

ECCLESHALL PARISH COUNCIL

March 20th, 2013

A meeting of Eccleshall Parish Council was held on March 20th, 2013 at Eccleshall Community Centre, at 7.30pm, this meeting was followed by a meeting of the Planning Committee.

31/13). Present were:-

Councillor G. Dale (Chairman)	Councillor D. Pimble
Councillor B. Apps	Councillor P. Mullee
Councillor P. Baskerville	Councillor P. Jones
Councillor J. Allen	Councillor G. Garner
Councillor L. Serjeant	Councillor M. Starkey
Councillor M. Dodkins	Councillor D. Jacques
Councillor L. von Elbing	County Councillor H. Butter
Mrs C. Heelis (Clerk)	3 members of the public

Apologies were received and accepted from Councillors Delanchy and Amos together with Borough Councillors Chapman and Pert.

The meeting opened with prayers

32/13). Public Participation:- Mrs Watson referred to the presentation given by Mr Watson at the Council meeting held on February 20th, 2013 concerning the provision of Defibrillators in rural areas. Assistance was sought from Councillors representing the Slindon and Croxton Wards with fund raising for the purchase and storage of equipment and maintenance following installation. It was agreed to refer this matter to the Policy and Resources Committee for further consideration.

33/13). To consider Councillor requests for Dispensations:- Councillor P. Mullee declared a Pecuniary Interest as an owner and tenant of certain areas of land, which may be involved in discussions with the Neighbourhood Plan and Affordable Housing. **The Council resolved to grant a dispensation to allow Councillor Mullee to participate in discussions regarding these areas of land but not take part in any vote, for a period of two years.**

34/13). Reports from Borough & County Councillors:-

Councillor Butter expressed concern at the appalling condition of local roads and encouraged members to persist in reporting pot holes and other issues. Additional funding had been allocated to repair the damage caused by the inclement weather but it would take considerable time to address all the issues. The road from Croxton to Greatwood was in a dreadful condition and Councillor Butter indicated that he was surprised that the road from Wetwood to Maer had been identified by the County Council as a priority for extensive repairs. Councillor Jacques stated that he considered the lack of maintenance to the drains exacerbated the situation.

Councillor Jones indicated that the Borough Council was appointing a consultant to investigate recommendations from the report into the failings at Stafford Hospital to close the intensive care and maternity units with patients having to travel to other facilities. The Council expressed concern at the situation and the additional travel times involved for patients.

Councillor Pimble referred to an email he had circulated concerning the fact that the RDB around Eccleshall and Croxton would cease to exist from the end of March and would only be replaced by a confirmed Stafford Borough Council Local Plan, together with a Neighbourhood Plan or a site Specification Allocations and Policies Document for Key Service Villages. As the Stafford Borough Local Plan was not yet confirmed and the Neighbourhood Plan was in the very early stages of development there would be no defence against the Presumption in Favour of Development defined in the National Planning Policy Framework. This had recently been highlighted by a case in Tewkesbury where an appeal against a refusal of planning permission totalling 1000 new homes had been successful as the High Court had determined that the proposals were in line with the principles of the Framework.

The Borough Council had failed to support the Parish by submitting applications for the Neighbourhood Plan Front Runners Scheme and it would be at least another twelve months before a Plan for Eccleshall could be produced and accepted. Without plans in place a number of planning applications for the development land outside the RDB would undoubtedly be submitted, which the Borough Planners would find hard to refuse. Indeed letters had been sent to landowners who had expressed an interest in selling their land to ascertain whether their land was still available. It was queried whether the Borough Council may be using this information to prepare a Site Specific Allocations and Policy Document.

Councillor Jones agreed that there was justification for concern and the Parish Council considered that the situation was untenable and could be disastrous for Eccleshall. Mrs Heelis was asked to write to Mr W. Cash MP stressing that contrary to the influence that 'Localism' and the 'Big Society' had been expected to afford to local communities the opposite situation was emerging and could have disastrous consequences. Councillors were also requested to write individual letters of concern to Mr Cash.

35/13). Committee Reports:-

Traffic Management Committee:- The next meeting of the Traffic Management Committee would be held on April 3rd, 2013 following the Planning Committee meeting.

