

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE PARISH COUNCIL OF LONGDON HELD IN THE
W. I. HALL, LONGDON, ON TUESDAY, JANUARY 11TH 2005

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. H. A. Meere; Cllr. Mrs. M. G. Nichols; and Cllr. M. A. W. Parsons.

Also present were the Clerk; Cllr. N. J. Roberts, Lichfield District Council;
Mr. Neil Vyse, of Stockings Lane, Longdon; and three other parishioners.

1. APOLOGIES

Cllr. N. Stanfield; Cllr. S. K. Welch; and County Councillor F. W. Lewis.

2. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the previous meeting, held in the W. I. Hall, Longdon, on Tuesday, December 14th, 2004, were, on a motion proposed by Cllr. Juxon and seconded by Cllr. Mrs. Nichols, approved and signed.

3. PARISHIONERS' QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS

The Chairman welcomed the four parishioners to the meeting and asked whether any of them wished to address the Council.

Mr. Vyse asked whether the Council would support the introduction of a zebra crossing on the A51 to enable parents and children to cross safely on their way to and from the school, adding that this was a proposal which had the support of the education authorities.

The Chairman reminded Mr. Vyse that this was one of the proposals already under consideration, adding that he did not think that there was any point in isolating individual proposals for recommendation.

Mr. Vyse then asked what progress had been made in the preparation of a scheme for Upper Longdon.

The Chairman replied that County Council officers were currently drawing up proposals, and he was very hopeful that the issue would soon be resolved.

Finally, Mr. Vyse referred to a letter which he had received from the Clerk regarding the distribution of the latest newsletter from L-A-S-T, the local road safety action group, suggesting that, while some had been distributed with "Longdon Life", the disclaimer printed in the Parish Council's newsletter that the views expressed therein were not necessarily the views of the Council would have ensured that no reader would have assumed that the views expressed in the action group's update were shared by the Parish Council.

Speaking as editor of "Longdon Life", Cllr. Juxon insisted that it had been discourteous on Mr. Vyse's part not to ask him whether his newsletter might be distributed with "Longdon Life", particularly since he had had the opportunity to do so when he phoned Cllr. Juxon to ask whether there was still time to include an article in the current issue of the parish newsletter and had been told that it was about to be distributed.

He pointed out that the distributor took her instructions from the Parish Council, that she was paid extra whenever the newsletter contained an insert, and that she had already been told to expect an insert from the church.

It appeared, however, that only fifteen copies of the L-A-S-T's update had been distributed with "Longdon Life".

4. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

(i) Discharge of Sewage in Shaw Lane, Gentleshaw

The Clerk reported that he had recently spoken to Sarah Tillen, of the Environmental Health Department of Lichfield District Council, who had told him that, accompanied by a colleague, she had visited Shaw Lane on November 19th, shortly after a period of heavy rain in an attempt to ascertain the extent of the reported problem, said to be caused by excess surface water following heavy rainfall, but they had found no evidence to support the complaint.

Though it had been alleged that this problem was being caused by newly-laid paving in front of a newly-built garage at a property in Shaw Lane, she had concluded that the space left between the blocks was ample for drainage.

A further complaint, made during the course of her visit, had been that sewage was flowing into the nearby property of the complainant's son-in-law. Subsequently, a bright-green dye had been poured into the septic tank from which it had been alleged that the sewage was flowing, but no trace of the dye had been found on the property in question.

She had told the complainant that, in the absence of evidence, she could take no action, but had offered to return if the problem should recur.

Her impression that this had satisfied the complainant was not supported by Cllr. Hemmingsley, who had spoken to him subsequently.

Cllr. Hemmingsley thought that there were two principal causes of the problem: firstly, Hollows Farm lay at a level appreciably below Shaw Lane and, at times of heavy rainfall, it was natural for surface water to flow from the road down the driveway (this was compounded by the fact that the storm drain was beyond the main entrance to the farmhouse, which lacked a threshold); secondly, because of a restricted curtilage, the property from which the sewage was alleged to flow had no filtration or overflow.

