carers Association South Staffordshire, a letter dated May 2008, enclosing a poster showing details of events taking place in the area during National Carers Week, which was running from June 9th to June 15th.

The Clerk added that he had duplicated the poster and placed a copy on each of the Parish Council's notice-boards.

15. OTHER COMMUNICATIONS

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

- (i) From Dawn Everitt, Democratic, Development and Legal Services, Lichfield District Council:

Forward Plan – Version 1 – issued 16. 05. 08 – effective for period 01 – 06 – 2008;
Calendar of Meetings, fortnight ending 8th June 2008.

- (ii) From Sally Duckett, Licensing Assistant, Democratic, Development and Legal Services, Lichfield District Council:

Licensing Act Applications registered during w/e 30th May 2008

- (iii) From Sarah Bradley, Licensing Assistant, Democratic, Development and Legal Services, Lichfield District Council:

Licensing Act Applications registered during w/e 6th June 2008.

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

Register of Electors – Monthly Applications for 2nd June 2008.

- (v) From Staffordshire Police:

“saferstaffs” (Trent Valley Edition): Summer 2008.

- (vi) From Lichfield District Council Energy Initiative:

New heating and insulation grant launches for residents in Lichfield District (enclosure: Heat Pack – “A little gift to keep you warm”).

- (vii) From Staffordshire County Council Ranger Service:

Countryside Events: June 2008.

- (viii) From The Open Spaces Society:

“Open Spaces”: Summer 2008, Vol. 29, No. 2;
Annual Report and Accounts 2007.

16. ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS

(i) It was agreed that the next issue of “Longdon Life” would be in August and that a Christmas issue should appear in November.

(ii) Cllr. Stanfield said that he had been greatly disappointed to find on a recent visit to District Council House that planning issues raised by the Parish Council in its carefully-constructed observations were not being addressed by officers when preparing their reports for presentation at meetings of the District Council's Planning Committee.

It was agreed that Cllr. Roberts should be made aware of the Parish Council's deep concern over the demoralising indifference being shown to parish council observations by planning officers.

(iii) The Chairman said that he was gravely concerned by the poor attendance at Council meetings of some of its members.

One Councillor had attended only one of this year's monthly meetings and was currently at her holiday cottage in Cornwall, while another, who had attended only two of this year's meetings, had decided to have an early night before setting off to Scotland the next day.

The Clerk pointed out that there was general agreement amongst Councils that only ill-health and work commitments should be accepted as satisfactory reasons for absence and that, as a consequence, some Councils exercised a right to distinguish between acceptable and unacceptable absences by deciding whether or not to record apologies.

Some Councils recorded the reason given for absence.

It was generally considered that Councillors exercised a degree of flexibility over their choice of holiday dates and therefore being on holiday was not an acceptable reason for absence.

The Chairman acknowledged that serving on a Parish Council was a voluntary act, but argued that, once the commitment was made, it should as far as possible be binding.

It was agreed that the Chairman should write a personal letter to all Councillors emphasising the importance of regular attendance.

17. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Tuesday, July 8th, 2008, in the Meeting Room at Christ Church, Gentleshaw, commencing at 7.30 p.m.