

## ECCLESHALL PARISH COUNCIL – ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

APRIL 30<sup>th</sup>, 2014

The Parish Meeting of Eccleshall Parish Council was held on Wednesday April 30<sup>th</sup>, 2014 at the Community Centre, Shaws Lane, Eccleshall at 7.30p.m.

**1). Present were:-**

Councillor G. Dale (Chair)	Councillor D. Pimble
Councillor L. von Elbing	Councillor B. Apps
Councillor J. Allen	Councillor L. Serjeant
Councillor M. Starkey	Councillor P. Baskerville
Councillor M. Dodkins	Councillor P. Mullee
Councillor P. Jones	Councillor E. Amos
PC Helen Davies	Ms E. Austin
Borough Councillor J. Pert	Mrs C. Heelis (Clerk)
7 members of the public	

**Apologies were received from:-** Councillor Garner together with County / Borough Councillor Chapman, Mr C. Marshall (Eccleshall Cricket Club) and Mr J. Bealey (Eccleshall Allotments Association).

**2). Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on April 24<sup>th</sup>, 2013** – The minutes, which had been previously ratified by the Council were presented to the meeting and copies were attached to the agendas.

**5). Chairman's welcome and report:-** The Chairman welcomed those present. Councillor Dale presented an overview of the Council's activities throughout the year.

It was noted that the precept had remained unchanged since 2011 and that due to various projects and maintenance issues the Parish Council had agreed a slight increase for 2014/15. The new amount to be levied was £50160 and would amount to 70p a year for a Band D Property.

The Parish Council continued to pressurise the County Council Highways to address issues with pot holes and road surfaces as well as liaising with the Police, the Eccles Society, and other local groups.

The footpath committee continued to explore the replacement of some stiles with kissing gates.

Last year a Housing Needs survey identified a need for 36 homes for rent / shared ownership in the Parish. Land was earmarked at the rear of The Burgage, but unfortunately the Landowners involved had indicated that they longer wished to sell. Housing Plus was continuing to seek an alternative site.

The Chairman referred to the refurbishment of Castle Street and the bespoke railings, which were an enhancement to the Conservation Area. Five trees had been planted on Stone Road in front of 'The Burgage' with funding from the Local Community Fund.

The Parish Council was liaising with the Governor of Drake Hall Prison regarding projects to improve the appearance of the town and maintain seats and notice boards in the Parish.

Councillor Dale indicated that the Parish Council had been approached by several developers including Richborough Estates who had held a Public Consultation regarding proposals to build 130 homes off Stafford Road, and J-Ross Developments who were producing plans for land off Cross Butts. These prospective developments together with the 82 homes already with permission at the rear of the Community Centre and other anticipated applications, demonstrated the importance of completing the Neighbourhood Plan with some urgency.

The Chairman concluded by indicating that the real work was carried out in the Council Committees and thanked Councillors for their commitment and enthusiasm over the last twelve months.

**3). Police:-** PC Helen Davies referred to crime in the area, which was relatively low and commented on an irresponsible article that had appeared recently in the local press, claiming that there was no police presence in the town. PC Davies reiterated that although PCSO Brewis and PCSO Hunt had been temporarily moved to Stafford and although PCSO Lutwyche now signed on in Stone, there was no reduction in the level of service provided for Eccleshall Parish.

**4). Presentation – Neighbourhood Plan:-** Councillor Pimble reported that the Localism Bill had introduced significant new powers to give local people a real voice to shape development in their

immediate area through Neighbourhood Development Plans. Neighbourhood Plan would have statutory status and could identify a set of guide lines and principles to govern which planning applications would be determined within the Neighbourhood area. However, Neighbourhood Plans were not able to contradict any of the elements within the Local Plan and could not oppose policies in the Local Plan which directly affected the Parish of Eccleshall.

The Borough Council expected their Local Plan to be adopted in June 2014. The Neighbourhood Plan could then be finalised and submitted for a 6 week consultation period. Following any amendments the Plan would then be submitted to Stafford Borough Council who would ensure compatibility with the Local Plan and also with statutory requirements. A Local Authority appointed examiner would then undertake an independent examination and if the Neighbourhood Plan was accepted it would then be subject to a referendum of the local residents in the Parish.

