

# FECKENHAM PARISH COUNCIL

## Minutes of 145<sup>th</sup> Ordinary Meeting held on 17<sup>th</sup> May, 2007 at 8.20pm

*Present:* Councillors:  
J.Matthews (Chair)  
J.Hooker  
T.Smith  
A.Henson  
J.Roundell

*In Attendance:* Cllr.Philip Gretton (Worcestershire County Council), Ian Bellion (Acting Clerk) and five members of the public

1. **Apologies:** Apologies for absence had been received from Cllr. Brandon Clayton (Redditch Borough Council); Sue Hanley (Officer, Redditch Borough Council).
2. **Welcome:** The Chairman opened the Meeting and welcomed all present.
3. **Declarations of Interest**
  - a) **To declare any Personal Interests** in items on the agenda and their nature:  
There were none declared.
  - b) **To declare any Prejudicial Interests** in items on the agenda and their nature  
There were none declared.
4. **Minutes of 142<sup>nd</sup> Ordinary Meeting held on 16<sup>th</sup> November**

It was AGREED that these would never be available as a complete and accurate record of this Meeting but that an attempt to reconstruct the record should be made with reference to the Agenda.
5. **Approve Minutes of 144<sup>th</sup> Ordinary Meeting held on 15<sup>th</sup> March, 2007**

Due to an oversight on the part of the Acting Clerk these had not been circulated. The Acting Clerk apologised for this error. Approval to be carried over to the next Meeting.
6. **Dismissal of Clerk\* / Appointment of New Clerk**

The former Clerk, Mrs Linda Morrison-Allsop had now been dismissed from the post by due and proper process on the grounds of her lack of competence. She had not communicated with the Council for over six months and had failed to respond to letters, e-mails, telephone calls and text messages. The dismissal process had been undertaken following advice from CALC and from a CAB specialist in employment law. Mrs Morrison-Allsop had been shown every courtesy and had been given every opportunity to remedy the situation.

The Acting Clerk had now started the recruitment process for a replacement as authorised at the 143<sup>rd</sup> Ordinary Meeting. Notices following the Best Practice guidelines issued by CALC had been posted on the village notice boards and would be inserted in Feckenham News. Enquiries had been made about inserting an advertisement in the CALC format in the Redditch Advertiser. The quoted cost for this would have been £377 + vat. The Acting Clerk did not consider this to be an appropriate sum to spend without specific authority from the Council. A smaller notice had been placed in the Redditch Standard at a cost of approximately £45. The closing date for applications would be 4<sup>th</sup> June and it was hoped to have the new clerk in post for a hand over at the July Meeting.
7. **Matters Arising from the Minutes of 144<sup>th</sup> Ordinary Meeting**
  - 7.1 Calor Gas Village of the Year  
Cllr Matthews had considered the application form for this and noted that it required the participation of two village organisations and was somewhat more complicated than expected. AGREED that this should remain on the agenda for possible action in time for the next year's competition.
  - 7.2 White Lines at Ham Green  
Cllr. Gretton reported that he had contacted Debbie Degg at the Highways department and she had indicated that action would be taken. Nothing had happened so he would press the matter further.
  - 7.3 Flower Tubs

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It had been requested that the Square Management Committee should order the summer re-planting at the same time as its own tubs. It was understood that this had been done

7.4 Trust : Charity Commission

The former Clerk had not sent in the Annual Returns and updates. It was not possible to progress this because the Acting Clerk didn't have the password to the Trust's account. It was recommended that this be left until the permanent Clerk is in post lest there be further confusion.

## 8. Vacancies following Election

The Elections Officer required that the two vacant seats on this Council should be filled by co-option by June 22<sup>nd</sup> at the latest. If this was not done a new election would be ordered. Accordingly Cllr Hooker PROPOSED that the two vacant seats on Feckenham Parish Council should be filled by co-option and that the Acting Clerk should be authorised to advertise these vacancies in the proper way. The motion was SECONDED by Cllr Smith and upon being put to the Meeting was CARRIED unanimously.

It was further AGREED that the Council would meet at a Special Meeting to consider the Applications for Co-option and to co-opt the successful candidates. This meeting would take place on Thursday, June 21<sup>st</sup> at Feckenham Village Hall at 7.30pm.

## 9. Affordable Housing Update.

9.1 **Planning Approval**

The information given by Mrs Pulsford during the Parish Meeting was noted. No firm date for commencement of work had yet been given

9.2 **Lettings Policy + Amendment\***

A proposed amendment to the Lettings Policy (previously approved by the Council) had been submitted by West Mercia Housing for comment. The wording had been changed to take into account Redditch Borough Council's Choice Based Lettings policy and would mean that the process would be faster. Cllr Roundell PROPOSED that the Council should approve this amendment. Cllr Henson SECONDED the motion and upon being put to the Meeting it was CARRIED unanimously. The Clerk was instructed to convey this decision to West Mercia Housing as a matter of urgency.

Cllr Roundell expressed some concern at the short time given in the original Policy document for households to be identified as fitting the criteria. It was acknowledged that this had already been approved by Council but it was felt that this should be investigated further.

## 10. Parish Plan Update.

10.1 **Grant Received\***

A Grant of £250 in respect of Parish Plan activities had been received and was lodged in the Council's current account.

10.2 **Working Groups Reports**

**a) Speeding, Traffic & HGVs**

The group working on the Speeding and HGV problems would meet in 2 or 3 weeks time. There had been a vocal public meeting of between 25 and 35 people

The group looking at Parking had met and was soon to conduct an on site inspection to identify problems. Russell Cotton, who was chairing the group, sought the Council's authority to enquire of official bodies. He also sought guidance on how the groups were run. It was felt that there ought to be a common way of working for all the groups and guidance was needed on governance and the relationship with the Parish Council.

Cllr Roundell PROPOSED that the Clerk's Finance Support Group should look into governance and financial arrangements of the Parish Plan Working Groups. Cllr Henson SECONDED the motion and when put to the Meeting it was CARRIED unanimously.

It was reported that there was concern amongst the farmers that tractors were being targeted by the traffic working group. Russell Cotton, Chair of the group, said that all sectors of the community would be consulted.

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b) Shop or Post Office

22 people had attended the public meeting about the possibility of providing a shop in the village. Various models had been suggested and the group was working towards identifying a viable option.

c) Housing & Planning

Continues to be the province of the Parish Council Planning Committee

d) Flood prevention

6 people had attended a public meeting. The group was looking into ways of lobbying for improvements in this area,

e) Village Watch / Police Presence

Was currently facilitated by the bi-monthly surgeries held by the Community Police Team.

**11. Redditch Partnership – representation\***

Alex Urqa had addressed the last Meeting and requested a representative from the Council to sit on the Redditch partnership Board. It had not been possible to nominate anyone at that time because of the forthcoming election. Deferred. Mrs Pulsford reported that the Partnership was holding a full day “State of the Borough” conference on 18<sup>th</sup> June – she was willing to report on this to the Council

**12. Standards Committee – Councillor Training**

Cllr Hooker had asked for Councillors to receive training in Standards matters. A reply was awaited. Deferred to next Meeting.

**13. Traffic Forum /Scrutiny**

13.1 Update

Cllr Hooker had attended the last Traffic Forum and had raised the issues of pot holes and flooding – the latter near works on a new electricity pylon in Astwood Lane. Action had been promised.

Cllr Hooker had also raised the question of representation at the Forums. It seemed that Redditch Neighbourhood Groups were represented while the Council was not. Cllr Gretton said that the Council would be listed for attention if advance representations on specific issues were raised. Cllr Matthews suggested a “nagging log” to record issues that needed continual agitation.

13.2 WCC Passenger Transport Consultation\*

AGREED that it was too late to investigate and comment on this as the closing date was 31<sup>st</sup> May.

**14. Report from County Councillor**

Cllr Gretton gave a brief explanation of the state and role of the County Council. He thanked the Parish Plan Committee for sending a copy to the County Council and promised a formal response soon. Cllr Gretton stressed the importance of the Spatial Strategy Options currently being explored. This was noted for inclusion in the Agenda for the next Meeting. He also drew attention to the savings needed in the library service meaning that Woodrow Library was under threat.

**15. Report from Borough Councillor**

Not in attendance.

**16. Financial report:**

Following the problems involving the former Clerk Phil Tricklebank and Richard Fletcher (internal auditor) had attempted to reconstruct the accounts in readiness for external audit. This was now urgent and it was AGREED that Mr Tricklebank should continue this work with the help of Cllr Roundell. It was acknowledged that this was an unorthodox arrangement but it was felt that this was the most suitable way to proceed in most unusual circumstances. It was emphasised that when the accounts had been set in order the financial management of the Council would revert to the new RFO. It was further AGREED that Dawn Southwell (RFO for part of the period concerned) should be consulted. It was reported and acknowledged that, because of the amount of work

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required, the internal auditor would be obliged to charge a much higher fee than normal for his services.

- 16.1 Internal Audit 05/06 (ongoing) (see above)
- 16.2 External Audit 05/06 (see above)
- 16.3 Internal Audit. March 06/07 (see above)
- 16.4 External Audit. March 06/07 (see above)
- 16.5 Current Financial Position\*

The Clerk reported the current bank totals (circulated). The half year Precept had been received.

- 16.6 Invoice from WCALC\* (Authorisation of payment)

The annual subscription for Worcestershire CALC was due. Cllr Hooker PROPOSED that the invoiced amount of £257.91 should be paid to Worcs CALC for annual subscriptions due. The motion was SECONDED by Cllr Smith and upon being put to the meeting was CARRIED unanimously.

- 17. Provision of Parish Council Notice-Board  
Deferred to next Ordinary Meeting

## 18. Correspondence Received

- 18.1 Affordable Homes – Lettings policy + Amendment\*  
Discussed at Item 9
- 18.2 Invoice & Update from WCALC and NALC\*  
Discussed at Item 16.6
- 18.3 WCC Integrated Passenger Transport Consultation  
Discussed at Item 13.2
- 18.4 Redditch Partnership Report\*  
Discussed at Item 11
- 18.5 Electoral Commission – “All About Parish Councils” booklet  
Noted
- 18.6 News-Line – Community First Magazine  
Noted
- 18.7 Planning Aid: The Planning Pack  
Circulated to Planning Committee
- 18.8 Head of Asset Maintenance RBC: Parish Plan/Flooding\*  
Noted
- 18.9 PCC Letter of thanks for Grant Awarded  
Noted
- 18.10 WCC Footpath Signposts\*  
Noted
- 18.11 RBC Election Costs\*  
Noted. Invoice awaited. Cllr Hooker pointed out that a reserve needed to be set aside for unexpected elections and/or referenda which electors could petition for.
- 18.12 RBC Election Result  
Noted
- 18.13 H & W Fire Auth: Brochure  
Noted
- 18.14 WCC Partnership Newsletter  
Noted
- 18.14 RBC Agenda 15 Apr  
Noted
- 18.15 CALC Newsletter (Apr)\*  
Noted
- 18.16 Community First Grant Award\*  
Discussed at Item 10.1
- 18.17 Worcs. Milestone Society\*  
Noted. Clerk to acknowledge. Action requested. Defer to next meeting
- 18.18 Worcestershire Warden Newsletter  
Noted
- 18.19 Clement Keys Notice of Annual Audit (06/07)

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- Discussed at Item 16  
18.20 CALC – e-mail advice\*  
Noted

## 19. Correspondence Sent :

- 19.1 Letters to Clerk\*  
Discussed at Item 6  
19.2 Reply to Head of Asset Maintenance RBC\*  
Noted

## 20. Planning Applications & Notifications

It was noted that the following had been received and commented upon by the Planning Committee.

- 20.1 2007-143-FUL Cross Lanes Farms  
20.2 SPD Open Space Provision  
20.3 SPD Land to rear of Alexandra Hospital  
20.4 LH 4020/302 (WCC) Diversion & Creation of Footpaths  
20.5 2007/153/LBC 47 High Street  
20.6 2007/147/LBC The Old Courthouse  
20.7 2007/147/FUL The Old Courthouse  
20.8 2007/159/FUL 11 High Street  
20.9 2007/160/FUL 13 High Street  
20.10 2007/113/FUL Meadow farm, Alcester Road  
20.11 2007/088/FUL Sillins Hall - REFUSED  
20.12 2007/070/FUL Merry Oak Farm - PERMITTED

## 21. Records Office – deposit of Parish Council Records (duty of Clerk)

It was reported that CALC advise that it should be standard practice for the Clerk to deposit copies of the year's records for safe keeping at the County Records Office in Worcester. This had not been done. AGREED that this should be done in the future.

## 22. Items for next Ordinary Meeting Agenda

Condition of Roads  
Astwood Farm Development  
Standards  
Spatial Strategy  
Identifying partners in other authorities for attendance at meetings

### For Special (June 21<sup>st</sup>) Meeting Agenda

Co-option of two Councillors  
Approval of Minutes of 144<sup>th</sup> Ordinary Meeting  
Finance Update  
Staffing report / appointment of Clerk  
Dates of Ordinary Meetings

## 23. Dates of meetings for 2006/7

Special Meeting – 21<sup>st</sup> June, 2007 at 7.30pm, Feckenham Village Hall  
AGREED to defer setting of dates of Ordinary Meetings until the Special Meeting on June 21<sup>st</sup> pending investigations into the possibility of moving the Meetings earlier in the month.

There being no further business the Chairman closed the Meeting at 10.19pm