Enhancements Committee:- Councillor Dale referred to the following matters detailed in the minutes of the Enhancements Committee meeting held on March 6th, 2013, which had been circulated with the agendas:-

- **Pump Site:-** It was noted no formal agreement had been entered into with Sugnall Estates for the use of the Pump Site and Councillor Jacques proposed that the £5 annual payment made by the Parish Council to maintain the owner's rights over the building at Sugnall Estate to store footpath equipment could also be accepted as cover for the use of the pump site. The Council agreed to accept this offer and thanks were extended to Councillor Jacques.
- **Eyeswells Footpath:-** Quotations had been sought to remove the tree overhanging a neighbouring property. The committee had resolved to award the contract to N&J Tree Services, which was the cheapest quote at £200 and requested that the work was undertaken as soon as possible.
- **Ash Tree, Croxton Play Area :-** Four quotations had been obtained to remove the tree, the main cost was for Western Power to turn off the electricity whilst the work was being done as the cables passed very close to the branches. The committee had resolved to award the contract to N&J Tree Services which was the cheapest quote at £968.00 and requested that the work was undertaken as soon as possible.

Retrospective authorisation was granted by the Council for the removal of the above trees, as it was expedient to have the trees removed before the leaves appeared and the removal of both trees had been discussed previously.

- **Benches / Seats:-** Following the committee meeting a letter had been received from Mr Wallace indicating that he no longer wished to refurbish the seats in Eccleshall due to other commitments. Mrs Heelis was asked to write and thank Mr Wallace for voluntarily undertaking this task over recent years. Councillor Starkey suggested that perhaps this was a job that could be undertaken by the women at Drake Hall. Councillor Serjeant agreed to discuss this proposal with the Governor of the Prison and requested that a specification for the work was provided.
- **Pillar Clock – damage:-** The clock had been damaged by a vehicle on the weekend of February 16th/17th, although there appeared to be no witnesses. The clerk indicated that she had obtained a crime number and contacted the insurance company. Zurich had requested the submission of two quotations for the work and the Policy excess was £100. Councillor Pimble agreed to prepare a specification for repairs to the brickwork and quotes would be sought for the work.
- **Bishops Court:-** The committee recommended that in view of the strong opposition expressed to the scheme put forward especially the youth shelter, the proposals were withdrawn to enable the council to consider other options and land availability with a view to putting forward proposals at a later date. All were in agreement with this course of action.

Hedge:- the Borough Council had failed to cut the hedge between the open space and Market Fields in 2012 and consequently the work remained outstanding. The Borough Council was unable to carry out the work until April as the equipment was in need of repair. The committee had resolved to request TGM to trim the hedge as soon as possible at a cost of £125.00 before the start of the bird nesting season. Retrospective authorisation was granted and the Clerk reported that the hedge had been cut and positive comments had been received on the standard of the work.

Tree - Councillor Pimble reported that he had undertaken a visual inspection of the tree on Bishops Court and Mrs Heelis had asked N&J Tree Services to inspect and advise on any work required with regard to Health and Safety.

- **Southwell Estate:-** It was reported that the committee had agreed to defer discussion of possible equipment for the site to a later meeting. Once a scheme had been agreed it would be presented to Stafford and Rural Homes for their comments and consultation with local residents.
- **Carol Sheets:-** It was agreed to have 250 copies of the sheets reprinted as many had been damaged during the Carol singing in December by the wet weather.
- **Fire Engine:-** Councillor Garner had approached Fletchers but the equipment could only be accommodated outside. Councillor Dale had spoken to the owner of Claremont Garage who was unable to store the engine Councillor Starkey had measured the engine and determined that the space under the arches outside the Co-op would be adequate. Mrs Heelis reported that Mr Whitcut a former Station Manager at Eccleshall had contacted her and expressed concern about the possible loss of the Fire Engine. Apparently, the engine has been brought to Eccleshall and restored by volunteers with funds that had been raised locally. Mr Whitcut agreed to speak to the new Station Manager and indicated that Mr Nicholls was able to house the equipment temporarily if required. Mrs Heelis was asked to write to the Co-op at Lichfield to ascertain if they would be agreeable to alterations to the building to enable the Fire Engine to be located there.
- **Castle Street:-** Councillors agreed that the standard of work was exemplary and the appearance of Castle Street was much improved. The Clerk was asked to write to thank the County Council and the contractors for their execution of an excellent job and also to Councillor Chapman to thank him for his assistance in this matter. Members commented on the congestion that had resulted from the traffic lights and the fact that this had highlighted the volume of lorries and traffic which travelled through the town.