He was satisfied that liquid of some sort was ingressing onto the garden of the lower property, but agreed that, until there was significant evidence, the matter would have to be left for the moment.

(ii) Cannock Chase Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty - Annual General Meeting

The Clerk reported that the W. I. Hall was not available for the above meeting. He was instructed to book the Hall of St. James School instead.

(iii) Refurbishment of Cast-Iron Roadside Signs

The Clerk reported that he had written to Ken Owen, the Divisional Engineer, asking for permission to remove these signs and awaited his reply.

He had also spoken to Tracey Bengel, of the County Council's Development Services Directorate, who had been unable to help him identify the locations and mileage recorded on the missing indicators, but had asked to be informed of what the Parish Council decided.

(iv) Footpath Leaflets

The Clerk reported that he had given instructions to The Benhill Press to proceed with printing the above leaflets, but had so far not been able to trace the original of the illustration which appeared at the front of the Longdon Green leaflet.

It was suggested that a new photograph should be taken when the signpost at the front of the Green was restored.

In the meantime, the printers should be asked to carry on with printing the other three.

(v) Community Paths Initiative Bid for 2005/6

Cllr. Mrs. Meere said that she would arrange a meeting of the Footpaths Committee at which a bid could be considered.

(vi) Planting at side of No. 12 Berkeley Way

The Clerk reported that she had received a phone call from Mrs. Elizabeth Cauldwell, concerned that she was being expected to maintain the strip of land at the side of her property and asking for an assurance that this would be done by the Council.

The Clerk was instructed to write to Mrs. Cauldwell re-assuring her that the Council would both plant and maintain this site.

(vii) Site of Special Biological Interest

The Chairman informed the Council that, at the recent site meeting, Ken Owen had advised him of an application from Ocean View Properties to establish ownership of the above site by virtue of adverse possession.

This seemed to be an acknowledgement that the company did not already own the land and might provide the Parish Council with the chance of itself acquiring possession of the land.

If the Council wished to pursue this opportunity, it might wish to re-consider its decision to return the sum previously set aside for the purpose of participating in its management (£2000) to its general fund.

However, it was concluded that there were now sufficient safeguards in place to protect the exceptional character of the site.

Nonetheless, it was thought that the Council should take steps to influence any decision made about the site, and, accordingly, the Clerk was instructed to write formerly to Mr. Owen, asking him for further information, and to approach the County Council's Legal Department for more details about the application.

Since the Council no longer aspired to own this piece of land, there was no need to re-consider its decision regarding the precept for 2005/2006.

(viii) Lane opposite Chorley Pumping Station

The Clerk reported that the state of this lane had been raised with Ken Owen, who had promised that it would be dealt with expeditiously.

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

None was declared.

6. PLANNING

(i) Report of Working Group

04/01309/COU: Mr. Paul Williams: Conversion of agricultural barn to three-bedroom dwelling: Broomy Lodge, Broomy Fields, Longdon Green

There was no objection to this proposal provided that the development was in character with existing conversions.

One member of the group had expressed concern over the new openings, but had not wished this to be put this forward as a reason for objecting.

(ii) For Consideration

04/01369/FUL: Roger Smith: First-floor extension over existing garage to form bedroom en-suite: 46 Upper Way, Upper Longdon

04/01373/FUL: Mr. & Mrs. B. Heath: Erection of detached double garage: The Cottage, Windmill Bank, Gentleshaw

In the absence of Cllr. Welch, Chairman of the Working Group, who was on holiday, consideration of these applications was deferred.

(iii) Approved by Lichfield District Council

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

(v) Other Planning Matters

(a) Proposal for outline planning permission for detached dwelling with double garage on land at rear of "Sunny Corner", Upper Way, Upper Longdon

The Clerk reported that he had received notice that this application had been withdrawn on 26th November 2004.

7. REPORTS OF MEETINGS

None was presented.

8. NOTICE OF MEETINGS

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

(i) Lichfield District Parish Forum: Wednesday, 19th January 2005, at Fradley Village Hall, commencing at 7. 15 p.m.

