

FECKENHAM PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of 143rd Ordinary Meeting held on 8th February 2007 at Feckenham Village Hall

Present: Councillors:
Phil Tricklebank (Acting Chair) Judy Hooker
Pam Lincoln-Lewis Jeff Matthews

In Attendance: 3 Residents and Ian Bellion (Acting Clerk)

1. **Apologies:** Apologies were received from Councillors Doug Hickman, Jim Vernall, Stephen Shaw, Antonia Pulsford (Borough Councillor).
2. **Welcome:** The Chair opened the meeting by stating that the Council was facing difficult times. The difficulties involved in the hand over from Cllr Hickman following his retirement as Chair had been compounded by the absence of the Clerk. Ian Bellion had offered to act as temporary Clerk only until the situation was resolved.
3. **Absence of Clerk:** It had not been possible to contact the Clerk (Mrs Linda Morrison-Alsopp) for some time.
 - Following initial absence through illness she had taken no action on any of the Council's business.
 - She had made no attempt to explain her absence either in person or by messenger.
 - The Council's e-mail address (feckenham.parish@hotmail.co.uk) had been shut down.
 - Cllr Tricklebank had consulted Worcestershire County Association of Local Councils (CALC) and Richard Levett (Councils Support Officer) had advised on the procedure to be followed. A letter had been sent to Mrs Morrison-Alsopp on 30th January, 2007 asking for an appointment to discuss the situation. She was asked to reply by 5th February, 2007. No reply had been received. The advice from C.A.L.C indicated that this should be taken as an indication that she had effectively resigned. Steps should now be taken to contact her and recover the Council's equipment and documents. Councillors agreed that this course of action should be taken.
 - The Bank should be informed and cheques in the existing chequebook (in Mrs Morrison-Alsopp's custody) should be cancelled and a new book requested.
 - Correspondence from the Borough Council also needed to be re-directed. Agreed that correspondence would temporarily be re-routed to the Temporary Clerk at Chapel Cottage, Mill Lane.

(Action: Clerk/Chair)
4. **Declaration of Interest** in any item on the Agenda: None
5. Approve **Minutes of 142nd Ordinary Meeting** held on 16th November 2006 (if available) The Minutes were not available. This item would be carried over to the next Agenda
6. Approve **Minutes of Special Lettings Policy Meeting** held on 12th December 2006 These had been compiled and distributed by Cllr Lincoln-Lewis in the absence of the Clerk.

Councillor Hooker PROPOSED that the Minutes of Special Lettings Policy Meeting held on 12th December 2006, having been previously circulated, be taken as read, and be signed as a correct record of the proceedings of that Meeting.

Councillor Lincoln-Lewis SECONDED the motion and on being put to the Meeting it was CARRIED unanimously. *(The Minutes were signed accordingly.)*
7. **Matters Arising from the Minutes of 142nd Ordinary Meeting** (as Minutes are not currently available the following are matters recalled)
 - 7.1 Calor Gas Village of the Year
Cllr Hooker to investigate. Carried over to next Agenda
 - 7.2 White Lines at Ham Green.
Had still not been done. Carried over to next Agenda
 - 7.3 Flower Tubs

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Cllr. Lincoln-Lewis had investigated the suggestion of an additional tub to prevent parking on the pavement at the corner of High Street/Droitwich Road. This was found not to be a practical solution. Agreed no action needed.

7.4 Grant Applications

There was no way of knowing if Grant Applications had been submitted to the Clerk. RESOLVED to place an advertisement in Feckenham News requesting that applications be re-submitted through the Temporary Clerk.

(Action:Clerk)

8. Affordable Housing Update

8.1 Planning Application

Had now been submitted and advertised. Discussion at next Meeting

8.2 Correspondence*

Drainage and Sewage issues had been under discussion. The developer now proposed to install an on site processing plant which would produce only clean water. Developer had been unaware of flooding problems along that part of Astwood Lane.

8.3 Housing List

It was emphasised that prospective residents of the Affordable Housing must get on the Redditch Borough Housing List if they are to be considered. RESOLVED to highlight this in Feckenham News.

