

FECKENHAM PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of 144th Ordinary Meeting held on 15th March, 2007

Present: Councillors:

P.Tricklebank (Chairman)
J.Hooker
J. Matthews

D.Hickman
P.Lincoln-Lewis

In Attendance: Cllr.Philip Gretton (Worcestershire County Council), Cllr. Antonia Pulsford (Redditch Borough Council), Alex Urka (Redditch Partnership Manager) and Ian Bellion (Acting Clerk)

1. **Apologies:** Apologies were received from Councillors Jim Vernal and Stephen Shaw.
2. **Welcome:** The Chairman welcomed Councillors and visitors to the 144th Ordinary Meeting of Feckenham Parish Council.
 - The Council remained in difficult circumstances in relation to the absence of the Clerk. He thanked the Acting Clerk for his work in keeping the Council running.
 - This would be Cllr.Hickman's last Council meeting. The Chairman paid tribute to his great contribution to the Council and the Community over many years. Cllr Hickman had served on the Council for 43 years – his efforts were much appreciated. Councillors echoed these sentiments and wished Cllr.Hickman well.
3. **Declaration of Interest in any item on the Agenda:** Cllr.Tricklebank and Cllr.Hooker were on the Village Hall Committee and therefore declared an interest in item 15.2. It was agreed that they should take part in the discussion but not vote on the matter. Cllr Hooker was the Acting Clerk's partner and therefore would not take any part in item 14.5.
4. 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
5. Approve **Minutes of 143rd Ordinary Meeting** held on 8th February, 2007
Councillor Hooker **PROPOSED** that the Minutes of the 143rd Ordinary Meeting held on 8th February, 2007 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.*)
6. **Absence of Clerk:** The Clerk had still not replied to attempts to contact her
 - Three recorded delivery letters had been sent on the advice of CALC to Mrs Morrison Allsopp advising her that, by her failure to communicate with the Council or to respond to the Council, she had effectively resigned from her post. She was also requested to return the Council's records and equipment. These letters had since been returned by the Post Office.
 - Following text messages from Cllr Tricklebank the Clerk's sister had replied saying that "she is still in hospital". An arrangement had been made for this lady to speak to Cllr Tricklebank on Friday, 16th March at 4pm.
 - Cllr Hooker suggested that Mrs Morrison Allsopp's primary employer (RoSpa) should be contacted to see if they knew that she was ill. There had been no sick note from the Clerk and no information supplied.
 - Cllr Lincoln Lewis suggested that it might be possible to appoint someone to recover the records.
 - Cllr Hickman thought that, even if she was sick, there could have been some effort made to contact the Council. He also reported that the Clerk's work had not been particularly satisfactory. She had failed to keep appointments and had not met deadlines as she was required to do. She only satisfactorily completed the work for one meeting (January 2006). When Cllr Hickman was Chairman she had not been given a contract because she was not doing her job properly. She failed to arrive at a meeting to finalise minutes after the November Council Meeting. The Council could not be held to ransom like this.

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- Cllr Tricklebank advised caution. CALC had advised the Council to show Mrs Allsopp every courtesy. The situation was exasperating but Richard Levett at CALC was being most helpful.
- Cllr Hooker made the point that the “duty of care” worked both ways.
- Councillors agreed that the situation could not be allowed to continue and should ideally be resolved before the election.
- Cllr Tricklebank agreed to re-deliver all three letters to by hand in the presence of a witness to Mrs Allsopp’s flat. Cllr Hooker would contact RoSPa as the Clerk’s reference from them had not been taken up – she would check to see that she was in fact employed by them. She would also informally consult a local expert in employment law in order to see what further action might be taken.

Action: Cllr. Tricklebank, Cllr, Hooker, Clerk

7. **Matters Arising** from the Minutes of 143rd Ordinary Meeting

7.1 **Calor Gas Village of the Year.** The entry documents had been received (ref 17.7). Cllr.Hickman wondered if there was enough manpower available to complete them by the deadline (about 6 weeks). Cllr Matthews thought that the Parish Plan had most of the information required and undertook to complete the entry.

Action: Cllr Matthews

7.2 **White Lines at Ham Green** : These had still not been done. AGREED that this should be raised at the Traffic Forum. It had been 12 months since Highways Dept had been made aware of the problem.

Action: Cllr Matthews

7.3 **Flower Tubs:** These would need re-planting for the summer season. Agreed to ask the Square Management Committee to order at the same time as they ordered their re-planting.