(ii) Lichfield Area Committee: Thursday, 10th February 2005, in the Council Chamber, District Council House, Frog Lane, Lichfield, commencing at 7. 00 p.m.

9. HIGHWAYS AND FOOTPATHS

(i) Road Safety - A51

The Clerk informed Councillors that the next meeting with David Grain would take place in early March.

He reported that he had received a letter from Michael Fabricant, MP, dated 15th December 2004, in which he had enclosed a copy of a letter which he had received from Neil Vyse, expressing his concern about the dangers facing local residents when using the A51 and his doubts about the scheme currently in preparation to diminish these dangers.

In his reply he had told Mr. Fabricant that the Council was already aware of Mr. Vyse's concerns and had full confidence in the officials preparing the scheme.

(ii) Traffic Calming in Upper Longdon

The Clerk reported that he had spoken to Simon Edwards, the project manager, who expected to be in a position to discuss his proposals with the Council in mid February.

(iii) Junction of Borough Lane and Horsey Lane - Report of Site Meeting

The Chairman reported on the site meeting which had taken place between Ken Owen and Ed Sandham, of the County Council's Development Services Directorate, County Councillor Frank Lewis, Councillor Juxon, the Clerk and himself.

Both Mr.Owen and Mr. Sandham had been concerned about the dangers of changing the priority at

this junction after so many years and thought that it would need various signs to warn people about the change.

They had agreed, however, that the present signage needed greater clarity, especially for motorists exiting Horsey Lane. In addition, signs warning of the proximity of the junction should be made much clearer.

Cllr. Juxon commented that he and the Chairman had been persuaded that the present priority should remain on condition that the signage was improved.

However, Cllr. Mrs. Nichols and Cllr. Hemmingsley remained unconvinced, and it was agreed that further discussion should be deferred until the Council had received details of the revised scheme.

(iv) Drainage in Borough Lane

Cllr. Juxon reported that, at the same meeting, he had raised the drainage problem in Borough Lane.

Mr. Owen had told him that it was intended to re-lay the pipe, but had not yet located the line of the pipe as it ran under the A51.

(v) Road Surface at Junction opposite Chorley Pumping Station

The Chairman had been informed that this work had priority rating and would be done in the imminent future.

(vi) Lack of Pavement in Upper Way

The Chairman further reported that, following the site meeting in Borough Lane, he and the Clerk had accompanied Mr. Owen to Upper Longdon, where he had been shown the apparent encroachment onto highway land outside a number of properties in Upper Way.

Mr. Owen had noted the position of two adjacent lamp-posts which seemed to confirm that encroachment had indeed taken place.

The Chairman pointed out that it would have been the developers who had laid out the curtilages of these properties and that they would have been approved in the planning stage.

Cllr. Parsons said that he would be extremely surprised if plans did not exist at Stafford which could establish the precise limits of these curtilages.

It was agreed that this matter should be left for the moment while the scheme for traffic management currently under preparation was being drawn up, since the absence of a pavement along this part of Upper Way had already been drawn to the attention of the Project Manager.

(vii) Renewal of Highway Maintenance Agreement

The Clerk reported that he had received from Ken Owen, Divisional Engineer South, Development Services Directorate, Staffordshire County Council, a Purchase Order (No. 6500032719) relating to the Highway Maintenance Agreement which the Parish Council had entered into with the County Council.

It was valid from 31st December 2004, and its expected value was £1040.00.

10. GREENS AND OPEN SPACES

(i) Japanese Knotweed in Church Hollow

Cllr. Bramley reported that this had been flattened, but not uprooted.

It was thought that this was as the result of work on the nearby signpost.

(ii) Yew tree obstructing access to mail box on Longdon Green

Cllr. Bramley reported that this had now been cut back.

(iii) Site of Biological Importance - Longdon Hall

Concern was expressed that this was now being mowed too often.

The Clerk was instructed to make this concern known to Marieke Tomlin, the District Council's Countryside Officer.

11. PARISH WEBSITE - PROGRESS REPORT

The Clerk reported that invitations to submit entries for inclusion on the parish website had been sent to all local organisations and local businesses, accompanied by reply-paid envelopes.

