

MINUTES – ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

Woodham Walter Parish Council.

Held in the Village Hall, Rectory Road, Woodham Walter.

Monday 30th March 2015

Present:

Councillor Peter Warren (Chairman)
Councillor Joanna Symons (Vice Chairman)
Councillor James Bunn
Councillor Mark Durham
Councillor Angus Neale
Councillor James Rushton
Councillor John Tompkins

Others:

Jacky Bannerman (Clerk)
Cllr. Henry Bass (Maldon District Councillor)
Cllr. Penny Channer (Essex County Council & Maldon District Council)

Public:

33 (Including representatives from: Woodham Walter Primary School; Women's Club; Tadpoles Nursery; Woodham Walter Village Hall Assoc.; Bell Meadow Village Assoc.; Essex Wildlife Trust; Village Design Statement Working Party; Allotment Association; St. Michael's Church; Community Agents Essex.)

1. **Welcome** Cllr. Peter Warren welcomed those present to the meeting and members of the council introduced themselves.
2. **Apologies For Absence** were received and accepted from Priti Patel MP; Brian Cumming (Neighbourhood Watch & Friends of St Michael's); Inspector Chris Kilgallen (Essex Police); PC Lea Keane (Essex Police); Melanie Coates-Jones (PTA).
3. **Register of Disclosed Interests** There were no interests declared and the book was duly signed.
4. **Minutes Of The Annual Parish Meeting Held On 28th April 2014**
The minutes were agreed to be a true record of the meeting and were duly signed by the Chairman.
5. **Matters Arising from the Annual Parish Meeting Held on 28th April 2014**
 - 5.1 (8.1) Shop/Post Office – clerk updated that the she had put the village hall in touch with the Post office but understands that negotiations were unsuccessful as the rental money offered was insufficient to cover costs. The Parish Council decided that it is not their role to become involved in a commercial agreement and declined to pursue any further.
 - 5.2 (8.2) Broadband – it was noted that the situation with broadband in the village is still frustrating! Most recent information available at our last meeting was from the Policy & Strategy Advisor on behalf of Cllr Penny Channer who provided a more detailed assessment of the situation and stated that Woodham Walter falls into a category classed as eligible for public investment in the Phase 2 rollout. However, Cllr. Tompkins reported that he had attended a Superfast Essex meeting which had not been entirely satisfactory. He explained what the Superfast Essex programme is and that Woodham Walter had missed out on Phase 1. Phase 2 is currently emerging (due to be announced in May) and despite the information received from the Policy & Strategy Advisor, this information for Woodham Walter was not able to be confirmed as there is a disparity of information currently available. Cllr. Tompkins advises that the most useful thing that parishioners can do is raise the issue through any channels they can and particularly to Superfast Essex. The Parish Council will continue to pursue.
 - 8.3 Wood Corner – Raised at our meeting in May 2014 Mrs Herrmann updated those present that she had attended a meeting at Maldon District Council and the Inspector had also found the wording confusing in the LDP regarding Policy H6 Provision for Travellers. Mrs Herrmann remains concerned that MDC cannot stick to the law bound by Essex County Council.
 - 8.4 Old Chapel Stores – building is now operating as Tadpoles Nursery.
6. **To Accept the Annual Parish Report 2014-15.** All present agreed that the report is very good and informative. Mr Frank Herrmann offered grateful thanks to the Parish Clerk for the work that had gone into producing the annual report. Mr & Mrs Herrmann presented the clerk with a gift of acclaim and gratitude for a splendid job done. Cllr. James Bunn proposed that the report be accepted, this was seconded by Cllr. Angus Neale and all were in agreement.
7. **Matters Arising from Annual Parish Report 2013-14**
Cllr. Warren went through the report page by page and asked for any comments or questions from those present.

Chairman's Report (Page1-3) – No comments or questions

Village Design Statement Working Group (Page 4-5)

Cllr. Warren commented on an excellent job with lots of work and the committee should be congratulated.

