

## ECCLESHALL PARISH COUNCIL

October 16<sup>th</sup>, 2013

A meeting of Eccleshall Parish Council was held on October 16<sup>th</sup>, 2013 at Eccleshall Community Centre, Shaws Lane, at 7.30pm, this meeting was followed by a meeting of the Planning Committee.

**109/13). Present were:-**

|                               |                           |
|-------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Councillor G. Dale (Chairman) | Councillor B. Delanchy    |
| Councillor B. Apps            | Councillor P. Mullee      |
| Councillor M. Starkey         | Councillor P. Baskerville |
| Councillor J. Allen           | Councillor G. Garner      |
| Councillor E. Amos            | Councillor L. von Elbing  |
| Councillor M. Dodkins         | Councillor D. Jacques     |
| Mrs C. Heelis (Clerk)         | Mr P. Thompson            |

**Apologies** – Apologies were received and accepted from Councillors Pimble, Serjeant and Jones together with Borough / County Councillor F. Chapman and Borough Councillor J. Pert

*The meeting opened with prayers*

**110/13). To consider Councillor requests for dispensations:-** No requests had been submitted.

**111/13). Public Participation:-** Mr Thompson did not wish to raise any issues with the Council.

**112/13). To confirm the minutes of the Council Meeting held on September 18<sup>th</sup>, 2013:-** The minutes, which had been previously circulated, were agreed and signed. With reference to the report received from Councillor Pert it was noted that thanks had been extended to the Highways Authority for resurfacing various roads around the Croxton Area including Windmill Lane and Woodwall Green Lane in addition to the B5026.

**113/13). Reports from Borough and County Councillors:-** There were no reports to receive.

**114/13). Committee Reports:-**

**Enhancements Committee:-**

- **Trees at The Burgage:-** Councillor Dale reported that the County Council had conducted further investigations into services beneath the surface and suggested locations for the planting of four trees and appropriate species. The Parish Council expressed support for the scheme and its implementation.
- **Pillar Clock:-** Councillors Dale and Pimble had examined the clock and confirmed that the damage was more extensive than had been apparent originally. Mr B. Smith had been requested to assess the repairs required and submit a quotation.
- **Christmas Trees:-** Quotations had been received from Woodsfarm and Treeway Fencing and it was agreed to place an order for the required number of Trees from Woodsfarm, who had agreed to maintain the same prices as 2012.
- **Croxton Play Area:-** The Chairman and Clerk had inspected the safety surfacing and had noted that the surface had shrunk and lifted slightly. Mrs Heelis had contacted Ms S, McDonald, Play Development Officer, Stafford Borough Council, who had indicated that a trip point of this nature would be confirmed as low risk and bearing in mind the time of year and the amount of usage that would be envisaged on the site over the winter it should be acceptable to monitor any further deterioration until the annual inspection was due in March 2014. The Council resolved to follow the suggested course of action.

**Policy and Resources Committee:-** Councillor Allen referred of the minutes of a meeting held on October 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2013, copies of which had been circulated with the agendas. The following matters had been discussed and recommendations made by the committee:-

- **Precept and Budget:-** It was noted that £13,000 held in reserves, had previously been earmarked for the purchase of land at the rear of the Community Centre and was no longer required for that purpose. The Council agreed that certain amounts from reserves should be earmarked for the Maintenance of the Community Centre and Croxton Play Area. Also amounts should be allocated in the budget for these areas of expenditure and this could require an increase being made to the budget for 2014/15. The Precept had remained unchanged since

April 2011 and various items of expenditure were envisaged including work associated with the Neighbourhood Plan.

Councillor Pimble had referred to the impact of preparing a Neighbourhood Plan on the Clerk's workload and the fact that other Parish Councils of a similar size to Eccleshall employed a full time member of Staff and an Assistant. It was agreed that it may be necessary to employ someone to undertake specific tasks for a temporary period.

Members and committee chairmen were requested to advise the Clerk of items of expenditure to be included in the budget. Mrs Heelis was asked to prepare a budget in consultation with Councillor Allen for discussion by the Committee in December.

- **National Minimum Wage:-** It was noted that the National Minimum Wage was to increase on October 1<sup>st</sup>, 2013 to £6.31 per hour and the Council agreed to that the Handyman's remuneration should be increased accordingly.
- **Recommended 1% Salary Award for Local Council Clerks from April 1<sup>st</sup>, 2013:-** The National Joint Council for Local Government Services had recommended an increase of 1% to the Salaries of Local Council Clerks. Salaries had remained unchanged since April 1<sup>st</sup>, 2009 and it was noted that this increase amounted to £215 per annum. The increase was approved by the Council
- **Review of Pension Policies:-** Following the submission of a Statement of Policies of the Parish Council as employing authority with regard to the Local Government Pension Scheme Discretionary Powers the Council agreed to amend the Policy regarding Regulation 18 – Flexible Retirement and Regulation 30 allowing early payment of benefits, in accordance with advice received from the Communication Officer at Staffordshire County Council. Mr Griffiths indicated that a situation may arise where the Council had a need or wish to grant Flexible Retirement or early payment of benefits. The Council agreed that these discretions would only be exercised in very exceptional circumstances and when financial considerations were met.