Response so far had been slow.

The view was expressed that the Council should not actively seek entries, although, alternatively, it was thought that the website needed a minimum number of entries to achieve credibility.

Cllr. Hemmingsley added that would-be contributors were being invited to discuss their entries with him if they were in doubt about what was needed.

He then circulated photographs taken in Upper Longdon and invited Councillors to choose the one which they thought most appropriate.

He reminded Councillors that he made provision for a page devoted to the history of the parish, and the Clerk was instructed to approach Mrs. Piper for material for inclusion in this section.

12. FINANCIAL MATTERS

(i) Accounts for Payment

On a motion proposed by Cllr. Juxon and seconded by Cllr. Mrs. Meere, payment of the following accounts was approved:

Longdon W. I.	Hire of Hall	£ 12. 00
Woodshoot Nurseries	Supplying and planting trees	£338. 41

(ii) Payments Received:

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

Staffordshire County Council	Mowing Agreement	£602. 00
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(iii) Current Balances

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

NatWest c/a: £2080. 87	The Halifax s/a: £11918. 65
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(iv) Appeals for Grant Aid

None had been received since the last meeting.

(v) Presentation of Reconciliation Statement

The Clerk presented a Reconciliation Statement for the period from 1st April to 31st December 2004.

This showed income amounting to £13834. 68, which, when added to the opening figure of £10011. 61, totalled £23846. 29.

Total expenditure for the same period was £9858. 77 and was comprised as follows: General Administration £2115. 36; Parks & Open Spaces £2440. 00; Community Halls £1500. 00; Highways & Rights of Way 1508. 00; Section 137 £1901. 35; and Churchyards £394. 06.

Excess of income over expenditure therefore amounted to £13987. 52.

At year end, the balance at the NatWest was £2080. 87, and at The Halifax £11918. 65, making a total of £13999. 52; however, when an uncleared cheque for £12. 00 was taken deducted, the final figure of £13987. 52 matched the earlier total.

(vi) Completion of Audit

The Clerk reported that he had received notice that the Annual Audit for the previous financial year had been completed and the certified Annual Return signed.

No comments had been appended by the External Auditor to the Annual Return, a copy of which he had placed in the Parish Council folder in Longdon Post Office.

He had completed the Notice of Conclusion and displayed copies on all five of the parish notice-boards.

13. CORRESPONDENCE SINCE LAST MEETING

(i) The Clerk reported that he had received from Lyn Jones, PLU Administration, Staffordshire Police, a letter dated 22nd December 2004, enclosing a copy of the minutes of the public Police Authority Community Consultation Meeting held at Fradley Village Hall on 2nd November 2004, with the request that they be made available to the public.

He has complied with this request by placing them in the Parish Council folder in Longdon Post Office.

(ii) The Clerk reported that he had received from Peter Jackson, Chairman of the Best Kept Village Competition Working Group, a letter dated - December 2004, enclosing entry forms for the 2005 Best Kept Village Competition.

On a motion proposed by Cllr. Juxon and seconded by Cllr. Bramley, it was agreed that Longdon & Longdon Green and Upper Longdon should both be entered in the Competition and that, in addition to the two entry fees of £12. 00 (making a total of £24. 00), 20 posters should be ordered at a cost of £0. 15p each (making a total of £3. 00), together with 550 handbills at a cost of £0. 07p each (making a total of £38. 50), the complete total for entry fees and publicity being £65. 50.

(iii) The Clerk reported that he had received from Catherine Russell, Deputy Office Manager, Community Council of Staffordshire, a letter dated - January 2005, inviting entries for the Community Council's Diary of Village Festivals and Events.

The Clerk was instructed to refer to the schedule of events which appeared on the back page of the latest issue of "Longdon Life".