(Action:Clerk)

9. Parish Plan Update and Analysis*

9.1 Presentation

Cllr Matthews presented a final version of the analysis of the Parish Plan. The areas of most concern identified by parishioners were Speeding Traffic, Shop/PO options, HGVs, Parking Facilities and Housing/Planning.

9.2 Suggestions

It was suggested that the Parish Plan organisation, before it was wound up, could assist in the starting of "Interest Groups" to tackle some of all of these areas of concern – acting as a catalyst. It was important the Parish Council remained the central agency in discussions with the Interest Groups and other bodies and it was desirable that a councillor should be active in each of the groups. Some funds may be available for Leaflets and other start-up needs.

Agreed that this should be a continuing Agenda item and that the Parish Plan Committee would report on progress. It was felt that this would ideally be dealt with by the incoming Council following the May elections.

9.3 Grant

A Grant for £250 had been received from Community First.

9.4 Financial Summary

A Financial Summary for the period November 2004 to 31st January 2007 was presented. The council congratulated the Parish Plan Committee on achieving a good result through its own efforts.

10. Precept Discussion

The Borough Council had requested the Parish Council's Budget for 2007/8 as a matter of great urgency. If the Budget was not submitted immediately a Precept increase of the current rate of inflation would be applied. There had been discussions at previous meetings and a copy of the proposed budget had been located.

RESOLVED to apply a 20% increase to the Precept. The Council's Budgeted income from this would be £6,402.

(Action: Chair/Clerk)

11. Traffic Forum

11.1 Borough:

Cllr Hooker had attended a session at the Town Hall at which neighbourhood groups had been able to put forward complaints and comments about highway matters. These would be logged by the Highways Department and acted upon with high priority. Feckenham was not invited to participate.

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Agreed that this was unsatisfactory and should be remedied. Cllr Hooker would investigate and would continue to attend the sessions.

(Action: Cllr.Hooker)

It was also noted that the Highways Department was inviting comment and notification of defects. Agreed that the Council and public should be encouraged to participate by placing as many comments on their internet site as possible. Access is through e-mail to scrutiny@worcestershire.gov.uk. Complaints can be put directly into the system through the Highways page of <http://worcestershire.whub.org.uk>. Agreed that the public should be made aware of this through Feckenham News

(Action: Clerk)

11.2 County:

Cllr Matthews had been in contact with the Debbie Degge of the Highways Department to establish contact and to raise the specific issues of flooding on Astwood Lane/School Lane and the poor standard of hole filling (correspondence filed under item 16.7). Though the replies had not yielded specific action the problems had been registered. Cllr Matthews would continue contact.

(Action: Cllr Matthews)

Cllr Lincoln-Lewis raised the poor condition of pavements throughout the village. Cllr Hooker had also raised the closure of two main access routes at the same time for utility company works. The authority stated that it could not refuse such closures.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

At this juncture the Meeting was opened for public comment.

- It was reported by a parishioner that there was an infestation of rats at the Bird Garden on Droitwich Road. Environmental Health were aware but were unable to take action. Cllr Tricklebank would contact the owner to establish the facts. Cllr Lincoln-Lewis would follow the matter up with Environmental Health.

(Action: Chair/Cllr Lincoln-Lewis)

There being no further matter raised by the members of the public present public the meeting returned to the Agenda.

12. Cllr Jeff Matthews presentation:

Cllr Matthews presented an analysis of future developments in local government based on a report by SOLACE (The Society of Local Authority Chief Executives). It seeks to distil the Government White Paper on the subject. Some of the main points being:

- Some counties had bid for "single tier" status thereby taking over some of the functions of District (Borough) Councils. Worcestershire had not done this.
- The likely effect was that Borough Councils would have to work more closely with Parish Councils and there would be a reporting and assessment system in place to monitor this.
- There would be an assessment of quality which would have an impact on the budget and powers of Parish Councils.
- It was likely that the Parish Council would be stronger if this comes to pass.

Cllr Matthews was thanked for his work on this and it was agreed to continue to monitor developments. Further action may be necessary by the new Council following the May elections.

