

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE PARISH COUNCIL OF LONGDON HELD
IN THE W. I. HALL, LONGDON, ON TUESDAY, DECEMBER 14TH, 2004

Present: Cllr. The Rev. J. R. Andrews (Chairman); Cllr. N. J. Bird;
Cllr. H. C. Bramley; Cllr. B. J. Butler; Cllr. R. C. Hemmingsley;
Cllr. A. J. Juxon; Cllr. Mrs. M. G. Nichols; Cllr. M. A. W. Parsons;
and Cllr. S. K. Welch.

Also present were the Clerk and County Councillor F. W. Lewis.

1. APOLOGIES:

Cllr. B. J. Butler; Cllr. Mrs. H. A. Meere.

2. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the previous meeting, held in The Meeting Room of Christ Church, Gentleshaw, on Tuesday, November 9th, 2004, were, on a motion proposed by Cllr. Bramley and seconded by Cllr. Hemmingsley, approved and signed.

3. PARISHIONERS' QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS

No parishioners were present.

4. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

(i) Discharge of Sewage in Shaw Lane, Gentleshaw

Cllr. Hemmingsley reported that, in spite of visits from District Council's Environmental Health Department, nothing had transpired.

The Clerk was instructed to write to the Environmental Health Officer, advising him that the nuisance remained.

(ii) Roadside Tree Planting in Upper Way

The Clerk reported that this had been carried out on the previous Saturday.

(iii) Alleged Boarding Kennels in Upper Way

The Clerk reported that he had written to the householder expressing the Council's regret at the distress which this unfounded allegation had caused to him and his family.

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

None was declared.

6. PLANNING

(i) Report of Working Group

No plans had been submitted for the consideration of the Working Group since the last meeting of the Council.

(ii) For Consideration

No plans were presented for consideration.

(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 last 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 last meeting.

However, in his report for the meeting of the District Council's Planning Committee to be held on 29th November, the Corporate Director - Development Services was recommending refusal of permission for outline development on land at the rear of "Sunny Corner", Upper Way, Upper Longdon (Application No. 04/01064/OUT).

(v) Other Planning Matters

(a) Lichfield District Local Development Framework

Copies of a two-page briefing note prepared by Cllr. Roberts had been distributed prior to the meeting.

The Clerk was instructed to record the Parish Council's thanks to Cllr. Roberts for providing the summary.

(b) Interim Management Arrangements for Management Control

The Clerk reported that he had received from Joanne Lancaster, Development Executive, Development Services, Lichfield District Council, a letter dated 16th November 2004, setting out new management arrangements for the six-month period when she would be on secondment to the North Shropshire District Council.

(c) Advertisement Boards

The Clerk reported that, following the appearance of roadside advertisement boards in School Lane, Gentleshaw, and Stockings Lane, Longdon, he had contacted the Enforcement Officer at Lichfield.

No action had been taken before the first of these signs was removed by the contractor,

and he had been obliged to write to Christine Hibbs concerning the second.

She had responded by writing to the house agent responsible and the signs had promptly been removed.

(d) Lichfield District Council Draft Supplementary Planning Documents on Residential Extensions and on Trees and Development

The Clerk reported that he had received from Maria Bailey, Principal Development Plan Officer, Development Services, Lichfield District Council, a letter dated 7th December 2004, enclosing a copy of each of the above documents and asking for written comments from the Council by January 28th, 2005.

Cllr. Welch offered to study the documents and report to the Council on their contents at the next meeting.

7. REPORTS OF MEETINGS

(i) Lichfield District Parish Forum: December 1st

The Clerk reported that he and Cllr. Stanfield had attended a meeting of the Lichfield District Parish Forum which had taken place at the Guild Hall, Lichfield, on Wednesday, December 1st, 2004.

The sole item on the agenda had been policing in Staffordshire, and there had been three presentations: the first had been by Paul Ross, Business Manager of the Trent Valley Division, who had outlined the financial problems facing Staffordshire Police in matching funding and best performance, and the other two had been by Inspector Mike Kozam and Inspector Trevor Steventon, who had discussed policy and practice in their respective Divisions.