The work was almost completed and a temporary guard rail had been erected to prevent vehicles accessing the pavement. The Council resolved that the design and specification for the bespoke Railings should be amended to fit the area and the fixing points to enable formal tenders to be obtained.

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

Policy and Resources Committee:- Councillor Allen referred to a meeting of the Committee which had preceded the Council meeting, when the following items had been discussed:-

- **Committee Membership:-** The Council accepted a recommendation that Councillor Serjeant was co-opted onto the Committee.
- **Precept 2012/13:-** The Clerk circulated copies of a spreadsheet detailing expenditure during the year and indicating an estimated balance at the yearend of £44,000.00.
- **Tenders for repairs to the flat roof at the Community Centre:-** Specifications and invitations to tender had been sent out to 4 contractors. Greenhill Roofing had not submitted a further quote for the insulation required and the material used by Staffordshire Roofing was not considered suitable. An invitation to tender had been sent to C.J. Hughes of Newcastle but had not been returned.

The committee recommended that the Parish Council accepted a quotation from Steve Emery of £3120.00 for the roofing and £1625.00 for the insulation and that the Community Centre Association donated £1000 to the Council to offset the costs. The proposal was carried by ten votes to three, with Councillors Dodkins, Jacques and von Elbing voting against the motion.

Councillor Dodkins objected to the proposal and indicated that she considered the repairs should be funded by the Community Centre Association and not taken out of Parish Council reserves. Councillor Pimble stated that as Landlord the Parish Council should maintain the fabric of the building. Councillor Jacques proposed that in future, provision for the maintenance of the Centre should be made in the budget to enable earmarked reserves to be accumulated for this purpose.

- **Neighbourhood Plan:** Mrs Heelis referred to a Council decision made in November 2011 to allow the Clerk to claim for overtime hours worked in connection with certain projects and requested that this agreement was reinstatement whilst the Neighbourhood Plan was being produced as this would create a significant amount of work.

Councillor von Elbing queried why the expenditure was not included in the Budget analysis which had been circulated. Mrs Heelis replied that the Council had not decided to proceed with a Plan when the Budget had been prepared in January and the costs involved were undetermined. It was resolved that £1000.00 should be earmarked to cover expenditure incurred in connection with the Neighbourhood Plan such as overtime, travel and costs associated with consultation.

Footpaths Committee:- There had been no meeting of the committee.

36/13). Liaison Representatives:- There were no reports to receive from Offley Hay Village Hall or the Community Centre Association,

Allotments Association:- Councillor Starkey reported that keys for the shelter had been allocated to plot holders for a small charge.

Ecclian Society:- Copies of the March newsletter had been delivered. Volunteers were needed to open their gardens for the event on June 15th and 16th, 2013 and 4 new oak posts had been incorporated into the Castle Street improvement works.

Tourism Bureau:- Councillor Jones reported that it had been Tourism Week and events to promote tourism had been held in the Market Square in Stafford. The next meeting was to be held at Aston Marina.

Bishop Lonsdale School:- Councillor Dodkins reported that the School had participated in World Book Day and held a Red Nose Cake Day.

Business Group:- Councillor Jones reported that Totally Locally was to be launched in Eccleshall at the weekend and members hoped to arrange a careers convention.

Young People:- Councillor Dodkins reported that the Youth Club was preparing to move into the new Cricket Club premises after Easter and had made a significant contribution towards the new facilities. Mr Marshall was to be congratulated on his achievements for the Club. April Lewis would be leaving in June. It had been suggested that the young people extended an invitation to their counterparts in Sancerre to visit Eccleshall in 2014. Councillor Dodkins asked Councillor Serjeant if Drake Hall could provide any assistance with the maintenance of the library garden?

Communities Mean Business:- Councillor Dodkins indicated that there had been no meeting and undertook to make enquiries about the future of the body with a view to reporting back to the next Council meeting.

37/13). Clerk's Report and Correspondence:-

Watering Contract:- It was resolved to waive Standing Orders and invite Stafford Borough Council to tender for the watering contract for 2013. Councillor Apps proposed that the matter was taken up with Drake Hall Prison to ascertain whether the Ladies could undertake the watering as they used to in the past and Councillor Serjeant agreed to discuss this possibility with the Governor. Otherwise, members were unaware of anyone else who may be able / willing to undertake the work as cost effectively as the Borough.