Eccleshall was identified In the local Plan as a Key Service Village capable of additional development, together with 10 other larger villages in the Borough such as Gnosall, Tixall and The Haywards. The Key Service Villages having a total requirement to provide 1200 new dwellings. However, no specific sites for development in Eccleshall or numbers of dwellings are mentioned in the plan, although the Borough had indicated a wish to discuss the number of new houses with the Parish Councils in the Key Service Villages. The Local Plan also included the expansion of Raleigh Hall by an additional 4 hectares on land to the west of the existing estate with a new vehicle access onto the A519.

The Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group, established following the last Annual Meeting comprised 4 Parish Councillors and 14 representatives of various community groups with an interest in how Eccleshall develops and other members of the public who had expressed an interest in helping to prepare the plan. Extensive consultation had already been carried out. The most important aspects of the consultation related to issues of housing, jobs and employment, traffic and parking, green space and the historic fabric.

The March edition of the Parish Council contained details of key facts identified throughout the consultation process and the Neighbourhood Plan objectives. A further update would be included in the June Parish Council Newsletter and information could be found on the Parish Council website – [www.eccleshallparishcouncil.org](http://www.eccleshallparishcouncil.org).

Unfortunately, some aspects of the Neighbourhood Plan which the steering group may have wished to incorporate could not be included for legal reasons. These included a policy strategy to determine the types and location of any new housing in a suitable form of words whereas the Local Plan stated that a Settlement Boundary was required within which new dwellings could be built and a desire to have small developments of around 20 houses had been deemed to be anti-development and unacceptable.

The main reason that the Parish Council wished to complete its Neighbourhood Plan as quickly as possible was to try to prevent undesirable developments springing up around the town. With no adopted Local Plan in place, the only planning guidance that the planners had to consider was the National Planning Policy Framework, which was very much geared to encouraging development. Hence planning applications that had already been lodged in Gnosall, Tixall and the Haywards had either been granted by the Borough or were subject to appeals with the Secretary of State. In Eccleshall, no applications had yet been made but an application for 130 homes was expected to be made by Richborough Estates. Other applications were anticipated even when the Local Plan was adopted because the Neighbourhood Plan was not in place.

The Steering Group was presently going through the initial stages of preparing the policies for the Neighbourhood Plan and these would be the subject of further consultation with the community.

**5). Emma Austin** – Emma gave a very interesting presentation and photograph display on her recent visit to Japan as part of the Young Core Leaders of Civil Society Groups Development Programme. Emma was congratulated on being the only volunteer of the 14 people chosen to represent the UK.

**6). Clerks report and accounts:-** Mrs. Heelis presented the receipts and payments accounts which had been adopted by the Council and audited by the Independent Internal Auditor. No questions were raised regarding the Council's Accounts.

**7). Reports from Borough / County Councillors:-**

Councillor Dale read a report submitted by **Councillor Chapman**. Amongst other things Councillor Chapman urged residents and businesses to contribute to the future viability of the town by sweeping their frontages and keeping them clear of litter. It was noted that funding was available from the Local Community Fund and those with projects should contact Councillor Chapman in the first instance.

**Councillor Pert** referred to the improvements being made to the West Coast Main Line and stated that local contractors were being used as far as possible. Councillor Pert congratulated Emma and the Youth, Cricket and Junior football Clubs together with the Ecclesian Society on achieving the Queens Voluntary service award.

**Councillor Jones** reported that he continued to call in controversial planning applications in the Parish and held regular surgeries in Eccleshall Library. Councillor Jones referred to the proposals of the Boundary Commission to reduce the number of Borough Councillors with effect from May 2015.

**8). Reports from Council Committees:-** Reports were received from the Planning, Traffic Management, Policy and Resources and Enhancements Committees. Copies were available of reports from all the Council Committees.

**There followed an interval, during which refreshments were served.**

**9). Reports from Organisations in the Parish:-**

Councillor Dale read reports submitted from the Allotments Association and Eccleshall Cricket Club.

Reports were received from the following organisations:- Offley Hay Village Hall, Eccleshall in Bloom, Eccleshall Neighbourhood Watch, St. Peter's Church Broughton, Broughton Parish Rooms, St. Paul's Croxton, Eccleshall British Legion, Slindon PCC, Eccleshall Festival and Eccleshall Community Centre.

**10). Any matters of Local or Topical Interest:-** Mr Ranson enquired whether any report had been received from Holy Trinity Church? Mrs Heelis replied that no correspondence had been received and Mr Downs thanked the Parish Council for their donation on behalf of Holy Trinity Church.

The Chairman thanked everyone for attending what had been a very interesting and worthwhile meeting.

There being no further business, the Chairman declared the meeting closed at 9.35pm.