

## Lilleshall, Donnington and Muxton Parish Council

### Minutes of a Full Council Meeting held at Turreff Hall on 5<sup>th</sup> December 2011 at 7.00pm

#### Present:

Councillors: Mrs P A Green (Chairman), A Baker, Mrs C A Baker, M Bolam, Mrs E A Clare, Mrs L M Dugmore, N Dugmore, B Green, J Haigh, J Lavery, A Lawrence, C Mason, P Norton.

Also Present: R Morgan (Parish Clerk), Mrs R Gregory, P Hawkins, D Marshall, S Smith (Telford & Wrekin Council Library Services), S Wozencroft (Shropshire Star).

1. **Apologies:** Councillors Mrs V Brown and Mrs E P Millard.  
**Resolved** – that the apologies are accepted.

2. **Declaration of Interest:** As per Register.

3. **Public Session**

Mr P Hawkins made reference to a previous critical comment he had made to the Parish Council three years ago for which he had received an apology from the Chairman at the time, Councillor B Green. He then stated that prior to this meeting he had raised substantive concerns to Councillors covering budget data, reporting and scrutiny, along with constructive suggestions aimed at assisting Councillors when discussing the budgets at this meeting. As a result, Mr Hawkins was concerned that Item 16 regarding a Vexatious Complaints Policy was directed at him as a thinly veiled and vindictive censure.

Councillors then informed Mr Hawkins of concerns they had regarding the contents and defamatory comments made in emails sent by him especially where he referred to them as being “in the role of nodding dolls in financial matters”. Mr Hawkins insisted that this was meant as a “tongue in cheek” statement but apologised to the Council for the comment made.

The Chair assured Mr Hawkins that it was good practice for Parish Councils to have a Vexatious Complaints Policy due to the nature of its work and that it was in no way aimed at him.

Mr Hawkins was invited to make an appointment with the Clerk and, if necessary, a Councillor, to examine the accounts and budgets at the Parish Council office so that any confusion regarding its finances could be alleviated.

The Chair thanked Mr Hawkins for his comments and questions.

4. **Minutes**

To confirm the Minutes of the following meetings of the Council:

- a. Parish Council Meeting of 7<sup>th</sup> November 2011.  
**Resolved** – that they be confirmed and signed as a true record.
- b. Planning Committee Meeting of 14<sup>th</sup> November 2011.  
**Resolved** – that they be confirmed and signed as a true record.
- c. Parish Council Meeting of 14<sup>th</sup> November 2011.  
**Resolved** – that they be confirmed and signed as a true record.

## 5. **Matters Arising for Information**

As a result of this Parish Councils decision not to provide financial assistance to the Newport Regeneration Partnership and remove its representative from this organisation Councillor P Norton requested that Mr David Park comes to the next Council meeting to discuss the Partnership with the Council.

Councillors then requested an update on the following:

- Access gate to the allotments.  
The Clerk informed Council that discussions had been held with Mr Cooper (Donnington Wood Bowling Club) and A Corney (Telford & Wrekin Council) and the matter had now been resolved.
- Planning Application Site of Bell Inn Public House.  
Councillors Mrs E A Clare and C Mason stated that the application had been approved and was waiting to be signed off.
- Speed Limit Baldwin Webb Avenue.  
The Clerk informed Council that a response had been received from N Kitchen (Telford & Wrekin Council) stating that the Government is planning to relax the criteria relating to the signing of 20mph speed limits and Local Authorities are expecting guidance on this early in the new year. He stated that he will be happy to discuss this revised guidance and its implications for 20mph speed limits when it becomes available.
- Planning Application for Greenfields Farm, Brockton.  
Councillors were informed that a recommendation to refuse this application will be made by T&Wr Council at its forthcoming Plans Board meeting.
- Code of Conduct Training.  
The Clerk informed Councillors that he had contacted J Eatough (T&Wr Council) with a request that he attends a Council meeting to give a training seminar on the Code of Conduct as offered but, as yet, was still waiting for dates of availability.
- Bus shelter at the junction of School Road and Coronation Drive.  
Councillor C Mason stated that the issue had raised some misunderstanding amongst the residents as to the exact siting of the bus shelter. Some residents have stated that they do not want one and there are difficulties involved regarding the installation of one at this site. However, he and Councillor Mrs E A Clare were still working to resolve the matter.
- Project Development Worker.  
The Clerk stated that whilst he had not yet received written confirmation regarding the bid for a Project Development Worker he had been told verbally that it had been successful.

## 6. **Expenditure Transactions**

Each Councillor received a copy of the expenditure transactions for October 2011.

**Resolved** – that they be confirmed and signed as a true record.

## 7. **Bank Reconciliations**

Each Councillor received a copy of the Bank reconciliation as at 31<sup>st</sup> October 2011.

**Resolved** – that they be confirmed and signed as a true record.

## 8. **Financial Budget Comparison**

Each Councillor received a copy of the financial budget comparisons as at 31<sup>st</sup> October 2011.

**Resolved** – that they be confirmed and signed as a true record.

**9. Finance Committee**

Councillors considered a request to set up a Finance Committee to oversee the budget setting, performance management and all financial matters of this Parish Council. It was stated that the committee could set financial priorities and target spending whilst publicly being seen to review Council expenditure. The Clerk was asked to ascertain how other Town and Parish Councils operate their Finance Committees.