Finally, those attending the meeting had been presented with three alternative precept figures from which to choose, depending on whether the preference was for limiting a rise in the precept to 3% , which would mean a cut of £3.7m. in present funding, increasing the precept by 10% and thereby avoiding the need for major cuts, or increasing it by 11%, thereby enabling Staffordshire Police to recruit another 30 police officers. Those present were asked to discuss these alternatives with their Councils at their next meeting.

Here, Cllr. Lewis pointed out that it had already been agreed that an increase in the precept would have to be limited to 5% if capping by Central Government was to be avoided.

It was therefore agreed that no choice should be made, since, effectively, none existed, but that a letter should be sent to Michael Fabricant, M. P., expressing the Council's concern at the level of the funding being made available to Staffordshire Police.

(ii) Meeting of Parish Councils in the Cannock Chase AONB: October 19th

Cllr. Welch gave a report on a meeting for Parish Councils of the Cannock Chase Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty which had taken place at the Colwich Community Centre on Tuesday, October 19th, 2004, which he had attended, together with nine other parish councillors, representing, altogether, seven parish councils.

A lot of activities were on-going, and the Unit would welcome even greater involvement from the parish councils. To this end, Judith Moore, of the AONB Unit, was preparing a presentation which she would be pleased to make to parish councils.

The involvement of other interest groups such as the Staffordshire Wildlife Trust and the Friends of Gentleshaw Common would be sought. Children too should be involved.

The "Chase Hopper" Taxi Bus was proving a success, and more funding was being sought for it.

The next meeting would be taking place on Tuesday, March 15th, 2005, for which a venue was being sought.

On a motion proposed by Cllr. Mrs. Nichols and seconded by Cllr. Juxon, it was agreed that the W. I. Hall should be offered.

(iii) Meeting of Cannock Chase AONB Advisory Partnership: November 10th

Cllr. Welch gave a report on a meeting of the Cannock Chase Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Advisory Partnership which had taken place at the John O'Leary Education Centre, Cannock Chase Visitor Centre on Wednesday, 10th November 2004, which he had attended as a Parish Council representative.

Discussion covered concerns over the speed and volume of traffic crossing the Chase, creeping development and sporadic fly-tipping.

Next year's Annual Conference would take place at the Staffordshire Wildlife Centre, Wolsley Bridge, on Thursday, May 15th, when the theme would be "Managing Visitors".

The next meeting of the Committee would be on January 26th, 2005.

8. NOTICE OF MEETING

SPCA Information Event for New Councillors: Thursday, January 20th, 2005, at Admaston Village Hall, commencing at 7.00 p.m.

9. HIGHWAYS AND FOOTPATHS

(i) Road Safety on the A51

The Chairman said that there had been one or two criticisms about the timing of the press release which had appeared in "The Lichfield Post" on November 18th and in "The Express and Star" the following day.

He explained that Cllr. Lewis had forwarded a draft of the release to him before it was issued and that he had added a few words to it on behalf of the Parish Council.

Explaining the background to his comments in the open session which prefaced the November Council meeting, he said that there were two councillors at the present meeting who had not been able to attend the meeting with the engineers and were therefore at that stage unaware of the proposals, and protocol dictated that it would be inappropriate to discuss the proposals in public before the Council had had the opportunity to consider them first.

The attention of the Council was then drawn to a newsheet - Update No. 3 - written on behalf of the residents' action group, "Longdon Against Speeding" and distributed with "Longdon Life". In it, the Parish Council was criticised for not pressing for further dialogue with the engineers before they made public their scheme, when, it was feared, the scheme would be 'set in stone'.

Councillors dismissed this fear as unfounded; the engineers had already made it clear that they were prepared to discuss their proposals with the Council.

Councillors were also concerned that the unsigned newsheet had been distributed with "Longdon Life" without the authority of the Parish Council, and the Clerk was instructed to write to Neil Vyse, who was believed to have been the author of the newsheet and to have arranged for its distribution, asking him to ensure that, in future, the permission of the Parish Council was obtained.