Cllr. Tompkins updated those present that the VDS has been on display during the day and summarises the community's views on the built environment. The visitors who had viewed the document today had seen the definitive document and comments had been helpful and supportive. An excess of 75% return rate for the questionnaire had been achieved. The next stage is to finalise the report following the final comments from the public consultation, it will then be submitted to Maldon District Council for consideration and approval to then become a supplementary planning document alongside the Local Development Plan. It should be noted that some of the items raised in the consultation are outside the scope of the VDS so these cannot be raised in this document. Cllr. Tompkins explained that when a planning application is submitted to the local authority it is judged against various criteria into policies at District level. Locally the opinion of the Parish Council is sought at public consultation and councillors will then visit neighbours. It is then the Planning Officers duty to consider and report these views to the planning committee. The 2011 Localism act gives the community the ability to give their views. A VDS is a design focussed advisory document which should guide the Parish Council and District Council Officers and District Councillors. It gives guidance to what is considered good and appropriate design but is not prescriptive. A lot of planning is down to the personal opinion of an officer. The officer and/or councillors must take the VDS into account and this is why it is so important. The VDS committee wanted anyone reading the document to have a full view of the whole village including all the background information and this is why there is a crossover between design and community views. The VDS document will add additional support to the views of the Parish Council and help the views of the community to be heard at district level. Cllr. Tompkins thanked everyone for their input and hopes that the District Council will be supportive.

Cllr. Durham commented that the parish council is a key part of the consultation process prior to determination. VDS have been used as grounds to refuse on design grounds. The Parish Council are consulted along with other statutory consultees. VDS is a material consideration and planning officers refer to the VDS when they are doing their report. The majority of planning applications are decided by delegated powers. There are lots of other considerations and policy matters that could trump a VDS. Applications before committee always look at Parish Council opinions and VDS. Only legitimate planning reasons can be given and Woodham Walter Parish Council are usually good at writing relevant reasons. VDS are material considerations. If committee or officer does not follow the view of the Parish Council it is because of another policy matter including legal and policy reasons which may explain why a decision is contrary to the Parish Council. The only way of challenging the granting of permission is by judicial review.

Mr Frank Herrmann asked if several copies of the VDS will be given to MDC so that all officers have a copy.

Cllr. Tompkins confirmed that this would be the case and that copies would also be available at libraries.

Mr Geoff Hicks offered his congratulations to the VDS team for the outstanding work which had been achieved.

Parish Clerk's Report/Financial Overview (Page 6-7) No questions or comments.

District Councillors Report (Page 8-9)

Mrs Patricia Herrmann asked on the progress of the Conservation Area status for the village.

Cllr. Durham responded that last year when the list was prepared Woodham Walter was 3rd on the list and it had been hoped that it would have been considered in 2015 but due to the preparations for the LDP everything has been delayed. Cllr. Durham will remind the officer.

Womens' Club (Page 10)

Mrs Newton commented that the club are delighted with the support that they get.

Village Lunch Club (Page 11)

Cllr. Warren commented on the success of the club.

Mr Frank Herrmann commented that the Parish owes a great debt to Linda Hamilton and she should be thanked. It was agreed that the clerk should write a letter.

Village Hall (Page 11)

Mr Ken Rennie commented that they do now have the Breakfast and After School club at the hall.

Mrs Patricia Herrmann commented that it is difficult to hear and the Village Hall should consider installing a PA system.

Cllr. Warren /Cllr. Durham agreed that the Parish Council will look into providing a PA at the next Extraordinary or Annual Parish Meeting.

Bell Meadow Village Association (Page 12-13)

Cllr. Warren asked how many attend the celebrations.

Mr Ken Rennie responded around 2000.

Cllr. Durham informed that he has been appointed the new Chairman of the committee and plans for 2015 are coming along. This year will be varied but the event is still fundamentally a family day. They are still looking for volunteers.