Cllr. Lincoln-Lewis PROPOSED that work necessary to replant the tubs at High Street/Alcester Road should be authorised. Cllr Hooker SECONDED the motion and on being put to the Meeting it was CARRIED unanimously.

Action: Cllr Hooker/Clerk

7.4 **Precept:** This had now been set

7.5 **Infestation:** Cllr Tricklebank had contacted the owner of the Bird Garden with reference to the infestation reported. She claimed that the stock of birds was being run down and the Garden was closed. The rat problem would cease when the birds had gone. AGREED to monitor the situation.

7.6 **Trust: Charity Commission.** Attempts had been made to obtain a duplicate reporting pack from The Charity Commission. This was proving difficult and it was impossible to change the details of the Main Contact online because the only person allowed access was the Main Contact. Efforts continue

Action: Clerk

7.7 **Square Management Committee Constitution:** A copy of the Deeds to the Square had been located. These specified that three Trustees should sit on The Square Management Committee. The Committee should be informed accordingly. Cllr. Hickman pointed out that all potential Councillors should be informed that they would automatically become Trustees of Feckenham Village Amenity Trust with all the responsibilities that entails. AGREED.

Action: Clerk

7.8 **Milestone unveiling:** Cllr Hickman and The Acting Clerk had attended the event on March 7th. The result was felt to be good and The Milestone Society had been aided by a grant of £1,000 from Central Networks.

- ## 8. **Affordable Housing Update:** The plan had been due to go before the Planning Committee of Redditch Borough Council at their April Meeting. Cllr Pulsford reported that it was hoped to bring that forward to the March meeting. There had been some concerns

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over details like the lack of chimneys and other matters of style to blend with existing village. Detailed plans would be published as soon as the planning process allowed.

9. **Parish Plan Update:** Cllr. Matthews reported that 5 Interest Groups had been set up to work on priorities identified in the Parish Plan. These were: Speeding Traffic and HGVs; Options for a shop or Post Office; Housing and Planning; Parking Facilities; Flood Prevention and Village Watch / Police Presence. Cllr Hickman paid tribute to the Committee for being able to attract and motivate interested people. He reminded the Meeting that there was money budgeted for in the precept to fund some of the work. He also pointed out that the County Council still had £2,000 belonging to the Parish as a result of a 106 agreement. The County had agreed to spend this on High Street and Astwood Lane but claimed not to be able to find the agreement. Cllr Gretton would check on this
- 9a Brought forward from Item 16 as a courtesy to the visiting official:
Redditch Partnership Report: Alex Urka (Redditch Partnership Manager) presented a report setting out the purpose of the Redditch Partnership and seeking to formalise the relationship between the two organisations. Mr Urka requested that the Council nominate a representative to sit on The Redditch Partnership Board. The Chairman pointed out that there would be little point in putting forward a Councillor to sit on the board before the election. The matter should be put on the Agenda for the first meeting of the new Council. Mr Urka thanked the Council for their attention.

Action: Clerk

10. Traffic Forum/ Scrutiny

10.1 Worcester County Council had sent a report on the Scrutiny process.

10.2 An invitation had been received to a Redditch Forum and a Highways Surgery as well as posters and leaflets to publicise the events. AGREED to display the posters. Cllr Hooker would attend the Surgery.

Action: Clerk, Cllr Hooker

11. **Standards Committee Meeting:** Cllr Hooker had attended this meeting on 15th February, 2007. The Meeting Report has been received and is on file. Cllr Hooker had raised the matter of the situation of the Clerk and Acting Clerk and this was discussed in closed session. The Officers had agreed to check if there were any issues raised by the situation and report if there was a problem. Nothing had been raised so far. The Meeting had emphasised that new Councillors should be trained in Standards matters. Cllr. Hickman suggested that Sue Mullins, Redditch Borough Council's Head of Legal, may be able to help in finding a way out of the current difficulties in relation to the Clerk.

12. Report from County Councillor:

12.1 County Councillor Philip Gretton added his good wishes to Councillor Hickman on his retirement from the Parish Council.

12.2 The County Council had received a copy of the Parish Plan and officers would respond in due course.

12.3 Councillor Gretton outlined the financial problems faced by the County Council and emphasised that much of this was due to capping by central government. He made the point that this made it difficult to carry out a full programme of road repairs. He agreed with Councillor Hickman that the problem would only get worse the longer it was left.