Cllr. Lewis reported that he too had received a letter from Mr. Vyse in which he had expressed a similar fear. He had reassured Mr. Vyse that the engineers were very well aware of all the views and concerns that have been expressed through the many letters that they had received both directly and through him and through the Parish Council. He was sure that they would take account of all the representations that had been made when assessing options and working up proposals.

The Clerk reported that Mr. Vyse had sought a meeting with David Grain, the Project Manager, who had, in reply, reminded him that there had already been discussions with the County Councillor and the Parish Council, both of whom were representing the interests of the local community, adding that he saw no benefit in meetings with individuals.

(ii) Absence of Verge in Upper Way

Cllr. Parsons drew the attention of the Parish Council to paving work which had just been carried out in front of 126 Upper Way and which had extended the frontage of the property to the edge of the road, and he expressed his concern that this would oblige pedestrians to work in the road.

It was pointed out that this simply brought the frontage in line with long-established neighbouring frontages.

However, since it was recognised that the absence of a pavement at this point contributed to the danger caused to residents by passing traffic, it was agreed that the matter should be referred to the Divisional Engineer.

(iii) Junction of Borough Lane and Horsey Lane

The Clerk reported that he had received from Ed. Sandham, Liaison Officer, Community Programmes, Development Services Directorate, Staffordshire County Council, an e-mail dated 30th November 2004, in which he set out proposals for improving road safety at the junction of Borough Lane and Horsey Lane.

It was his opinion that the road marking should be maintained in its present location with priority along Horsey Lane. However, he would arrange for left and right turn warning signs with the word SLOW adjacent to be erected on the approaches to Borough Lane.

Additionally, he would arrange for a "Give Way 100 yards" sign to be put up in Borough Lane.

The order would be prepared within the next few days and, allowing time for administration, sign manufacturing, programming, etc., the works should be completed during Spring 2005.

Doubt was expressed that this was the most satisfactory way of dealing with the problem, since the majority of traffic travelled along Borough Lane to and from the A51 in or from the direction of Gentleshaw, while Horsey Lane, far from being the major route, was single-track.

Cllr. Lewis agreed to arrange a site meeting with the Divisional Engineer at which alternative arrangements could be considered.

(iv) Refurbishment of Cast-Iron Roadside Direction Signs

The Clerk reported that he had received from the Director of Resources, Staffordshire County Council, a letter dated 3rd December 2004, informing the Council that its application under the Local Member Initiative Scheme for a grant of £2000 towards the cost of the above project had been approved and that payment would be made shortly under separate cover.

The Clerk added that payment had now been received.

He had also received from Malcolm Lane & Son, of Cropwell Bishop, Nottingham, a revised quotation for the work, dated 11th December 2004, of £5183. 00, plus VAT.

On a motion proposed by Cllr. Juxon and seconded by Cllr. Hemmingsley, it was agreed that the quotation should be accepted and the work commissioned.

The Clerk said that he would write without delay to the Divisional Engineer, requesting formal permission for the removal of the signs.

It was unanimously agreed that a letter should be sent to Cllr. Lewis, thanking him for his generous support.

(v) Footpath Leaflets

The Clerk reported that he had received from Benhill Press, of Rugeley, a quotation for printing 1000 of each of the four footpath leaflets of £678. 00.

These leaflets would be in A4 size and printed in two colours on two sides.

On a motion proposed by Cllr. Juxon and seconded by Cllr. Hemmingsley, it was agreed that this quotation should be accepted and the work commissioned.

(vi) Signing of Mobile Safety Camera Routes

The Clerk reported that he had received from Steve Bibb, Technician, Tamworth Highway Office, Development Services Directorate, Staffordshire County Council, a letter dated 6th December 2004, advising the Council that, as part of an initiative by Staffordshire Casualty Reduction Partnership, the County Council were to erect warning signs on mobile camera routes and enclosing a drawing which indicated the extent of the route where signing was to be introduced on the A51 at Longdon.