The Clerk read a letter received from Mrs H. Ladell of 'Chirbury', Stafford Road, who expressed concern about the volume of traffic and the build outs in the High Street. Mrs Ladell considered that Blurtons Lane and Green Lane should be used to alleviate the situation and that 'No Parking' should be allowed on Stone Road for 100 yards from the roundabout. The Clerk was asked to acknowledge receipt of the letter and indicate that the Council had noted the contents.

Councillors von Elbing and Dodkins had received copies of letters from Mrs Bramall of 'Churchview' Farmhouse Slindon, which had been addressed to Mike Maryon at Staffordshire County Council. The letter included photographs of flooding around their property and referred to various management issues, which it was considered exacerbated the problem. Mrs Heelis was asked to forward the letter to Mr C. Mitchell for investigation and acknowledge receipt of the letter, indicating that the comments contained therein had been noted.

Governor vacancy – Bishop Lonsdale School:- The Parish Council had been notified that the term of office for Councillor Henry Butter was due to end at the end of September 2013. Councillor Butter indicated that he would not be seeking re-appointment. The Parish Council was invited to submit a nomination to be considered for appointment and Councillor Dodkins expressed an interest in being appointed as a Governor to the school. All were in favour providing that the nomination of a Parish

Councillor would be acceptable. Councillor von Elbing agreed to make enquiries and seek clarification of the criteria for Local Authority Governor eligibility.

Review of Electoral Arrangements:- The Borough Council had arranged for the Boundary Commission to make a presentation to Parish Councils on March 25th, 2013 at 5.30pm at the Civic Centre. The Parish Council deemed it unnecessary to be represented at the presentation as it was understood that no changes were recommended for Eccleshall Parish.

Neighbourhood Watch:- Mr Baldry had indicated that No Uninvited Trader signs had been erected on several streets around Eccleshall. The effectiveness of the scheme would be monitored before further locations for the signs were considered. The Clerk was asked to write and thank Mr Baldry for the instigation of this project.

Removal of Waiting Restrictions – Castle Street:- The Clerk referred to notification from the Highways that formal approval had been received for the removal of restrictions on Castle Street following the recent enhancement scheme.

Community Paths Initiative:- Bids were invited for projects to improve the Rights of Way network during 2013/14.

Parish Rooms:- Councillor Pimble indicated that he would be able to attend the opening of the new kitchen at the Parish Rooms on April 10th, 2013 to represent the Parish Council.

38/13). Chairman's Report:-

It was resolved 'That in view of the confidential nature of the business, about to be transacted, it was advisable in the public interest that the public were temporarily excluded from the meeting and they were instructed to withdraw'. The Chairman referred to the seven basic principles of the Code of Conduct and requested that members used their discretion when responding to emails and where possible referred all items of correspondence to the Clerk for an appropriate response or acknowledgement. Members were also reminded that the Parish Council was a corporate body and members had a duty to promote and maintain high standards of conduct, adhering to Council Policies which had been subject to full and proper debate.

The Public were invited to re-join the meeting.

39/13). Accounts:-

The Clerk referred to the following accounts which had been authorised at the meeting of the Planning Committee held on March 6th, 2013.

SCC - Castle St- Parish Councils Act 1957 s.1&3 & H'ways Act 1980 s.96	10000.00
Wicksteed Playground Inspection - <i>Public Health Act 1875 s.164</i>	72.00
Creative Copy 'n' Colour Newsletters March 2013 - <i>LGA 1972 s. 142</i>	258.00
Japhlin - Printer, fax, phone, scanner & cartridges - <i>LGA 1972 s.111</i>	296.40
Japhlin – 4 x toner for Laserjet printer, Anti-virus and visit - <i>LGA 1972 s.111</i>	397.20

Authorisation was sought for payment of the following accounts:-

Salaries and Associated costs - <i>LGA 1972 s. 112</i>	2214.26
Expenses - <i>Local Government (Financial Provisions) Act 1963</i>	59.18
Land Registry	80.00
D. Pimble – travel outside the parish - <i>LGA 1972 s.111</i>	16.50

All were in favour and the cheques were signed.

The Clerk was authorised to pay any further accounts received prior to March 31st, 2013 in consultation with the Chairman and Vice-Chairman.

40/13). Items, date and venue for next meeting:- April 17th, 2013, Broughton Parish Rooms, 7.30pm.

There being no further business, the Chairman declared the meeting closed at 9.10pm.