12.4 Councillor Gretton asked how the Council felt about the Spatial Strategy options currently proposed by the government. It was pointed out that, due to unusual circumstances, the Council had not received documents relating to this. As the result of this initiative was likely to affect the village it was AGREED that this should be placed on the Agenda for the next meeting.

Action: Clerk

13. Report from Borough Councillor

13.1 Councillor Antonia Pulsford reported that Redditch Borough Council had passed a budget containing a list of "desirable" items which they had no money to pay for. Final decisions were deferred until after the Election

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13.2 Astwood Farm had applied for planning permission for an industrial/office development with parking for 120 cars and lorries. Cllr Pulsford has written to protest on the grounds that the infrastructure cannot cope with the volume of traffic this development would generate. She has suggested that a possible partial solution would be for the developer to pay for the improvement of Rock Hill Lane to divert traffic away from the village. The planning application number was: 2007/061

13.3 Cllr Pulsford suggested that it would be a good idea to move the 30mph limit to beyond 14 Astwood Lane in view of the new Affordable Housing development. This would have to be referred to County Highways and the meeting suggested that this should be placed on the Agenda for the next meeting.

Action: Clerk

14. **Financial Report:** Not currently available

14.1 **Banking Arrangements:** Lloyds Bank was now co-operating with regard to changing the details of the accounts. Correspondence was now being sent to the Acting Clerk. Cllr Hickman and Cllr Tricklebank would be the only signatories until after the election. Statements of all accounts would be sent within days but it was known that there had been no activity on any of the accounts since the last authorised transactions in November. Chequebooks to enable the resumption of financial activity were expected within days.

14.2 **Village Hall Invoices:** Payment had been authorised in relation to outstanding invoices but there would be further bills to pay before the Election. Cllr Hooker PROPOSED that the invoices for use of Feckenham Village Hall for Council Meetings should be paid on receipt. Cllr Lincoln Lewis SECONDED the motion and on being put to the Meeting it was CARRIED unanimously.

14.3 **Ridgeway Nurseries Invoices** Payment of these had been authorised at the last meeting and would be made when the chequebooks were received.

14.4 **Audit:** Cllr Tricklebank had spoken to the internal auditor. He proposed that, using the Bank Statements and the Minutes of Council Meetings, it would be possible to reconstruct the accounts. The External Auditor is aware of the situation and has asked to be kept informed.

Action: Cllr Tricklebank / Clerk

14.5 **Clerk's Salary and Expenses:** Cllr Tricklebank proposed that the Temporary Clerk, though acting in a voluntary capacity, should be paid the Clerk's salary. Mr Bellion expressed reservations on the grounds that the Council may, if things go against it, find itself paying two salaries. Cllr Hickman pointed out that there was contingency money available. Mr Bellion agreed to accept the payment if it was made in response to invoices submitted (in line with his other employment). The proposed payment was in line with that made to the appointed Clerk. Cllr Lincoln Lewis PROPOSED that the Temporary Acting Clerk be paid the appropriate salary and expenses subject to the submission of invoices and receipts. Cllr Matthews SECONDED the motion and upon being put to the meeting it was carried. Cllr Hooker abstained for the reasons given at item 3.

15. **Grant Applications:** Resubmitted applications were considered

15.1 **The Church of St John the Baptist, Feckenham** – contribution to production of Feckenham News and upkeep of the currently used part of the graveyard. Cllr Hickman felt that Feckenham News had been supported in the past by the Council but had failed to carry reports of Council business on many occasions. The Editor had refused to accept items after the deadline even though the magazine had been appearing earlier than its advertised publication date. Other Councillors felt that the publication was invaluable to the village and should be supported. It was suggested that dates of Council meetings could be adjusted to meet Feckenham News deadlines. Some concern was also expressed that the circulation of the publication did not cover the Council parish and it was suggested that this could be improved by contributions from the Council. Cllr Lincoln Lewis PROPOSED that £300 be given as a grant to The Church of St John the Baptist for use in the publication of Feckenham News and the upkeep of the graveyard. Cllr Matthews SECONDED the motion and on being put to the meeting it was carried by 4 votes. Cllr Hickman abstained.

15.2 **Feckenham Village Hall** – contribution to provision of new notice board. The existing notice board had deteriorated beyond repair and the Trustees of Feckenham

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Village Hall wished to replace it with a larger one costing £1,258 (estimate copied to Council).