Allotment Association (Page 14)

Mrs Jane Weedon commented that there are still some spare plots available and this is a good time of year to get digging.

Footpath Officer (Page 15)

Mrs Gill Orford offered thanks for attention given to keep the paths clear and walkable.

St Michael's Church (Page 16-17)

Mrs Kathy Tompkins commented on behalf of St Michael's Church to give thanks to the village for what has been achieved. They are very grateful to the Friends of St Michael's. Please carry on supporting us. The well attended churchyard is largely down to Colin Warner and for that they are very grateful.

Wood Corner (Page 18) No comments or questions.

Silver Threads (Page 18) No comments or questions.

Woodham Walter Common (Page 19)

Mr Chris Wheadon commented that new waymarks have been installed. He requested that mountain bikers offer care to other users. It was noted that some bikers come from some distances to the common. Pheasant House Farm has seen more activity recently with new hedging, butterfly management and owl boxes installed. Essex Wildlife Trust need more volunteers and on Thursdays between 10am-1pm there is often a working party – please contact Mr Wheadon if you are interested.

Woodham Walter Primary School (Page 20-21)

Mr Geoff Hicks as Vice Chairman of the Governors was representing the school which he said is a hidden gem. A recent local authority inspection had found that behaviour and safety would likely be outstanding under an Ofsted review. The children demonstrated positive attitudes to learning. Mr Hicks commented that we are lucky to have such a good school in our community and at 105 pupils it is effectively full.

Friends of St Michael's (Page 22)

Mr Geoff Hicks commented that more help is always needed. The Friends are currently undertaking work to repair and extend the Memorial cremated remains area, any funding and help will be appreciated.

Tadpoles Nursery (Page 23)

Mrs Pam Seear commented that the nursery are settled into their new home and looking forward to celebrating their 20 year anniversary in September.

Neighbourhood Watch (page 24) No comments or questions.

Community Speed Watch (Page 24) No comments or questions.

Police (Page 25) No comments or questions.

Vehicle Activated Sign/Speed Indicator Device (Page 25)

Cllr. Warren explained the plans for the Parish Council to purchase a device for the village.

Community Agent (Page 26)

Mrs McDonald informed that the project now has funding for an extra 4 years and it is now supported by Age UK, British Red Cross, Neighbourhood Watch as well as The Rural Community Council of Essex. She thanked councillors for the invite to attend and congratulated the village on all the things that you do. She is available by telephone, email or home visits.

Cllr. Warren finished the review of the Annual Report by saying that the report format is very useful and works better for all and that a much higher percentage of the village are now informed of all the achievements and activities in the village.

There were no further comments or questions regarding the report.

8. Local Issues – Points Raised by Members of the Public

Mr Brian Mitchell asked what will be done with the information gained by the data capture facility on the VDS/SID. He is concerned that Parish funds are not being well spent and that he has never seen the police attend the village. It is only police attendance that will work with the speeding issue. In his opinion the VDS/SID will not target those determined to speed.

Cllr. Warren responded that the data captured would be for advisory purposes only and would help with timings of moving the equipment and targeting Community speed watch activity.

Cllr. Durham commented that there is no substitute for prosecutions but the problem is with resources. Essex police budgets have been cut and they are very stretched. It is hoped that the VDS data will give us evidence to provide police with timings for when they should attend. Cllr. Durham noted that he has a meeting with the police the following day and along with another issue will raise a query regarding CSW training.

Mr Ivor Brearley commented that the CSW team need more volunteers and that now the weather is improving it is hoped that the team will get out again.

Mr Ivor Brearley commented on the flooding which had occurred earlier in the year outside his house in The Street and that he was pleased to say that the drains were recently cleared.

9. Points of Information

Cllr. Warren thanked those present for attending and invited everyone to enjoy the refreshments.

Signed

Dated

Meeting ended at 9.20pm