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

**Traffic Management Committee:-** Councillor von Elbing referred to the following matters discussed at a meeting with Mr C. Mitchell, Community Highway Liaison Manager held on October 15<sup>th</sup>, 2013:-

- **HGV's and Gist –** No incidents had been reported and the Parish Council remained satisfied that the vehicles were generally well driven and the Company was working hard to address the issues raised by the local community.
- **Traffic monitoring –** Mr Mitchell indicated that there were no plans to undertake any monitoring at present but would advise Mrs Heelis of the contact details for the Data Manager who could provide data, which could be useful when compiling the evidence base for the Neighbourhood Plan.
- **Condition of local roads / flooding problems – update:-** Mr Mitchell referred to preparation work, which had been carried out in the Windmill Lane area of Croxton over the past few weeks, prior to the surface dressing proposed in 2014. Some areas had already received extensive overlay works and pot hole patching.
- **Stafford Street and Castle Street:-** The resurfacing and painting of the roundabouts had been included in the programme and would be undertaken in due course. The programmed work was to be undertaken at weekends to minimise disruption.
- **Small Lane:-** Small Lane had been resurfaced recently and the Crossroads at Sturbridge were due to be patched shortly.
- **Footway Resurfacing – Slindon:-** The pavements in Slindon were programmed for resurfacing at the end of November and Mr Mitchell referred to a proposal to replace a section of the existing granite setts in Slindon with kerbs and remove some areas of grass verge by the Church..
- **Footway – Stone Road:-** Mr Mitchell indicated that the footpath work outside The George car park on Stone Road would be completed in the current financial year.
- **Entrances to Holy Trinity Church:-** It had not been possible to repair the entrances to the Church when Small Lane was being resurfaced as the equipment and type of work was unsuited to that location. Two options for the treatment of the area had been forwarded to Councillor Chapman for consideration.
- **Ownership of and responsibility for the blue brick areas in Eccleshall High Street:-** There was some confusion regarding the ownership of the blue brick areas in the High Street as recent

investigations with the Land Registry and Land Charges had shown the areas were in the ownership of the Highways Authority. A definitive ruling on this matter had been requested and the owners of the Star Café had been advised to contact the Parish Council regarding the siting of a seat outside their premises.

- **Bus Stop – Stafford Road / Green Lane:-** Councillor Chapman had been requested to give priority to a request from a resident for a formalised bus stop on the Eccleshall side of Green Lane and enable the work to be undertaken from the DHP fund. An order had been raised for a flag pole and hardstanding, although the implementation of the works was dependent on demands on resources from other areas.
- **Neighbourhood Highway Team:-** The team had been allocated 5 day's work in the Parish starting on October 15<sup>th</sup>, 2013.
- **Speed of Traffic – Croxton:-** There had been no further concerns raised by local residents regarding the speed of traffic though Croxton and no incidents report. A request had been included in the September Parish Council Newsletters for volunteers to come forward to re-form the Eccleshall and Croxton Speedwatch Groups but only one expression of interest had been received, from an Eccleshall resident. It was agreed to remove this item from future agendas.
- **Request for speed restriction – Elford Heath:-** Mr Mitchell reported that this issue was on the Divisional Highway Programme List, but resources for the current financial year were already committed on other projects. Feasibility surveys would be undertaken and the request prioritised, however, it was likely that resulting actions may include better signage or visual cues rather than the speed restriction sought by local residents.
- **Winter Gritting:-** Mr Mitchell referred to proposed changes to gritting routes and service delivery over the coming winter and advised members that a new Ice Buster Scheme was to be launched. Parish Councils were encouraged to become involved and grit, storage and equipment could be provided.

Councillor Mullee referred to numerous potholes on the lane leading to Bank House Farm. Councillor Delanchy indicated that the best way to ensure action was taken was to keep contacting the Highways hotline.

**Footpaths Committee –** There was no report to receive.

**115/13). Liaison Representatives:-** There were no reports to receive from the Business Group or the Tourism Bureau.

**Allotments Association:-** Councillor Starkey reported that the next meeting of the Association would take place on October 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2013 and the retiring committee members were writing job specifications for the incoming members.

**Ecclian Society:-** It was reported that the 2014 Calendar was now available, the first walk of the season would take place on October 27<sup>th</sup> at 10am, the next newsletter would be published at the end of October and the AGM was to be held on November 27<sup>th</sup>, 2013 in the Kings Arms. Councillor Baskerville indicated that the group planned to plant daffodil bulbs around the town on October 30<sup>th</sup>, 2013 at 10am when volunteers would be welcomed. The Prisoners from Drake Hall were commended on recent weed clearing exercises in the High Street.