Cllr Lincoln Lewis PROPOSED that £320 be given as a grant to Feckenham Village Hall as a contribution to the provision of a new notice board. Cllr Matthews SECONDED the motion and on being put to the meeting it was carried by 3 votes. Cllr Tricklebank and Cllr Hooker abstained for the reasons given at item 3.

16. Redditch Partnership – Moved to Item 9a

17. Correspondence Received

- 17.1 Worcestershire County Council: Feedback from Highway Maintenance Scrutiny Parish Council Workshops *Passed to Cllr Matthews*
- 17.2 Redditch Borough Council: Agenda Council Meeting 26th February, 2007
- 17.3 Biodiversity Partnership: Vision Mapping Project (+ leaflets)* *Leaflets distributed*
- 17.4 Redditch Borough Council: Costs of Election* *Discussed at Item 20*
- 17.5 Redditch Borough Council: Electoral Register AFC. *Note: this cannot be copied or distributed – held on file.*
- 17.6 Redditch Borough Council: Invitation to Annual Civic Charity Dinner. *Cllr and Mrs Matthews would attend*
- 17.7 Community First: Calor Village of the Year Competition* *Discussed at item 7.1*
- 17.8 Community First: ARC Computers for Rural Communities* *Placed on file. May be useful if new Clerk requires equipment*
- 17.9 Parish Church of St John the Baptist, Feckenham: Grant Application* *Discussed at item 15.1*
- 17.10 E-mails from CALC* *Discussed at Item 6*
- 17.11 Worcestershire County Council: Scrutiny Report *Discussed at item 10 Passed to Cllr Matthews*
- 17.12 Redditch Borough Council: Standards Committee Report *Discussed at item 11. On file*
- 17.13 Cllr A, Pulsford: e-mail re Moors Lane* *Cllr Pulsford had been seeking clarification of the adopted section of Moors Lane. The County Council claimed that less of the Lane was adopted than was originally thought. Cllr Pulsford would continue to investigate.*
- 17.14 CALC: Subscription review and Chairman's Report* *Time for response to this had passed. Original correspondence not received.*
- 17.15 Redditch Borough Council: Agenda Council Meeting 12th March, 2007
- 17.16 Feckenham Village Hall: Grant Application* *Discussed at item 15.2*
- 17.17 Cllr. J.Hooker: Copy of Trust Deed relating to Feckenham Village Square Amenity Trust. *(hold for reference)*
- 17.18 Cllr. J.Hooker: Copy of letter dated 1992 from Mrs D.Rushton setting out some of the history of The Square *(hold for reference)*
- 17.19 CALC: e-mail update for Clerks. *(Hold for reference of new Clerk)*
- 17.20 Election Office: Notice of Election* *For discussion at Item 20*

18. Correspondence Sent

- 18.1 Letters to Clerk*
- 18.2 Letters and e-mails to Redditch Borough and Worcestershire County Councils about clerk and change of contact details.
- 18.3 Letter to Lloyds TSB Bank. Change of address. Request for new chequebook and statements.
- 18.4 Letter to Group Accountant Redditch Borough Council: Budget year 2007/8* and precept rise.
- 18.6 E-mails to CALC: Advice.

19. Planning Applications

- 19.1 2007-070-FUL Merry Oak Farm - Menage
- 19.2 2007-088-FUL Sillins Hall – Swimming pool, etc.

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The above were circulated to the planning sub-committee and commented upon. Concern was expressed that some applications were still not being received from Borough Planning. Notable by its absence was that for the Affordable Homes on Astwood Lane. Clerk would investigate.

Action: Clerk

20. Election

20.1 **Estimate of Cost:** this had been received from the Borough Council's Elections Officer*. The estimate for a contested election was £1578 and for an uncontested election £213. The cost could come down if the election was shared with a Borough Council Election. This would be the case and it was AGREED that clarification should be sought

Action: Clerk

20.2 **Nomination Forms** were now available from the Acting Clerk and the Town Hall. It was emphasised that when completed these must be handed to the Elections Officer or Deputy Returning Officer. They must not be posted or dropped off at the Town Hall.

21. Items for next agenda:

Provision of Parish Council Notice Board
Traffic Forum Report
Parish Plan – Individual Interest Group Reports
Other items as noted earlier in these minutes.

22. Date of Next Meeting

17th May, 2007 – AGM, Parish Meeting and 145th Ordinary Meeting

There being no further business the Chairman closed the Meeting at 10.25pm

Signed..... Date.....