14. OTHER COMMUNICATIONS

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

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

Report of Corporate Director - Development Services for meeting of Planning Committee to be held on Monday, 10th January 2005;

Report of Corporate Director - Development Services: Lichfield District Local Development Framework - Draft Local Development Scheme;

Report of Corporate Director - Development Services: Submission of Local Development Framework - Core Strategy and Allocation of Land: Preferred Options;

Report of Corporate Director - Development Services: Submission on Local Development Framework - Review of Settlement Boundaries;

Minutes and Reports for meeting of Council to be held on Tuesday, 21st December 2004;

Agenda of meeting of Council to be held on Tuesday, 21st December 2004;

Executive Arrangements - Forward Plan 2004/2005 Version 1 (to take effect on 1st January 2005);

Executive Arrangements - Forward Plan 2004/2005 Version 2 (to take effect on 1st January 2005);

Calendar of Meetings, fortnight ending 9th January 2005;

Calendar of Meetings, fortnight ending 23rd January 2005.

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

Register of Electors 2005: Monthly Applications for 4th January 2005.

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

Public Transport News - January 2005 (2 copies).

(iv) From The Sustainable Staffordshire Forum:

"Sustainable Staffordshire": Issue 14, Winter 2004;
Leaflet: Calor Village of the Year;
Leaflet: "Paths for People" (published by The Ramblers Association).

(v) From The National Association of Local Councils:

Local Council Review: Volume 56, No. 5 - January 2005.

(vi) From The Call Centre Manager/Energy Efficiency Adviser, Central Midlands EEAC:

10 DIY Home Energy Survey leaflets;
10 leaflets promoting the Warm Front Grant;
10 Energy Wise Direct leaflets;
2 posters promoting the Warm Front Grant;
1 copy of Lichfield EEAS News.

(vii) From The Traffic Operations Directorate, Divisional Management Team, Hiughways Agency, Birmingham:

The A50 Trunk Road (Queensway Roundabout to Heron Cross Roundabout)
Order 2004;

The A50 Trunk Road (Queensway Roundabout to Heron Cross Roundabout)(Side Roads) Order 2004.

(viii) From The Staffordshire Wildlife Trust:

"Staffordshire Wildlife": No. 92, November 2004;
"Natural World": Winter 2004;
Wildlife What's On: January to April 2005;
Cannock Wildlife Group - 2005 Programme;
Nature Reserve Volunteers Workparties - January to April 2005;
Short Breaks & Stress Busters in North and East Staffordshire;
Leaflet: Dancing Daffodils Walk - George Hayes Nature Reserve: Sunday,
27th March 2005, 2. 00 p.m. - 4. 00 p.m.;
Lottery - New Members Form.

(ix) From GOPAK, Hythe, Kent:

Brochure: "First for folding tables".

14. ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS

(i) The Chairman suggested that the Finance Sub-Committee might become the Finance and General Purposes Sub-Committee, thus enabling its members to consider issues of policy and procedure other than those strictly related to financial matters.

The Chairman suggested that such a Sub-Committee would be able to discuss issues in detail and then prepare a report to the full Council for discussion at its next meeting.

It would not be empowered to make decisions on behalf of the Council, only offer recommendations.

There was, however, some concern that such an arrangement might "take the meat" out of Council meetings.

It was agreed that the Chairman's suggestion should be discussed at the next meeting of the Council.

(ii) Cllr. Hemmingsley asked if the procedures to be followed in drawing up a Village Plan might be established.

The Clerk was instructed to make the necessary enquiries and include the topic in next month's agenda.

(iii) Cllr. Roberts advised the Council to consider preparing a policy statement on rental accommodation.

He suggested that the District Council's Director of Housing would be prepared to give the Council an overview on the supply of rental accommodation.

(iv) Cllr. Parsons asked to be present at the site meeting with Simon Edwards; the Clerk said that he expected all three Councillors living in Upper Longdon to be invited.

(v) Cllr. Parsons asked if there had been any communication from the District Council concerning the windmill-operated generator and hard-standing in Stockings Lane.

The Clerk replied that he had received no such communication, but believed that the time to take and complete enforcement action was now passed.

(vi) Cllr. Butler informed the Council that he was one of four or five Upper Longdon residents who had applied to join the County Speedwatch Scheme.

15. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Tuesday, February 8th, 2005, in the W. I. Hall, Longdon, commencing at 7. 30 p.m.