

## ECCLESHALL PARISH COUNCIL

January 20<sup>th</sup>, 2016

A meeting of Eccleshall Parish Council was held on January 20<sup>th</sup>, 2016, at Eccleshall Community Centre, at 7.30pm. This meeting was followed by a meeting of the Planning Committee at 9.05pm.

- 1/16). Present were:-**
- |                                 |                                      |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Councillor D. Pimble (Chairman) | Councillor G. Garner (Vice-Chairman) |
| Councillor B. Delanchy          | Councillor M. Starkey                |
| Councillor R. Langford          | Councillor E. Amos                   |
| Councillor P. Baskerville       | Councillor P. Mullee                 |
| Councillor B. Davies            | Councillor D. Dyer                   |
| Councillor D. Jacques           | Mr C. J. Leather                     |
| 1 member of the press           | Mr P. Alcock                         |
| 6 members of the public         | Mrs C. Heelis (Clerk)                |

Apologies were received and accepted from Councillors Marshall, Taylor-Potts and Jones together with Borough Councillor J. Pert.

- 2/16). To consider Councillor requests for dispensations:-** There were no requests to receive.

**3/16). Public Participation:-**

With regard to Planning Application No. 15/23396 Mr Clarke resident of Trinity Road referred to a disparity between the surface water run-off and drainage details contained in the current planning application and the plans previously approved. Councillor Pimble stated that the most recent plans comprised the relevant details for consideration and comment.

- 4/16). To confirm the minutes of the Council Meeting held on November 18<sup>th</sup>, 2015:-** The minutes, which had been previously circulated, were agreed and signed.

**5/16). Vacancy on the Council – Slindon Ward:-**

The two candidates for the vacancy, Mr C. J. Leather of Ankerton House, Eccleshall and Mr Alcock of 2, Usulwall Close gave a presentation to the Council. The candidates withdrew from the meeting and a secret ballot was held.

Mr Leather was duly co-opted and Mr Alcock was thanked for his interest in the Council.

The Declaration of Acceptance of Office was signed and Councillor Leather was requested to complete the Register of Interest Forms.

- 6/16). Report from County Councillor Chapman:-** Councillor Chapman reported that over 100 letters had been delivered to occupiers of properties in the centre of Eccleshall seeking assistance with keeping the frontages free from litter and weeds and gullies clear of debris. The project appeared to have been moderately successful and some improvement had been noticed.

Councillor Chapman was liaising with Borough Councillor Pert regarding the clearing of debris and leaves from pavements and gutters, which was thought to have been a factor in the flooding which occurred in Castle Street before Christmas.

All branches of Local Government were presently considering their precepts for 2016/17. The County Council was in an increasingly difficult position and the Government would allow an increase of 1.99% without the need for a referendum. As a result of the cost of caring for the elderly, the Government would also allow the precept to increase by a further 2%.

Councillor Chapman was a member of the Fire Authority and Chair of the Police and Crime Panel.

**7/16). Committee Reports:-**

**Traffic Management:-** the next meeting of the committee would be held on February 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2016 following a meeting of the Planning Committee. Representatives were to meet with Mr Rayson (Highways) on January 21<sup>st</sup>, 2016 at 4.30pm, Eccleshall Community Centre.

**Enhancements:-** Councillor Baskerville presented a report on the meeting held on January 6<sup>th</sup>, 2016. The minutes had already been circulated to members.

**Grass verge by Boughey's Well, Croxton:-** Following the meeting held on October 14<sup>th</sup>, 2015 Mrs Heelis had contacted the County Council regarding the licence application request for the maintenance of the grass verge and been advised that as the matter was not straightforward it was being dealt with by a Senior Solicitor.

- Mr Latham had indicated that the co-operation and agreement of the Farmer was required before any posts could be installed.
- Posts could not be installed at right angles to the road as this would obstruct the passage of farm vehicles.
- The Farmer was entitled to cross the verge as it was part of the public highway.
- If the Farmer was prevented from crossing the verge this would have serious safety implications as when exiting Back Lane with a tractor / trailer, visibility was poor and the Farmer therefore used the grass verge to access his field gate.

Councillor Langford indicated that she considered this response to be unacceptable and requested a site meeting with Mr Latham. However, Mr Latham had subsequently stated that a site visit would be unproductive but he was willing to speak to Councillor Langford regarding the matter.