The accompanying plan showed this to extend the entire length of the A51 through Longdon.

(vii) Community Paths Initiative - Bids for 2005/6

The Clerk reported that he had received from Mike Bowdige, Countryside Community Services Officer, Development Services Directorate, Staffordshire County Council, a letter dated 8th December 2004, inviting bids for paths projects to be supported under the above Scheme.

The deadline for such bids was 28th February 2005.

It was agreed that this letter should be referred to the Footpaths Working Group.

(viii) Street Lighting in Brook End

The Clerk reported that there had been a complaint about the quality of the street lighting at either end of Brook End.

He was instructed to refer the complaint to Midlands Electricity.

10. GREENS AND OPEN SPACES

(i) Gentleshaw Common Heathland Restoration Works - Winter 2004/2005

The Clerk reported that he had received from Justine Lloyd, Biodiversity Officer, Development Services, Lichfield District Council, a letter dated 25th November 2004, advising the Council that, as part of the Tomorrows Heathland Heritage Programme's 'Restoring the Lichfield Link' project, Lichfield District Council, in conjunction with English Nature, was carrying out critical restoration work on an area of Gentleshaw Common Site of Special Scientific Interest.

The conservation work included the felling of birch and pine trees over an area of three hectares.

The work of the project focussed primarily on restoring the habitats through a range of management practices, progressing to a level where a more sustainable form of management can be successfully introduced and maintained.

As part of heath week activities beginning on 11th September 2005, an event would be held on the Common in partnership with the Friends of Gentleshaw Common which would demonstrate the various uses of heathland product, both past and present.

Cllr. Hemmingsley commented that the Friends of Gentleshaw Common had serious reservations about some of the proposals.

They were not certain of the efficacy of grazing cattle on land widely soiled by dog fouling, even if, as proposed, the beasts were contained by fencing and looked after by attendants.

They were also concerned what they saw as the absence of a co-ordinated policy.

(ii) Track in front of "The Red Lion", Longdon Green

The Clerk reported that he had received from Ken Tillet, Estates Manager, Staffordshire Ambulance Service, a phone call in which he had requested that the potholes in front of the car park entrance to the above premises be filled in.

He had explained the problem of maintaining this track caused by the fact that it ran across the Green and therefore had no authorised legal status.

Moreover, it could not be excluded from the registered area unless a piece of land of comparable size could be found to replace it.

It was agreed that, if Mr. Tillet himself could arrange for the holes to be filled in, the Parish Council would raise no objection.

(iii) Robinia at side of 12 Berkeley Way

The Clerk reported that he had received from Gareth Hare, Arboricultural Officer, Development Services, Lichfield District Council, a letter dated 10th December 2004, in which he reported that he had visited the above site and met Mrs. Caudwell, whom he believed he had reassured about the presence of the tree.

However, he recommended that the tree be crown-cleaned and the crown thoroughly inspected.

He also recommended that cultivation of the soil beneath the tree cease and that small shrubs requiring biennial pruning be planted, thus negating the need for digging.

It was agreed that Mr. Hare's recommendations should be adopted.

11. PARISH WEBSITE

The Clerk reported that he had received an entry from St. James Church, but that otherwise the response from local organisations had been disappointing.

Cllr. Hemmingsley suggested that a reminder be sent to those organisations which had not replied, giving a deadline for submissions.

It was also agreed that a letter be sent to every locally-based business offering them the opportunity of publicising their services on the Parish Website.

Cllr. Hemmingsley added that he would still lacked an illustration which would characterise Upper Longdon; Cllr. Welch offered to take a selection of photographs from which such an illustration could be selected.

12. FINANCIAL MATTERS

(i) Accounts for Payment

On a motion proposed by Cllr. Welch and seconded by Cllr. Bramley, payment of the following accounts, received since the last meeting, was approved:

| | | |
|----------------------------|---------------------------------------|----------|
| *Christ Church, Gentleshaw | Hire of Room | £ 12. 00 |
| * Instaprint, Rugeley | Printing 650 copies of "Longdon Life" | |
| | Printing 600 inserts | |

£212. 86#

| | | |
|-------------------|---|-----------|
| * Hazel Crosbie | Delivering "Longdon Life" and inserts | £ 35. 00# |
| * A. J. Juxon | Editor's Expenses | £ 15. 00# |
| Longdon W. I. | Hire of Hall | £ 12. 00 |
| Aqua Jet Services | Manufacturing & installing 2 benches; Replacing arm to existing bench; Strimming & clearing Church Hill pathway; Clearing vegetation from alonside path between Berkeley Way & Beech Walk | £419. 00 |
| W. B. Sullivan | Salary: £187. 50 Expenses: £164. 82 | £352. 32 |
| * confirmation | # payment made under Section 137 of the Local Government Act of 1972 | |

(ii) Payments Received

Staffordshire County Council Local Member Initiative Scheme £2000. 00

(iii) Current Balances

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

NatWest c/a: £2265. 19; The Halifax d/a: £11918. 65

(iv) Appeals for Grant Aid

(a) Lichfield District Summer Playscheme Programme

The Clerk reported that he had received from Mary Cooke, Play Development Manager, Community, Communications and Culture, Lichfield District Council, a letter dated 15th November 2004, in which she asked if the Parish Council would be prepared to make a grant towards the cost of running the Lichfield District Summer Playscheme Programme at Longdon.

On a motion proposed by Cllr. Mrs. Nichols and seconded by Cllr. Juxon, it was agreed that the Council would meet the cost of £130. 00 for hiring St. James School.

Payment would be made under Section 137 of the Local Government Act of 1972

(b) Open Spaces Society

The Clerk reported that he had received from Rodney Legge, Chairman, Open Spaces Society, a letter dated 23rd November 2004, asking for a contribution towards the cost of a failed legal action against the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs.

Since this action had related to Wisley Common, in Surrey, the Council felt that it did not have the powers to make a donation.

(c) Staffordshire Wildlife Trust

The Clerk reported that, on 24th November 2004, he had received from Guy Corbett-Marshall, Director, Staffordshire Wildlife Trust, an undated letter asking for a contribution towards the cost of securing the future of nature reserves in Staffordshire.

Since none of those listed as the subject of the appeal was in the parish, it was decided that the Council did not have the powers to make such a contribution.

(v) Report of Meeting of Finance Sub-Committee

The Chairman reported on a meeting of the Finance Sub-Committee which had taken place in the W. I. Hall on Monday, 7th December 2004.

Though the meeting had been advertised, no member of the public had been present.

The Clerk had prepared a financial statement which compared income (£21244. 29) and expenditure (£8812. 59) between 1st April and 30th November 2004 with the corresponding period in 2003 (£20650. 33 and £8127. 45).

The Committee had then reviewed current spending and found that, within minor variations, it was generally in line with budget.

The Committee next considered a budget for the financial year 2005/2006. Expenditure was expected to be as follows: General Administration £2800; Parks & Open Spaces £3000; Community Halls £3000; Highways & Footpaths £2000; Expenditure under Section 137 £2500; and Churchyards £1000, making a total of £14300. Income from various sources other than the Precept would be in the region of £2000.

Since Ocean View properties had taken over the management of the Site of Biological Importance outside Longdon Hall, the Council no longer needed to hold money in reserve against the possibility of its having to maintain it.

Similarly, there was at present no pressure on the Council to provide the community with a play area.

Under these circumstances, it was agreed that the Council should be recommended to return these reserves to the General Account and set its Precept for 2005/2006 at £10500. 00.

Cllr. Hemmingsley said that he hoped that money could be made available in the next financial year to fund a Parish Plan.

(vi) Precept 2005/2006

On a motion proposed by Cllr. Mrs. Nichols and seconded by Cllr. Bird, it was unanimously agreed that the Council should set the Precept for 2005/2006 at £10500. 00.

