

Willaston Residents' and Countryside Society

Minutes of the AGM held on 11th October 2019 in Willaston Memorial Hall

Approximately 55 people were in attendance.

1. Welcome & Apologies

Chris Hampshire welcomed everyone present to the Annual General Meeting of the Willaston Residents' and Countryside Society (WR&CS) and took them through the revised agenda.

Apologies had been received from Vicky Spraggon (Vice Chair), Barry Vowles (Planning Officer), Sue Unsworth (Publicity Officer), Susie Dixon (WI Representative), Paul Janvier (Festival Society Representative), Gillie O'Rourke and Ronald and Pauline Anderson.

2. Minutes of the AGM held on Friday 26th October 2018

Copies of the minutes had been placed on seats prior to the meeting for attendees to read. Chris asked for any amendments to the Minutes and none were given. Therefore, the minutes were proposed as a true record of the meeting by Ian Shannon and seconded by Helen Mayles. By a show of hands, the minutes were accepted.

3. Actions Arising

Page 5, item 10.1 Aldi Lorries – Chris Hampshire reported that he had written again to Aldi, who were very supportive and have a route for drivers avoiding the village. He said that his perception was that there were now very few lorries going through the village, other than delivery lorries for local shops.

Page 5, item 10.2 Pavements – The vegetation between the Methodist Church and Christ Church has been cut back.

4. Presentation by PC Mike Wakeling, Beat Manager for Neston, Willaston and other villages

PC Mike Wakeling introduced himself, saying that he had served in the army for 22 years before joining Cheshire Police and had served for ten years in the Ellesmere Port area of Cheshire.

PC Wakeling then encouraged attendees to take action against burglary. He commented that car thefts are often by organised groups looking for particular vehicles and encouraged attendees to report people who look out of place in the area by ringing 101. He suggested buying window tremblers – small devices that are stuck onto the window and go off if the glass is touched. He also said that keys should not be left in sight of the letterbox as they can be easily taken by fishing through the letterbox. In answer to a question from Ruth McElroy, he confirmed that if burglar alarms go off, people should ring 999. In answer to a question from Hilary Booth, if you are at home when an alarm goes off, you should loudly, make a lot of noise and ring 999. Stay safe, out of the way and try not to touch anything.

PC Wakeling then turned to the fact that fraud is on the increase, both face-to-face and online. He said that people pretend to be police or custom officers, say that money is owed and take people to the ATM. He encouraged people that if something doesn't feel right, not to do it and you should never be taken to a cash machine. Ask for ID and ring the office to get it authenticated. He also suggested that if you get a phone call from someone suspicious, you should just hang up.

Cheshire Police has a cyber team and booklet about fraud. PC Wakeling said that it was important to create a strong password and suggested blending three random words together. He also said that it was important to change your Wifi password and to be careful what you click onto. It is better to ring an organisation and check if you are unsure. The Little Book of Big Scams has been updated and is available online at <https://cheshire.police.uk/media/198832/the-little-book-of-big-scams-third-edition.pdf>

PC Wakeling also raised concerns that people have about trick and treaters. There is a leaflet that can be put in your window to say whether you welcome them or would prefer not to have them. This can be downloaded at https://cheshire.police.uk/media/14486/halloween_yes-and-no-2015.pdf. Cheshire Police will have a big operation over Halloween and bonfire night.

PC Wakeling noted that 20mph limits are randomly enforced. He also said that the Government is looking at legislation around parking on pavements but it is not clear if this will be enforced by the Police or the Council. In answer to a question, he confirmed that it is an offence to park a car with engines running. He asked attendees to get the details and the police will have a word with the owner.

In answer to a question, PC Wakeling confirmed that the local Police Station is Ellesmere Port and there is also a base in Neston. He said response times to Willaston were normally only a few minutes as officers are out and about.

Chris Hampshire thanked PC Wakeling for his input and noted that regular information is available from Facebook and Twitter.

5. Chair's Report

Chris Hampshire reported that the Society had had another active year.

The Society has responded to 40 planning applications in Willaston over the last twelve months. The main aim is to protect the Green Belt and the village conservation area. We submitted detailed objections to the Planning Inspector for the planning appeal by McCarthy and Stone on the former Royal British Legion site. He thanked Cheshire West and Chester Council (CWaC) for their support in appointing an external consultant to support their objection to the site and noted that an excellent response had been submitted. He also thanked Barry Vowles for his work in submitting our response. We attended the appeal and are now awaiting the result. Christine Barnes thanked Sarah Shannon for her input at the appeal meeting.

Other significant planning applications over the past year, were an application to build six small houses on the site of the livery stables at Hanns Hall. The Society objected and this application was refused by CWaC and has now gone to appeal; an application to extend the Station Master's House at Hadlow Road Station, for which a third submission has now been approved; and an application to retain the travellers' site at Green Acres Caravan Park on Heath Lane.