Although the hedge had been cut and the verge strimmed the verge would not be added to the urban cutting schedule, but the area could be tidied up when the Neighbourhood Highway Team visited the Parish.

**Risk Assessments and Assets Surveys:-** Members were requested to undertake surveys of the assets allocated to them and submit reports to the Clerk prior to the next Committee Meeting to enable a schedule of works to be prepared.

**Croxton Playing Field:-** Mrs Heelis reported that a grant of £240 had been awarded from the Broughton and Croxton Jubilee Committee towards the provision of seating at Croxton Playing Field. The Parish Council was required to match fund this amount. The grant had to be claimed no later than July 2017. It was resolved to arrange a site visit to discuss the position and cost of a seat (seats) fixing and paving slabs together with the thinning of trees on the Field.

**Toilet Area:-** Nothing further had been received from the Borough Council other than queries regarding the cost of the installation of a power supply for a possible Christmas Tree on site. Mrs Heelis was asked to make enquiries regarding the plan and schedule of works. Members expressed concern that the toilet building would be an eyesore once the Horse Chestnut trees had been removed.

Councillor Pimble reported that he and the Clerk had met Andy Scattergood (electrician) on site to obtain a rough estimate of the cost of installing a power supply for Christmas Tree Lights. It appeared that the most suitable course of action would be to take the power from a cable to the lamp post (within the site) closest to the telephone kiosk and connect to a secure post. Mr Scattergood had quoted up to £2000 to undertake the work. It was anticipated that the three lighting columns would be removed when the trees were felled as they would not be required. It was appreciated that negotiations were in the early stages and associated issues around the size of the tree to be planted and the cost of lights were yet to be debated.

The Council agreed to authorise the Chairman and Clerk to liaise with the Borough Council and expenditure of up to £2000 was agreed to secure a power supply.

**Bus shelters:-** Mrs Heelis had reported the roofing felt had blown off the bus shelters at Croxton and Slindon. Councillor Langford suggested that her husband could repair the shelter at Croxton if the appropriate materials were provided. Mrs Heelis had obtained a quote from Mr C. Heath to re-felt both shelters using heavy duty mineral felt, cut back the hawthorn tree around the Slindon shelter and provide new fascia boards to the Croxton Shelter for £280.00. It was resolved to accept this quotation and the Council thanked Mr Langford for offering to repair the shelter at Croxton.

The next meeting of the Enhancements Committee would be held on April 6<sup>th</sup>, 2016, following the meeting of the Planning Committee.

The minutes of the Enhancements Committee were adopted by the Council.

**Policy and Resources:-** Councillor Garner presented the minutes of the committee meeting held on December 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2015, which had been circulated to members.

**Eccleshall Community Centre:-** The Parish Council was advised that after careful deliberation of the issues raised by the late Councillor Dodkins and consideration of the lease between the Parish

Council and the Community Centre Association the Policy and Resources Committee was satisfied that as the facility was run and managed by the Association it was not within the remit of the Parish Council to interfere.

The following issues were agreed by the Council:-

- Although Association had large reserves these were justifiable. Councillor Marshall referred to the recent the closure of the Pre-School, which had involved a significant reduction in the regular income of the Centre and stated that it was right and proper for the Association to hold funds to cover such contingencies.
- The accounts were available on the Charity Commission website and showed that a profit of approximately £9,000 was made annually.
- The members of the Association often undertook repairs at the facility and funds raised from events were ploughed back into the centre. The lease was not a full self-repairing and insuring lease.
- The lease stated that 'the tenant shall peaceably hold and enjoy the demised premises during the said term without any interruption by the Landlord'.
- The lease indicates that the centre is to be managed by the Association as a community centre for the use of the inhabitants of the parish of Eccleshall and the neighbourhood. No reference is made to any requirement that it should be run as a business.
- The Parish Council as landlord cannot dictate advertising methods or hire charges.

There followed some discussion as to whether the Parish Council should procure a structural survey of the building. It was noted that although the Lease indicated that the Landlord's surveyor should be permitted access to examine the condition of the premises, a survey was not a requirement. The Parish Council representatives had reported that the building was kept in good condition with the Association arranging for an electrical inspection as well as funding recent repairs to a flat roof, partition doors in the hall and broken windows. Councillor Garner proposed that the Parish Council representatives on the Association were asked to report back to the next Council meeting detailing any concerns regarding the condition of the building. The motion was carried with two votes against and one abstention.