13. Report from County Councillor

Not present

14. Report from Borough Councillor

Not Present

15. Financial report: (not available)

15.1 Authorisation for alteration to Banking Arrangements

As reported at Item 3.

15.2 Village Hall invoices

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There were invoices totalling £47 due for payment. It was noted that these could not be paid until the arrangements detailed in Item 3 had been completed. Temporary Clerk would include an apology with the payment.

Councillor Hooker PROPOSED that the amounts due to Feckenham Village Hall as detailed in their Invoices should be paid as soon as possible.

Councillor Matthews SECONDED the motion and on being put to the Meeting it was CARRIED unanimously.

15.3 Ridgeway Nurseries Invoices

There were two invoices totalling £200 due for payment. It was noted that these could not be paid until the arrangements detailed in Item 3 had been completed. Temporary Clerk would include an apology with the payment.

Councillor Lincoln-Lewis PROPOSED that the amounts due to Ridgeway Nurseries as detailed in their Invoices should be paid as soon as possible.

Councillor Matthews SECONDED the motion and on being put to the Meeting it was CARRIED unanimously.

15.4 Accounts – discussion re: audit. *

A letter from the external auditors (Clement Keys) had been received. The Annual Return for 2005/2006 had not been filed for audit and was required as a matter of urgency. It was thought that the information might be available from the Internal Auditor (Richard Maxwell Fletcher). Urgent enquiries to be made

(Action: Chair/Clerk)

Clerk's note: The above mentioned Return MUST also be displayed on the village notice board when it is filed.

15.5 Accounts received from Village Amenity Trust *

The Feckenham Village Amenity Trust, Square Management Committee had submitted its Annual Accounts to the Trust and Council. It was thought that these would normally have been submitted by the Clerk to The Charity Commission together with the details of the Trustees. Enquiries to be made.

(Action: Clerk)

16. Correspondence Received

16.1 E-mail from CALC:

As detailed under Item 3

16.2 Telephone call from Bradley Green Parish Council re Wind Turbine:

Cllr Tricklebank explained that the Chair of Bradley Green Parish Council had telephoned to ask why Feckenham Parish Council had not commented on the application to build a wind turbine near Beanhall/Church Road. Cllr Tricklebank had had to admit the Council had not received any information due to the Clerk not having been in contact. Councillors regretted that they had not been able to comment but nothing could now be done.

16.3 Telephone call from Milestone Society re: Saltway Milestone

Mr Neville Billington had called to inform the Council that the Saltway Milestone had been completed and that there was to be an unveiling ceremony on Wednesday, March 7th at 11am. It was hoped that a representative of the Council could attend. Agreed that this information should be made available to the public so that attendance could be boosted.

(Action: Clerk)

The Society now wished to tackle the milestone by the bridge on Droitwich Road.

16.4 Annual Report from Square Management Committee *

Filed

16.5 Letter from Square Management Committee re: constitution of that Committee *

Research needed

(Action:Chair/ Cllr Lincoln-Lewis)

16.6 Additional plans for Affordable Housing Development

To replace those on display

(Action:Clerk)

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16.7 E-mails re: Highways Maintenance Scrutiny *
As detailed in Item 11.2

17. Correspondence Sent :

17.1 E-mail to Clerk *

One of a number of attempts contact Mrs Morrison-Alsopp

18. Planning Applications

None received. To be redirected for Temporary Clerk (Item 3)

19. Acting Chairman's Statement

Cllr Tricklebank wished to make it clear that, if re-elected at the May election, he will not under any circumstances be prepared to undertake the office of Chairman. Pressure of work made this impossible. Dealing with the present emergency had placed a great strain on himself and his family and it would not be possible for him to continue as Chair after the end of the present Council's term.

20. Items for next Agenda

20.1 Standards Committee Report: Cllr Hooker

21. Dates of remaining meetings for 2006/7

15th March, 2007

17th May, 2007 AGM

There being no further business the Meeting closed at 10.15pm

** Documents copied to councillors.*

Signed.....

Date.....