The Society has also engaged with the Post Office around the re-instatement of a Willaston service. Chris read out a statement from the Post Office which said that they are in discussions with a potential retail partner who is in the process of negotiating and securing a lease from which to operate. Once this is done, they have to go through a process to apply for a Post Office licence. This will take several months but the Post Office will keep the Society informed as progress is made. Chris said that if this fails, then there is a back-up plan which would involve setting up a community Post Office and offers of premises to do this from have already been made.

The Society has purchased and installed the Christmas lights and will be responsible for their ongoing maintenance, safety and electricity costs. An electrical contractor has been appointed who checks the lights regularly to ensure that they are safe.

The Society co-ordinated a range of events across the village to celebrate the end of WW1 and also put up bunting and stalls when the OVO Tour of Britain came through the village. Chris thanked Sarah for co-ordinating these events.

The Society has worked closely with CWaC on the final phase of the play area improvements. A consultation exercise took place with local residents and children to identify which large climbing unit that should be installed and we have now started to raise the necessary £30,853.50 to purchase and install it.

The Society has worked with Hooton Residents' Association to produce a joint welcome pack for new residents buying houses on the former Roften site, next to Hooton Station. We are currently waiting for confirmation of funding for this document before printing and distributing it.

The Society has increased regular engagement with residents. We have regular postings on the website, an active Facebook page and information on both noticeboards in the village. We have also produced two copies of the newsletter 'Willaston Matters' which goes to every house in the village. Chris thanked Brett Hoare for his help maintaining the website and Ceri Jones for maintaining our Facebook site.

Chris then commented on the current 20mph speed limit consultation. The Council is proposing to reduce the speed limit on 31 side roads on Willaston. After discussion at the previous committee meeting, the Society agreed to submit a response that this is not fit for purpose as some of the roads already have an average speed of under 20mph and it is not enforceable. Our view was that money could be spent more wisely by reducing the speed limit on the section of Hadlow Road from the Station to the village centre. A detailed response has been received from CWaC but it does not support our view.

Ian Shannon commented that evidence has shown that installing a 20mph limit just through signs, without any changes to the road is not effective and it is better to target where limits are put. Eileen Macdonald commented that this has been requested for over 30 years, along with a reduction for Hooton Road but because it is a B road, this has not been agreed.

Myles Hogg said that these proposals are the fourth year of a roll-out across all of the CWaC area. They will have cost over £1 million altogether and roads only qualify if they have an average speed of under 24mph. He commented that this is a Council policy which was agreed in 2016 and it is a shame that Hadlow Road does not qualify as the traffic went at an average of 25.2mph. He commented that the 20mph zone in Neston Road had reduced traffic from an average of 32mph to 24/25mph, which is a significant reduction, whereas the CWaC monitoring is showing an average reduction of 0.4mph. In response to a question about whether it is necessary to have signs, rather than painting on the road, Myles explained that the regulations say that signs are required every 100m.

Ged Weeden commented that only people in the roads affected got the consultation letter. He said that residents in Hadlow Road had got together to write but had not yet received a response. Eileen Macdonald noted that the more people who respond personally, the more credence an issue will be given.

Myles said that he will continue to do his best to get a 20mph limit in Hadlow Road.

6. Treasurer's Report

Hilary Booth, Treasurer, presented the accounts which had been placed on seats prior to the meeting. She explained that these figures represent the situation at 31st August 2019.

Hilary explained that the Current Account funds our core work and that the Society's main income is through the Lottery but also through the Christmas Card Fair. Overall, the Current Account had credits of £1816.63, payments of £1287.57 and carries forward a balance of £529.06, of which £146 is ringfenced for the newsletter. She noted that we have moved our meetings from the Memorial Hall Committee Room to Willaston Chapel School Room as the latter had more space. We were able to make a donation towards the village defibrillator which is now installed outside the pharmacy.

The Play Area Account has £1480.65 and as the fundraising develops, is expected to increase. The WW1 events enabled the Society to donate £1,259.51 to the RBL Poppy Appeal and Hilary thanked all those involved.

Hilary explained that the Fundraising Account shows the income relating to the Willaston Lottery, which has been successful in raising money for the Society. This ended with a balance of £584.84 which is available to spend. During the year £500 was transferred to WR&CS for general funds.

The Christmas Lights account has a balance of £12,563.66. This money will be used for future electricity, inspections, insurance etc.

Overall, therefore we have a total of £15,463.66. Hilary thanked Nigel Pratten for auditing the accounts and said that the accounts will be on the WR&CS website for inspection. She commented that we are lucky to live in a great community where everyone works together.

The presented accounts were proposed by Roy Spraggon and seconded by Carol Mercer. By a show of hands, they were accepted as a true record. Chris then thanked Hilary for all her work on behalf of the Society.

7. Election of Officers and Resident Representatives

Chris explained that officers are elected for a period of three years on a rotational basis and nominations are requested in advance, together with a supporting statement. There had been no nominations received for the post of Vice Chair so that remains vacant. However, Chris explained that we are aware that someone is interested in the role.

Jane Townsend is stepping down from the role of Footpaths and Bridleways Officer. Chris thanked Jane for the work she had done on this for the past seven years. However, there are no nominations for this role and Chris asked if anyone is interested to let us know.