It was resolved to record appreciation of the excellent and dedicated work of the Eccleshall Community Centre Association in managing the community centre.

**Milestone refurbishment:-** Mr D. Wright of the Milestones Society had indicated that he would be willing to refurbish the 15 milestones in Eccleshall Parish at a cost of £75.00 each. Following the Parish Council meeting members had assessed the condition of various milestones and found that the condition was acceptable at the present time. It was resolved to thank Mr Wright to for his kind offer and continue to monitor the condition of milestones in the Parish.

**Fencing – Allotments site:-** The Allotments Association had requested funding towards the purchase of a gate and fencing materials for the allotments site, indicating that the members of the Association were prepared to undertaken the work. However, since the Policy and Resources Meeting the Allotments Association had reviewed the work required a quote of £545.04 had been obtained. A further quote was required and it was agreed to accept the lowest quote received.

**Croxton Playing Field:- Seating:-** A grant of £240.00 had been awarded from Broughton and Croxton Jubilee Fund to provide seating at the playing field. The Parish Council agreed to match funded this grant from reserves earmarked for the Playing Field. Further consideration of the type of seating to be provided was referred to the Enhancements Committee.

**Wicksteed Inspection:-** A quotation to replace several rotten posts, which had been identified during the course of the recent inspection amounted to £490.30 (Excluding VAT). It was agreed to place an order for the works to be funded from reserves earmarked for the Playing Field. Councillor Jacques queried whether recycled plastic could be used in place of wood similar to the boardwalk at Jacksons Coppice. It was agreed to consider alternative materials for future repairs.

**Broughton Parish Rooms:-** A funding application had been received from Broughton Parish Rooms to help with the cost of repairs. However, the committee had subsequently withdrawn the application indicating that sufficient funds had been raised from other sources.

The Parish Room Committee had been commended on their proactive work and advised that the Parish Council would be happy to consider future applications for funding prior to the commencement of any work.

**Broughton Tennis Club:-** An application had been received for funding towards the renovation of the Tennis Courts. Some funds had been raised and a grant offered from the Broughton and Croxton Jubilee Fund. The committee hoped to apply for funding from the Stafford Borough small grants scheme for community projects, for which it was necessary to be able to demonstrate that match funding was already in place. The deadline for receipt of applications from this fund was December 24<sup>th</sup>, 2015 and the Committee had agreed to provide a grant of £100 to enable further funding to be secured. The Parish Council was in agreement with this course of action.

**Precept 2016/17:-** Mrs Heelis had reported that the Borough Council intended to maintain the level of concurrent functions allowance at £3733.00. The Committee had agreed to recommend an unchanged precept for 2016/17 which would result in a percentage decrease of -0.5% due to a slight increase in the Tax Base.

However, since that meeting invoices had been received totalling £4654.25 in respect of election recharges and several additional items of expenditure would be incurred in the next financial year including increased NHI contributions and Insurance Premium Tax.

Councillor Garner proposed an increase of 2% (£1000) which would result in an increase of 1.6% (0.40p) from last year for a Band D property (copy of precept details attached). The motion to levy a precept of £51,160.00 for 2016/17 was carried with two votes against.

**Election recharges:-** It was agreed to pay the cost of the election in Eccleshall of £4430.90 in two instalments – one at the end of January 2016 and the rest at the end of April 2016.

**Future Audit arrangements:-** Following the abolition of the Audit Commission a new company had been established on behalf of the National Association of Local Councils and the Society of Local Council Clerks to appoint external Auditors for a five year period. Councils were entitled to opt out of the new arrangements before March 31<sup>st</sup>, 2016. The decision to opt out must be through a formal meeting of the Council and would require the Parish Council to set up an independent audit panel and procure external audit. The Parish Council agreed to continue to participate in the 'sector led body' scheme.

The next meeting of the Policy and Resources Committee would be held on March 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2016, following the meeting of the Planning Committee.

The minutes of the Policy and Resources were adopted by the Council.

**Footpaths:-** Councillor Mullee reported on a meeting of the Footpaths Committee held on January 13<sup>th</sup>, 2016.