**Offley Hay Village Hall:** - Councillor von Elbing reported that bookings remained buoyant and Bridge lessons had started on a Wednesday at 7.30pm. The hole in the car park had been filled with a ton of hardcore.

**Bishop Lonsdale School:-** Councillor Dodkins reported that the Harvest Festival had been well attended with proceeds going to Christian Aid. An Open Day was planned on November 7<sup>th</sup>, 2013 to enable anyone interested to look at the new building and view progress. A Remembrance Day Service would be held on November 8<sup>th</sup>.

**YoYo:-** Councillor Dodkins reported that the group continued to go from strength to strength and the AGM would be held in November. Some Japanese teenagers were to visit and a knitting project was underway with the teenagers knitting squares for blankets.

**Community Centre:-** A new hot water boiler had been delivered for the kitchen and the new heating boiler was due to be installed next week.

**Communities Mean Business:-** The group was allocated the remaining funds and it was anticipated that transitional funding would be available in 2014 for community projects.

**116/13). Neighbourhood Plan:-** Mrs Heelis reported that approximately 400 completed questionnaires had been received to date and the closing date had been extended to November 8<sup>th</sup>, 2013. Flyers were to be sent home with the school children to remind those parents who had not submitted questionnaires. A date

was to be arranged for the group to meet with Bob Keith from Planning Aid who would advise on the next stage of the process – analysis and interpretation of results and building the evidence base.

**117/13). Clerks Report and correspondence:-** Mrs Heelis reported on the following consultations:-  
**Revised Statement of Community involvement SCC** – The Clerk indicated that this was a Planning Matter, which should have been included on the agenda of the Planning Committee. Responses were to be received by November 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2013 and the link to the document had been circulated to members and a hard copy provided for those without email. It was agreed to include the matter on the agenda of the Planning Committee on November 6<sup>th</sup>, 2013 for further discussion.

**Infrastructure+:-** Details of this consultation had been forwarded to members the closing date for submission of responses was November 25<sup>th</sup>, 2013.

**Rally Event** – Swynnerton Training Area:- Major Salisbury had advised that a Rally Event was due to take place on November 1<sup>st</sup>, 2013 between 18.15 and 20.30hrs and on November 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2013 from 08.45 to 11.00hrs. The event would be monitored throughout by the Environmental Department of Stafford Borough Council.

**118/13). Chairman's Report:-** Councillor Dale reported that he had visit Drake Hall Prison with the clerk and met with the Governor. Mr Newton had indicated that the Prisoners would be able to assist with the maintenance of street furniture, play equipment and notice boards together with strimming and weeding. A date had been arranged for the Governor to visit the various sites in the Parish with Mrs Heelis to gain an understanding of the locations and work that was required.

Repairs could also be undertaken to the two benches, currently stored by Councillor Mullee, who agreed to deliver them to the Prison.

Councillor Dale was to attend the Mayors Ball in Stafford and it was agreed that Councillor Jones would be asked to deputise for the Chairman in case he was unable to attend the forthcoming Civic Service at Holy Trinity Church.

**119/13). Accounts:-** Mrs Heelis referred to the lists itemising income and expenditure, which had been circulated to members and payment of an invoice from Trent Grounds Maintenance of £266.40 which had been authorised at the Planning Committee Meeting. Income included a VAT refund of £1031.86 and bank interest of £6.60.

**Authorisation was requested for payment of the following accounts:-**

|  |         |
|--|---------|
| Salaries & associated costs- October - LGA 1972 s. 112                 | 2230.16 |
| Expenses - Local Government (Financial Provisions) Act 1963            | 45.25   |
| Grant Thornton - Accounts and Audit Regs. 1996                         | 360.00  |
| Stafford Borough - Civic Amenity visits - concurrent allowance         | 102.00  |
| Creative Copy 'n' Colour - questionnaires - Neighbourhood Plan Funding | 29.00   |

All were in favour and the cheques were signed.

**Audit Report 2012/13:-** It was noted that the report had been received from Grant Thornton and no issues were identified that should be brought to the attention of the Parish Council. Mrs Heelis were commended for her diligence in the preparation of the accounts.

**Computer Maintenance:-** It was agreed to renew the standing order for the annual maintenance contract with Japhlin Computers at a cost of £36.66 per month. The annual charge of £439.91 was unchanged from 2012/13.

The Clerk was authorised to order a copy of the 9<sup>th</sup> Edition of 'Local Council Administration' - Charles Arnold Baker at a cost of £60.00 and a Receipts and Payments Ledger for £59.00.

**120/13). Items date and venue for next meeting:-** November 20<sup>th</sup>, 2013, Eccleshall Community Centre 7.30pm.

There being no further business, the Chairman declared the meeting closed at 8.20pm.