13. CORRESPONDENCE SINCE THE LAST MEETING

(i) The Clerk reported that he had received from Fishers, Solicitors, of Ashby-de-la-Zouch, Leicestershire, a letter dated 17th November 2004, enclosing a Notice of Application for the Transfer of Justices Licence relating to The Chetwynd Arms, Upper Way, Upper Longdon, ro Rodney Abrahams and Susan Anne Abrahams.

(ii) The Clerk reported that he had received from Steve McQuade, Policy and Performance Manager, Operational Development, Lichfield District Council, an undated letter asking whether he would be able to receive committee papers and reports by e-mail or whether he would prefer to remain on the list of those receive hard copies of information.

He had replied that, for the moment, he preferred to received information as hard copy

14. OTHER COMMUNICATIONS

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

(i) From The Corporate Director - Democratci and Legal Services, Lichfield District Council:

Report of Corporate Director - Development Services, for meeting of Planning Committee to be held on Monday, 29th November 2004;
Report of Corporate Director - Development Services for meeting of Planning Committee to be held on Monday, 20th December 2004;
Executive Arrangements - Forward Plan 2004/2005 Version 1 (to take effect on 1st December 2004);
Executive Arrangements - Forward Plan 2004/2005 Version 2 (to take effect on 1st December 2004);
Calendar of Meetings, fortnight ending 28th November 2004;
Calendar of Meetings, fortnight ending 12th December 2004;
Calendar of Meetings, fortnight ending 26th December 2004.

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

Register of Electors 2005.

(iii) From The Passenger Transport Business Unit, Staffordshire County Council:

Public Transport News: December 2004 (2 copies).

(iv) From Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Archive Service:

“from Time 2 Time”: Issue 8, Winter 2004>

(v) From Staffordshire Parish Councils’ Association:

Training Up Date: New Arrangements for the Certificate in Local Governement Administration;
Booking Form for Seminar on Quality Parish Status on 25th November 2004 at the County Buildings, Stafford;
Booking Form for final session of Autumn Semester for students studying for CiLCA Portfolio on “Completing Your Portfolio” - 15th December 2004, at the County Buildings, Stafford;
Report of action taken on resolutions passed at 2003 AGM;
Joint Annual Report by Police Authority and Chief Constable for 2003-2004;
Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire Fire Authority: Main Report - Integrated Risk Management Plan 2005/06 Onwards;
Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Services: Annual Report 2003-2004;
Staffordshire County Council: Scrutiny News - Issue No. 4; September 2004.

(vi) From The Assistant Secretary, Staffordshire Advisory Committee on Justices of the Peace:

Poster: “Are you magistrate material?” (2 copies for display on notice-boards).

(vii) From Wicksteed Leisure, Kettering:

Brochure: Safety Grass.

15. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

(i) Cllr. Juxon said that he had been invited to read one of the lessons at this year's Carol Service at St. James Church, Longdon, as a representative of the Parish Council and, since there had not been time to consult the Council, he had accepted the invitation.

(ii) The Chairman reported that the lane opposite the Chorley Pumping Station was disintegrating.

Since this was within Longdon Parish, the Clerk was instructed to report the problem to the Divisional Engineer.

(iii) Cllr. Parsons asked whether the situation regarding the unauthorised windmill and hard-standing in Stockings Lane had been resolved.

The Clerk said that insufficient time now remained for enforcement, but he would remind Cllr. Roberts of his undertaking to provide the Council with an answer.

(iv) Cllr. Parsons drew the attention of the meeting to the damaged footpath sign in Stockings Lane opposite Catmeadow Lane.

The Clerk replied that this had already been reported to the County Countryside Officer.

16. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Tuesday, January 11th, 2005, in the W. I. Hall, Longdon, commencing at 7. 30 p.m.

17. DATES OF MEETINGS IN 2005

The following dates were agreed:

February 8th (Longdon); March 8th (Gentleshaw); April 12th (Longdon);
May 10th (Longdon); June 14th (Longdon); July 12th (Gentleshaw);
September 13th (Longdon); October 11th (Longdon); November 8th (Gentleshaw);
December 13th (Longdon)

The Annual Assembly would take place in Longdon on April 26th.