**Resolved** – to set up a Finance Scrutiny Committee and the Terms of Reference are to be determined at the next available meeting after the Clerk has investigated how other Town and Parish Councils operate their Finance Committees.

**10. War Memorial, Winifred's Drive, Donnington**

Councillors were disgusted by the condition of the War Memorial for this year's Remembrance Service. There were piles of leaves, old wreaths and litter lying around as well as dog excrement on the grass where people had to stand.

**Resolved** – that the Clerk writes to Telford & Wrekin Council highlighting the complaints raised and to diarise a reminder to request it to ensure the War Memorial is clean, tidy and painted prior to next year's and following year's services.

**11. Consultation on 2012/2013 Highway Maintenance Schemes**

Councillors discussed Telford & Wrekin Councils proposed highway maintenance schemes for 2012/2013. Councillors were of the opinion that there are lots of roads that require repairing but to accept the proposals contained in the consultation document.

**Resolved** – that the Parish Council accepts Telford & Wrekin Council's proposed Highways Maintenance Schemes for 2012/2013.

**12. Telford & Wrekin Council Library Service Review**

Councillors were asked to consider a request from T&Wr Library Services to help maintain the current opening hours at Donnington library. The Parish Council has been asked if it would fund five staff hours at a cost of £7,279. The Chair invited Sharon Smith to explain the proposed reduction in services and answer questions from Councillors. It was explained that there would be no library closures in Telford & Wrekin and the 20% savings required would be made through staffing and non staffing costs through a reduction of opening hours. At present only those Parish/Town Councils where there are libraries have been approached but it will go out for general consultation in January. Councillors were concerned that Parish/Town Councils were being asked to increase their precepts to help finance something which is ultimately Telford & Wrekin Council's responsibility.

**Resolved** – that the Parish Council will not fund five staff hours for Telford & Wrekin Council's Library Services.

**13. Christmas Festival**

The Chair thanked all Councillors for supporting and attending the Christmas festival and informed those present that £100.65 had been raised and sent to Severn Hospice which is the Chair's Charity for this year. Councillor J Haigh thanked the Clerk for all the work undertaken in making the event such a success. Councillors were then asked to consider holding a Christmas Festival event again next year to celebrate the switching on of the Parish Council's Christmas lights.

**Resolved** – to hold the Christmas Festival event again in 2012.

**14. Format of Parish Council budgets for website**

Each Councillor received copies of three proposed formats of budgets and discussed which would be the most appropriate to be placed on the Parish Council's website.

**Resolved** – that Option A is the format to be placed on the Parish Council website.

**Resolved** – to suspend Standing Order 1z so that the duration of the meeting can exceed 2 hours.

**15. Parish Council Budgets for 2012/2013**

Each Councillor received copies of the draft proposed budgets for the financial year 2012/2013. Councillors were reminded that these were draft budgets only for consideration/amending before agreeing the Parish Council precept at January 2012's meeting. During the debate Councillors considered:

- Reducing the garden/allotment competition prizes or forgoing the competition altogether. **Resolved** – to forgo the competition in 2012/2013.
- Budgeting for elections.
- Reduce Councillor Allowances or forgo altogether. **Resolved** – to continue paying Councillor allowances
- Reduce or forgo awarding grants in 2012/2013. **Resolved** – to reduce the grants budget by £2,000
- The future of Donnington Toilets. The Clerk was asked to apply for grants to improve/refurbish Donnington toilets whilst continuing to approach Telford & Wrekin Council for help as the landlord of the toilets.
- Increasing the budget for gas and electric by 10%.

The Clerk was asked to make the above amendments to the proposed budgets and circulate them to Councillors as soon as possible prior to the Council meeting to be held on 16<sup>th</sup> January 2012.

**16. Vexatious Complaints Policy**

Councillors were requested to consider, discuss and adopt the Vexatious Complaints Policy for this Parish Council.

**Resolved** – to adopt the Vexatious Complaints Policy for this Parish Council.

**17. Date of Next Meeting**

The Chair informed Councillors that the date of the next Council meeting will be the 16<sup>th</sup> January 2012 commencing at 7pm to be held at Turreff Hall.

The meeting closed at 2130hrs.

Signed:

Date:

### Private Session

**Resolved** – that under the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 S1(2), in view of the confidential nature of the business about to be transacted, it is advisable in the public interest that these matters be discussed in Private Session and the Public have been asked to withdraw.

#### **Cordingley Hall**

The Chair informed Councillors that during the recent Christmas Festival event held at Cordingley Hall it was apparent that the hall was in an appalling condition requiring cleaning, some cosmetic work and the gardens to be managed and maintained properly. It was stated that the building was beginning to look dated.

The Clerk then informed Councillors of the balance owing on the lease by the current tenant. Councillors stated that the debt should be pursued through the small claims court and the lease agreement and covenant on the building examined to see if there were other ways of managing the building in the future. Councillor J Haigh volunteered his services to examine the lease agreement and covenant and help the Clerk with the process of pursuing the debt.

**Resolved** – that the Clerk and Councillor J Haigh examine the lease agreement and covenant and proceed with pursuing the debt through the small claims court.

The meeting closed at 2130hrs.

Signed:

Date: