

Willaston Residents' and Countryside Society (WR&CS)

Minutes of the Committee Meeting held on Monday 20th March 2017 in the Memorial Hall

Residents' Issues

1. Lorries in the village

Ann and Richard Dutton attended the meeting to bring members' attention to the problem of the dangerous bend around Nag's Head and Cannell Court, particularly with the apparent increase of lorries going through the village. Ann commented that cars approach that bend too fast. There is a 20mph sign and mark on the road but no slow sign and suggested that this may help. She expressed concern that this is an accident waiting to happen and that there is nowhere for pedestrians to go, should a vehicle swerve off course. Richard commented that he had seen a car be forced onto the pavement by an HGV and fortunately, there were no pedestrians at the time.

Chris thanked Ann and Richard for coming along and commented that this has been raised with us in the past and it is on this meeting's agenda for full discussion later.

2. Station Master's House

Joan Butcher attended the meeting to let members know about the work of the Station Master's House Action Group (SMHAG) seeking a Community Asset Transfer from CWaC. Chris Hampshire declared his interest as Chair of Friends of Hadlow Road Station (FHRS) and Paul Janvier as a member of FHRS and SMHAG.

Joan explained that the Council has currently put up for rent the buildings at Hadlow Road Station which include, not just the Station Master's House but also the yard, garage and two of the outbuildings. This comprises about half of the building stock at the station and these have been empty since the Ranger relocated in December 2015. Joan said that FHRS were told initially that the buildings may be sold and a small group from FHRS wrote a bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) to buy them. HLF then spoke to the Council who advised that they did not intend to sell them. After waiting some time (over a year), Joan then spoke to Justin Mathers, the MP who wrote to the Chief Executive and was told that the intention was to lease the buildings. She then spoke to the officer concerned who confirmed that the intention was to put them up for letting. Joan then advised that another station in West Cheshire at Whitegate had been transferred to the community at a peppercorn rent. A community group is now running the Whitegate facility, covering all the overheads. Joan felt that there was potential for Willaston to do the same and outlined ideas of making it into a community building which could be an educational resource linking to the Wirral Way.

Therefore, Joan established SMHAG to explore this further. The group's first step was to put together a petition to see if the community would be interested in such a resource and they had a good deal of support. They have now put together an expression of interest to the council and are waiting to hear the outcome. If it is positive, then the next stage would be to put together a business plan and they have a volunteer who will support them with this. If it is not successful, at least they would have tried.

Joan stated that the group does not feel that it is in opposition to FHRS and that FHRS had declined to make an expression of interest. She also said that the proposals link into the Willaston District Community Plan as the enhancement of the station as a tourist attraction is included in the plan. She noted that many people make a special effort to visit the station, some coming from a good distance away.

Chris commented that the leasing of the buildings does not mean that we will lose the Station Master's House, as had been written in the petition, since the buildings had always been rented out by CWaC and you cannot lose something you never had; the only change is that the revenue will be external, rather than internal. He also said that FHRS had not done an expression of interest but had asked the Council if they could have first refusal if this option became available. His understanding was that the expression of interest had been noted and was not being progressed by the Council but Joan refuted this. She also commented that if the building is let commercially, the opportunity of access to it will be lost.

Joan commented that there is likely to be more people using the Wirral Way when the Roften site is developed. Myles refuted this, saying that included within the Roften development are proposals to completely redevelop the Hooton Village Hall. He expressed his unhappiness that he had not been involved in the expression of interest at an earlier stage.

Jane commented that the development of a visitor centre on the site with leaflets, walks and information about the village would be welcome.

Chris then thanked Joan for attending and said that we look forward to hearing the response.

Following Joan's departure from the meeting, there was then further discussion on the proposals and it was agreed that there is a lot of potential for development. The proposals are ambitious and the business case was crucial as any group developing it would need to be sure that it was viable. It was also noted that this is a listed building. Vicky said that the Council are not interested in converting it back to housing. Myles commented that the Council need to raise as much revenue as possible in rent/rates and this is currently a commercial decision to let. He understood that currently two organisations have shown very keen interest in letting and that an open tender will be taking place.

Barry commented that the development at Whitegate is different. It is not a listed building so it had more potential to change things. Also, the village where Whitegate is situated had no facilities so they created an outlet that was lacking, providing a shop and café. They also employ staff to run the facilities. It was also noted that the transfer happened before the political change in the Council at the last election.

Barry said that he and Chris (as FHRS officers) had met three members of SMHAG. At that time, the only difference of opinion was that when the petition was put together, the wording implied that the buildings would be lost. He stated that FHRS would consider working with SMHAG should the expression of interest be successful.

Some concerns were expressed about the way Joan had been received at the meeting and it was suggested that if a similar situation arises again, where the Chair has an interest, the Vice-Chair should take the chair for that specific item.

Committee Meeting

Present: (Officers): Chris Hampshire (Chair), Vicky Spraggon (Vice-Chair), Sarah Shannon (Secretary), Hilary Booth (Treasurer), Sue Unsworth (Publicity), Jane Townsend (Footpaths), Ceri Jones (Social Media), Barry Vowles (Planning)

(Committee Members): Rob King, Annette Troake, Paul Janvier, John Fisher, Madeline Hughes, Lyn Jackson-Eves, Helen Mayles, Hilary Morris, Sheila Smith, Margaret Smyth, Myles Hogg and Debs Jerrett

1. Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Fiona Ennys, Leanne Kershaw, Stephen Bazely, and Hilary Gould.

2. Declarations of Interest

There were no additional declarations of interest.

3. Minutes of the Meeting held on 16th January 2017

The minutes were proposed by Hilary Booth, seconded by Paul Janvier and accepted by the Committee as a true record of the meeting.

4. Matters arising from the previous Minutes (16th January 2017)

There was discussion on the following items, other items being completed:

4.1 Sign at Hadlow Road Station (item 4.1)

Sarah still has to get costings for a finger sign.

Action: Sarah

4.2 Traffic survey (item 4.2)

Myles reported that the traffic survey will be done in May and it will be able to confirm the number of HGVs on the road.

There was then a discussion about the issue of HGVs and the corner at the Nag's Head. Jane commented that in the District Community Plan, 58% of people would strongly support reducing the weight of lorries through the village. Concerns were also expressed about vehicles being diverted through the village and the size of vehicles relative to the width of the pavement, which makes them more intimidating. It was felt that doing a further survey would not be helpful as most people would support the idea of reducing HGVs but the issue is how to do this. Jane distributed a document listing the criteria for requesting road weight restrictions and how to request this. It was agreed to arrange a separate meeting for interested committee members with Andy Raynor. This will be arranged for May or June after the results of the traffic survey are known.

Action: Sarah/Chris

4.3 Leaves on Hooton Road (item 4.2)

Lyn commented that Hooton Road has been cleared but Delamores Acre is still poor. It was felt that we should encourage people to keep their pavement clean. It was agreed to discuss this in more detail at the next meeting as a separate agenda item.

Action: Sarah

4.4 Elm Green path (item 4.3)

Jane reported that she has been in contact and has a meeting planned with Andy James on 28th March. Sarah will also be attending.

4.5 Concert Society (item 6.1)

Sarah reported that the Concert Society will be having their AGM on 21st March, following which there will be three final concert trips and then the society will close as they are losing money.

4.6 Post Office (item 6.3)

Sarah reported that the rent for the old Post Office building is still being paid and no notice has been given of an intention to cease the payments.

5. Play Area Working Group

Sarah reported that funding of £1000 has been agreed from the Johnston Recreation Ground and a full application had been made to Veolia for the remaining £34,009. The outcome of this should be known in June.

6. Parking Questionnaire

Ceri thanked everyone who had been involved in the parking questionnaire and said that she wanted to report back on two areas: the organisation of the questionnaire and the feedback from it.

In terms of organisation, Ceri said at the last meeting she had agreed to co-ordinate people into slots for doing the survey. There had been no discussion around briefing people, printing and distributing the survey and that she had undertaken this by default. She felt that the committee needs to think through the logistics in more detail in future. 49 slots had been set up and 24 of those were completed. The WI, rotary and our volunteer list had provided additional support – without these, we would not have had enough people to undertake the survey. Ceri questioned whether the survey was robust enough with just under half the slots filled as we had indicated at the last meeting that a full week's data would be more robust. It was also noted that some vehicles may have parked elsewhere when they realised the survey was taking place.

In terms of feedback, we had received a few negative comments through the About My Area website. Of particular concern was one person who felt intimidated and rang her father to come to help her. Subsequently, they had contacted the police. Three other negative comments had been posted. A response apologising and explaining a bit more about the purpose of the survey has been posted. Generally, committee members who had undertaken the survey had a more positive interaction with the public who mainly welcomed the idea of restricting parking.

Chris thanked Ceri for the work she had done and it was agreed that she should be reimbursed for the printing she had done.

Action: Hilary B

Chris also mentioned that he had received an email from Keith Butcher pointing out that the Green is common land and therefore it may not be possible to restrict parking if the parking area is included in the common area. Myles is investigating this further.

Action: Myles

It was agreed that the data we have should be analysed. Chris agreed to provide a pro-forma which Barry, Helen and Jane agreed to help populate with the data.

Action: Chris, Barry, Helen and Jane

7. WR&CS Matters

7.1 Correspondence

a. We have been contacted by a resident expressing concern about children waiting for the bus walking on the crocuses. By email, Chris had suggested small signs but this was not felt to be necessary. Sarah said that she did speak to some children who walked through the crocuses when doing the parking survey.

b. Pedestrian crossing by the Old Hall. It was agreed to raise this at the meeting with Andy Raynor. However, it was thought that this had been looked into before and was not feasible.

c. Memorial Hall letting to S4YC for the pre-school playgroup. Chris had received a lot of correspondence about this letting. People had objected on the grounds that it is a commercial organisation and that the longer hours restricted other organisations' ability to use the hall. Colin Jerrett had responded to some of the correspondence, as Chair of the Memorial Hall. Chris requested that if something is likely to be controversial, the Residents' Society could be told in advance.

d. Overhanging trees in Hooton Road. Chris reported that we had written to the houses concerned. One had immediately cut back the trees but the others had not. Therefore, we had contacted CWaC asking them to contact the owners but the officer concerned did not think that their criteria had been met.

7.2 Committee Membership

Chris reported that Keith Butcher has resigned as the Memorial Hall representative. Rob King was proposed by Myles, seconded by Hilary B and agreed by all present as the new representative. Rob will therefore cease to be a residents' representative.

Action: Chris to advise Colin Jerrett

Sarah reported that Paul Janvier is now Chair of the Festival Society and will be the Festival Society representative on the committee. He will also therefore cease to be a residents' representative. Paul informed the committee that the group still needs people to take on key roles for a full festival to be put on. They hope to do another Christmas Tree Festival and to have a Drive in in 2018 but have postponed the full festival until 2021.

8. Treasurer's Report

Hilary Booth circulated the financial report. On 27th December, the current account had a balance of £928.12. Payment had been made for hiring the hall for the year. The lottery account had a balance of £1600.47, which should result in approximately £1000 profit at the year end. £1,056 of the current/lottery accounts is for newsletters. The play area account has a balance of £4997.12.

9. Planning Applications, Decisions and Appeals

9.1 Rosenheath

Barry had asked for comments on the proposed development at Rosenheath, Heath Lane by email. Subsequently, he had responded to CWaC with comments on the application and a request for conditions to be applied. He has not formally objected to the proposals.

9.2 Hooton Road Service Station

The architect for this development had requested a meeting that Chris and Barry had attended to review the plans before submission on a non-binding basis. It had been explained to them that the potential developers were requesting four houses be put onto the site for it to be viable and the arrangement in the plans is the best solution. It was agreed this is a welcome development but concerns were expressed that the view from Hooton Road onto the side of the semi-detached house could affect the general street scene. Concerns were also expressed that the footpath should not be surrounded with high hedges and the footpath sign may need to be moved. Barry agreed to feed these comments back to CWaC and to ask for all surrounding houses to be consulted.

Action: Barry

9.3 Planning Principles paper

Barry has begun work on this paper and will bring it to the next meeting.

Action: Barry

10. Organisation Reports

The following reports were received in advance. In addition, Chris told the committee that FHRS would like more volunteers to help at the café on the last Sunday morning of each month.

10.1 Christ Church

No report received

10.2 Friends of Hadlow Road Station (Submitted by Hilary Booth)

We have had another couple of successful breakfast brunch mornings, one on Sunday 29th January and the second on Sunday 26th February. Both rather chilly days but nevertheless a very good turnout once again, keeping the kitchen staff fully occupied throughout opening hours. We were very sad to see Debbie Weeden leave as catering lead, due to family commitments. Debbie is however leaving the team in very good order and certain to thrive, so many thanks go to Debbie for all her hard work in getting the cafe operational, up and running. Debbie is leaving the cafe in the very capable and safe hands of the catering team Carole (Collins) Jenny (Jackson) and Lyn (Jackson Eves). Our next cafe opening will be on Saturday 25th March from 10.00 am to 1 pm. We hope to see you there.

Tidy-up and gardening weekends have been on hold due to wintry weather, but with Spring well on the way we will be working hard again in the very near future, to ensure green spaces are looking good, with hanging baskets and lots of colour in the flower beds outside the Station Masters House.

The larger project development list will be put into full swing starting in Spring, when paint will dry more quickly. Over the coming months, you will see lots of development being progressed, including the long awaited and much needed restoration of the K6 telephone box, and a refurbished hand cart with a milk churn being added to enhance the stations 1950's character. Our many thanks go to Tom S. who has very kindly donated money to purchase this milk churn. Any spare milk churns will be gratefully received, or purchased, and will be secured for display on the platform.

10.3 Friends of Willaston Meadow (submitted by Hilary Morris)

Volunteers have cleared away broken glass, metal, bits of bicycles and other debris which emerged from the dredging of Jackson's Pond, and the recent heavy rain has filled it up nicely. Vegetation is starting to re-establish on the banks, and a new seat has been installed close by. The water level in the pond in the north-east corner of the Meadow has also risen.

The annual newsletter is in preparation, and will be distributed before the AGM, which this year will be held on 25 May.

10.4 Guiding Organisations

No representative currently

10.5 Hadlow Green Singers

No report received

10.6 Horticultural Society (Submitted by Pam Irving)

On Tuesday 18th April, we are having a presentation on 'Gardening for Wildlife' by Dr Hilary Ash. There are so many things we can do to help wildlife and this is the perfect opportunity to find out more. If you have not paid your subscription or sponsorship money in March, our Membership Secretary will be on hand this month.

The Society meets on the third Tuesday of each month in the Memorial Hall, at 7.30pm; details are shown on the Village Notice board, and if you are interested in joining us, come along or contact the Membership Secretary, Ms Jill Thompson, telephone number 336 5927. Membership is only £6.00 per year and you can

get 10% discount at Burleydam Garden Centre on all gardening products on production of your Membership card.

10.7 Johnston Recreation Ground (received at meeting by Sue Unsworth)

Meetings are held every three months and the next meeting will be on 21st June at 7.30pm in the Pavilion. The Council Legal Department are responsible for the accounts. Copies are sent to the Charity Commission. A payment of £1000 will be given to the play area.

Some football games have been postponed due to the pitches being waterlogged and matches will continue into April. The goalposts will then be removed until the season starts again. There is still a problem with underground mole tunnels which affects the football pitches, making them uneven.

The pavilion ceiling and lighting have been repaired but the floor still needs to be finished. Cleaning and painting inside will be done by managers/committee. The tennis club has requested a storage box.

Allotment number 8 has improved slightly but more improvement is still needed. The Council has been asked to do some further trimming to shrubs along the pathway by the playground as there is flooding every winter at the Elm Road end.

We are going to take part in the next campaign organised by the Dog Warden.

Andy James, our main Council contact, is now moving on within the Council. Thanks for all the help he has given; we wish him luck and hope he will still be able to help from time to time.

10.8 Memorial Hall

No report received

10.9 Scouting Organisations

No representative currently

10.10 Sporting Organisations

No report received

10.11 Willastonhey W.I. (submitted by Hilary Morris)

Our annual Bridge Drive in February was a success, with the tea being greatly appreciated as usual. Members have enjoyed outings to "Escapism" in Chester and to the theatre in Liverpool for "Pygmalion". Our quiz team were successful in the local heat, and now look forward to the County final next month. At the last meeting, we were entertained with a performance about Joyce Grenfell, and next time the talk will be about orchids.

Some members have participated in the recent survey of parking on the Green. The walking group have rambled nearby in Wirral during the winter, and look forward to the next outing to Marbury Country Park.

10.12 Willaston Methodist Church (Submitted by Sheila Smith)

As we approach Easter the Lent courses have commenced jointly with our friends from Christ Church. Anyone is welcome to come along and join in the discussions. Tuesday morning session from 10-30a.m. to 12 noon, and a Wednesday evening 7-30p.m. both in the schoolroom at Chapel, and Tuesday evening 7-30 at the Vicarage.

The Soup Lunch in February was well supported for which thanks are extended to all who came and enjoyed the Valentines morning!

Please see the notice board for Easter services, including the annual Easter breakfast which precedes the Easter Sunday service. Thanks to Theresa and John who have put great effort into organising this for many years.

10.13 Willaston CE School PTA

No representative currently

10.14 Willaston Royal British Legion/Willaston Royal British Legion Services Club

No report received.

10.15 Willaston and South Wirral Rotary Club (Submitted by Debs Jerrett)

We have a musical evening planned on Saturday 6th May courtesy of "Simon the barber" at the Memorial Hall, fish & chip supper at the interval. Time: 19:30. There will be a charity cash bar & a raffle. All welcome, tickets £10 from Debs Jerrett 0151 923 1240 or Chris Simpson 07941 949508.

10.16 Willaston Surgery Patient Participation Group

No representative currently

10.17 Willaston Toddler Group

No report received.

10.18 Willaston Village Festival Society (Submitted by Maria Manders)

The Festival committee has decided that the Festival committee should remain active but due to insufficient key people being identified for the Festival due to be held in 2018, it be postponed until 2021. However, the subcommittee who organise the Drive-in Movie, will be asked to hold this event Saturday 23rd June 2018 – A final decision will be announced when this sub-committee have met.

The role of chair has been taken by Paul Janvier who will also represent the Festival Committee at meetings of WR&CS.

Over the period between now and the next Festival it was also agreed that every effort be made to recruit further members to the management committee including key young people for the Festival itself proposed for 2021.

11. Footpaths and Bridleways

11.1 Footpaths

Jane reported that the local footpaths are muddy but not as muddy as usual at this time of year. There is some debris on the footpaths and bridleways following 'Storm Doris'. Jane has reported a blockage on FP 28 (between the mill and the far end of Street Hey Lane) to the Council. In addition, she was aware of a potentially dangerous branch hanging from a tree on FP32 (footpath behind the Pollard Inn), and a fallen bush partially obstructing the entrance to FP35 at the junction with the Wirral Way. It was suggested that where there are a number of obstructions that need moving, the Community Payback Team could help if the different paths are packaged into one day's work. **Action: Jane**

Jane has been told that the Council will implement the promised improvements to muddy section of FP 32 in the new financial year. As described at our last meeting the metal platform was put in place by the pond. Walkers are making good use of it as the pond has overflowed as usual. Jane contacted the Council about concerns that dogs cannot walk on this platform. The response has been that the Council is 'under no obligation to provide for dogs.' There is still an area of this path, which is flooded, that is not covered by the platform which the Council has been informed about. The pot holes on Change Lane (FP 33) are also scheduled to be filled in soon.

Jane has received a complaint about the surface of FP 70 between the Memorial Hall and the Pollards Inn.

11.2 Bridleways

Jane has been told that the hollows on BR 66 (end of Street Hey Lane) will be filled in after the end of this financial year. These hollows are muddy but just about passable. Several trees and bushes have blown across the track. These have also been reported to the Council. There are also four obstructions on BR64 (the bridleway between Hadlow Road and the A540).

Please email willastonfootpaths@outlook.com if you see any other problems with our Willaston footpaths or bridleways and put 'Footpaths & Bridleways' as the subject of the email.

12. Councillor's Report

12.1 Wirral Line

The second phase of the improvements is now in progress and trains run to James Street on weekdays and Birkenhead Central during weekends and public holidays. The third phase, when trains stop at Birkenhead Central will be from 30th May to 18th June.

12.2 Council Housing

Management of council housing is being transferred from Plas Dane to City West Housing Trust.

12.13 Contact Points

A list of council contacts was passed to Sarah for adding to those already on the website.

Action: Sarah

12.14 Community Governance Review

A response has gone from WR&CS. The consultation has now ended and the outcome awaited.

12.15 Household Waste Recycling

A new leaflet is being produced. There were comments made that the site in Neston has changed its entrance which is harder to navigate. Also, the days that it is open have been reduced. Myles agree to take this up.

Action: Myles

12.16 Quarry Road

There is a traffic order to reinstate the road to how it was before the pipeline was installed.

Currently the proposals for a permanent scheme to put no entry from the A540 are on hold to allow for more consideration before formal consultation takes place. However, it is likely that the junction with Hanns Hall Road will be altered, regardless of whether the full scheme goes ahead.

12.17 Public Health Wellbeing Service (PHWS) Consultation

PHWS include sexual health, substance misuse, smoking cessation, weight management, exercise on referral, over-75s exercise for free and NHS health checks. The Council is proposing to put these services into one contract and is seeking views on this proposal. An online questionnaire is available at http://inside.cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk/get_involved/consultations/public_health_wellbeing_services_consultation. The consultation finishes on 25th June 2017.

13. Any Other Business

13.1 Uncared for gardens

Sue mentioned two houses where gardens are looking very uncared for. Myles was already aware of one and has reported it. Sue agreed to give him details of the other.

Action: Sue

13.2 Flagstones on the Green

Paul mentioned that some of the flagstones on the Green were damaged. Myles confirmed that this has already been reported.

13.3 FHRS

Chris said that FHRS have three A-frame advertising boards which can be borrowed (free of charge).

There being no other business, the meeting closed at 10.00pm.

Dates for future Committee Meetings:

Monday 15th May 2017

Monday 17th July 2017

Monday 18th Sept 2017

Monday 20th Nov 2017

AGM: Friday 29th September 2017