- The Clerk had divided the Footpaths between 19 volunteer walkers and distributed footpath details, maps and report forms.
- Mrs Heelis had been asked to prioritise reports submitted by Mr Davenport and Mr Legge and issue job sheets to Mr Smith.
- There was some confusion concerning Footpath 110 from Platt Bridge to The Hough where it appeared a post and rail fence had now been replaced and also a rabbit warren on Footpath IR2964 where the Ranger had inspected the wrong footpath.
- The next meeting of the Footpaths Committee was arranged for May 4<sup>th</sup>, 2016 preceding the meeting of the Planning Committee.

**8/16). Liaison Representatives:-** There were no reports to receive from Eccleshall Community Centre, Offley Hay Village Hall, Tourism Bureau, Business Group or Young People.

**Allotments Association:-** Councillor Starkey reported on the AGM of the Association held on December 7<sup>th</sup>, 2015. Mr R. Milne had been appointed as the Chair and Mrs J. Davies as Vice-Chair. The Secretary and Treasurer were unchanged. Concern had been expressed regarding a high turnover of plot holders and a suggestion had been made that some plots could be split.

**Ecclian Society:-** Activities since the November meeting included a structural survey of the manger posts, trimming and erection/removal of Christmas Trees, provision of mulled wine for the Carols around the Christmas Tree. In December the management committee discussed the provision of flags and poles for the festival and replacement of some of the oak posts.

**9/16). New Developments:-** Councillor Pimble reported that no further progress had been made with the roundabout on the Stafford Road. However, a meeting was to be held on January 21<sup>st</sup>, 2016

between Highways and Bovis representatives and hopefully information would be available at the meeting with Richard Rayson.

**10/16). Neighbourhood Plan:-** Councillor Pimble indicated that disappointingly the referendum was still scheduled to take place on May 5<sup>th</sup>, 2016 at the same time as the Police and Crime Commissioner's elections.

**11/16). Clerk's Report and Correspondence:-**  
**Civic Amenity Visits 2016/17 –** It was resolved to request bi-monthly visits of two hours duration as previously.

**Gist -** Mr D. George the new site manager had offered to attend the Council meeting on March 16<sup>th</sup>, 2016. Councillors were asked to note details of Gist lorries coming through Eccleshall on the B5026.

**Local Council Award Scheme:-** Mrs Heelis reported that the criteria for the scheme had been revised and the Parish Councils' Association now supported and promoted the scheme. Consideration of the revised scheme was referred to the Policy and Resources Committee.

**12/16). Chairman's Report: -** Councillor Pimble reported that he had switched on the Christmas lights in Eccleshall.

**13/16). Accounts:-** Copies of the accounts had been circulated. Retrospective Authorisation was granted for the following accounts paid since the last meeting:-

SPCA Training - LGA 1972 s.111	55.00
SLCC Membership - LGA 1972 s.143	187.00
Trent Grounds Maint - Croxton Playing Field - Open Spaces Act 1906 s.10	432.00
Data Protection - LGA 1972 s.111	35.00
AS Electrical Services install tree lights - Concurrent Allowance	312.00
Jacksons of Eccleshall - tree felling Open Spaces Act 1906 s10	72.00
Wicksteed Playground Inspections - Public Health Act 1875 s.164	54.00
Woods Christmas Tree Farm - Concurrent Allowance	1394.00
Stafford Brigade Band (Chair's Allowance)	150.00
SBC Election recharges - LGA 1972	223.35
Zurich Municipal - Council Insurance - LGA 1972 s.111	2330.75

Authorisation was requested for payment of the following:-

Salaries & associated costs - LGA 1972 s. 112	2336.94
Expenses - Local Government (Financial Provisions) Act 1963	68.07
AS Electrical Services tree lights - Concurrent Allowance	126.00
SBC Election recharges - LGA 1972	2215.45
Stafford Borough - Civic Amenity visits - concurrent allowance	210.00
Broughton Tennis Club - LGA S.137	100.00

All were in favour and the cheques were signed.

**14/16). Items / Date and venue for the next meeting:-** February 17<sup>th</sup>, 2016, Eccleshall Community Centre 7.30pm.

There being no further business, the Chairman declared the meeting closed at 9pm.