No nomination had been received for the post of Publicity Officer but Chris explained that we understand Sue Unsworth would like to continue but had not put in a supporting statement as she is on holiday.

Two nominations had been received for the post of Social Media Officer – from Ceri Jones and Greg Leach. Their supporting statements were shown on screen and each was asked to give a two-minute speech to support their statement. There was then a ballot and the votes were counted. As she had the most votes, Ceri was reappointed as the Social Media Officer. Chris congratulated Ceri on her reappointment and thanked Greg for his interest and encouraged him to become involved in the Society in other ways.

Chris explained that up to six Residents Representatives are elected onto the committee for a three-year term and there are currently two vacancies. Nominations had been received in advance from Fiona Ennys and Jane Townsend and again a slide with their supporting statement was shown. On the basis that there were no additional nominations, they were both proposed by Ruth Hampshire and seconded by Sandra Kettiros. By a show of hands, their appointment was agreed by all present.

8. Volunteer Opportunities in the Village

Chris explained that there are a number of opportunities for volunteers with different organisations in the village. This includes becoming Chair or Vice-Chair for the Memorial Hall, Treasurer for Friends of Willaston Meadow and helping in various roles at Hadlow Road Station.

9. Events Coming Up

9.1 Charity Christmas Card Fair

Chris reminded attendees that the WR&CS Christmas Card Fair takes place on Saturday 9th November 2019 from 10am to 12 noon at the Memorial Hall.

9.2 Play Area

Chris reminded attendees that there is the WI Soup Lunch on Saturday 12th October, for which the raffle will support the play area. In the evening, the Methodist Church will be showing the film 'Sing' to support the play area. On Sunday 20th October, there is the chance to ring the church bell during Harvest Festival.

10. Willaston War Memorial Fund

Nigel Pratten then explained that in January, he had attended a meeting of the Society to discuss the Willaston War Memorial Fund which raised funds following the theft of the bronze plaques and damage to the memorial. It was agreed that the AGM of the Society was an appropriate time to report on this fund.

Nigel explained that in January there were three trustees remaining on the committee – Fred Chapman, Richard Berry and Nigel Pratten. However, since meeting the Society, the committee has now grown to five trustees, with the addition of John Woodrow (representing WR&CS) and Ged Weeden, a community volunteer and they have met on five occasions. There has been no maintenance or repairs required to the memorial and the flowers around it are donated by Follyfields Nursery.

There are no formal accounts for the War Memorial Fund to present as there has been no activity since 2013 and the bank balance remains unchanged at £5,657. Nigel noted that this 'should be held solely as a fund for the future repair and upkeep of the Willaston War Memorial' – an extract quoted from the minutes of the last public meeting in March 2013. Nigel explained that he was concerned that someone may be wondering what happened to this money and is grateful to the Society for this platform to explain the situation.

11. Any Other Business

Colin Brown said that he had lived in the area for four years and was concerned about the quality of the road surface on The Knowe. He said that with support from Myles, he had drafted a letter to go to CWaC asking for it to be resurfaced and this will be signed by all residents. He asked that if any member has expertise in road building and can help with the technical side of the letter, that they get in touch with him.

Another resident commented that the whole of Hooton Road also needs resurfacing. Myles said that he had raised the state of Hooton Road twice with CWaC but the raised ironworks are public utilities' responsibility. He agreed that it is a problem but it is unlikely to be done until the work on the new housing estate next to the station is complete. He commented that the recent floods are due to the road sweeper emptying sludge into the drainage system.

Another resident commented that the pavements are dangerous. Chris informed the meeting that any problems like this can be reported on the CWaC Streetscene website, pinpointing the exact point where the problem is, and they then do get looked at.

Jane Townsend asked that if anyone is interested in Willaston memorabilia to get in contact with her. She explained that the Society is getting a small group together to discuss this and agree how to ensure that memorabilia is preserved and available to members of the community.

Carol Mercer noted that the 22 bus has changed its timetable and the bus now leaves Chester from station N, not station J.

Eileen Macdonald thanked the committee on behalf of everyone, saying that we are lucky to have so many people who volunteer to look after our village. Chris noted that all the committee are volunteers who give their time freely and thanked Eileen for her kind words.

12. Close of Meeting

Chris Hampshire closed the meeting by thanking all the committee and organisation members for their support and work during the year. He then thanked everyone for coming along and invited them to join us in some wine and nibbles and to visit the information tables around the room.

The meeting then concluded at 9.00pm.

Want more information?

Our website can be found at: willastoninwirralresidents.org and Facebook at: /willastonresidents

If you would like an email alert when minutes of meetings are posted on our website, please contact us via the website.

Any village concerns then let us know

Email Willaston Residents' & Countryside Society through the 'Contact Us' page on the Society's website. Alternatively write to the Society c/o the Chair, 11 The Courtyard, Willaston. CH64 2UT.

If there is any particular issue you would like to raise, the first 15 minutes of each meeting is open to any resident. Please let us know if you would like to attend during this session. You are also welcome to attend throughout the meeting as an observer – again, please let us know if you will be attending.

These Minutes are subject to ratification.
Sarah Shannon
Secretary