

`Willaston Residents' and Countryside Society (WR&CS)

Minutes of the Committee Meeting held on Monday 26th July 2020
in Willaston Memorial Hall

Present - Officers: Chris Hampshire (Chair), Vicky Spraggon (Acting Vice-Chair), Sarah Shannon (Secretary), Hilary Booth (Treasurer), Ceri Jones (Social Media), Margaret Smyth (Acting Footpaths Officer),

Present - Committee Members: Lyn Jackson-Eves, Roy Spraggon, Rob King, Sheila Smith, Helen Jakubczak, Sheila Greenhalgh, Suzie Dixon, Ruth McElroy, Annette Troake, Myles Hogg, Fiona Ennis, Jane Townsend, Fiona Mosley, Brian Greenhalgh and Sandra Kettiros

In attendance: Michelle Swann, Simon Oliver and Ruth Hampshire

Residents' Issues

Chris welcomed the committee back after a long break because of Covid-19, which has prevented us meeting as a committee, although work has been done. Three residents were attending to raise issues.

a. Green Belt

Michelle Swan attended to speak about the Green Belt. She had gone through the planning applications over the past six years and of 12 applications in the Willaston ward, nine had gone through which were mainly agricultural buildings that became 21 houses on green belt land. Four were rejected of which two went to appeal and one won. She had also looked at small plots of land where there was infill. There were also 12 applications of which only four got through. Therefore, she concluded it is easier to build on green belt.

Michelle also stated that about 60% of green belt applications aren't commented on by the Residents' Society.

Michelle suggested that the current village-led community plan has no legal standing and a neighbourhood plan would do this. However, Myles said that in practice CWaC Planning Officers take the plan into account. Michelle also suggested that we should work more closely with the Council to reduce how many applications get through at the first stage. She also felt we should improve our responses, citing the Hanns Hall development where she felt our response was brief and did not cover all the reasons it could have. Chris commented that we had asked the Council to reject this development, they had done so and it was approved on appeal so adding further detail was irrelevant.

Vicky commented that it was unfortunate that neither the former nor the current planning officer were able to attend the meeting to respond. She asked Michelle why she didn't apply for the role and Michelle responded that her health was not good enough to take this on.

Helen commented that it was clear from the questionnaire that residents want to know more about planning applications and Chris said that we are now circulating the planning list on Facebook each month, as well as putting it on the website and noticeboards to try to increase awareness.

Jane commented that the Neighbourhood Plan is more binding but those who were involved in the Community Plan realise the considerable amount of time that it takes and no-one was willing to lead on it. She also commented that a Neighbourhood Plan needs to include where development takes place and it is difficult for us to identify any land for development.

Chris also commented that draft Government planning regulations suggest that it may be easier to build on green belt land in future.

Chris thanked Michelle for her input to the Residents' Society's meeting.

b. Hooton Crematorium

Simon Oliver attended to speak about the potential planning application for a crematorium in Hooton. An exhibition with the proposals was at Hooton Village Hall but a formal application is not yet in. Simon said that the level of opposition at the exhibition was high. He explained that the proposal is by Horizon Cremations

who currently have two facilities in Scotland and Staffordshire, another planned in Glasgow and two further ones seeking planning permission.

Simon said that Horizon are citing usage of Blacon and Landican crematoria but Flintshire is only 11 miles away and is only at 60% capacity. There are also open slots at both Blacon and Landican – his group is monitoring this weekly. In the area, we have 3 crematoria for 330,000 people and government guidelines is for one per 150,000.

Simon raised the issue of congestion. He said that the car park is for 100 vehicles and all traffic from the Neston direction will come through Willaston. Horizon are saying that the Neston catchment is key in their plans. They boast sunrise and sunset services and are happy to be open at weekends and bank holidays.

Simon also raised the issues that this is on the green belt, there is increased flood risk on a road that already has problems, loss of natural habitat and antiquated technology that is being proposed.

Chris commented that the previous application had been turned down because of demand.

Brian asked if there was a traffic management plan. Simon said that they had planned to ask Stuart Milne to share theirs but his contact with the CEO had suggested that this would not happen. It is a requirement of any planning application.

Myles commented that Horizon are attending a CWaC Planning Committee meeting on 2nd August to give a presentation.

Vicky commented that she recognised the issues but it could bring money into the village, particularly for hospitality venues.

It was agreed that when an application is submitted, the Residents' Society would review it and decide whether to submit comments to the Council. The application is outside our normal area but likely to affect the village.

Simon asked if he could have a stall on the Green and Chris commented that it is public land and anyone can have a stall there. He also advised Simon that he could be an observer at a future meeting when any crematorium application was considered by the committee.

Chris thanked Simon for his input to the Residents' Society meeting.

c. Neighbourhood Watch

Ruth Hampshire attended to raise awareness of Neighbourhood Watch (NW). Chris declared an interest as Ruth is his wife but said they had not discussed this presentation to the committee.

Ruth thanked the committee for sharing information about the award she received and NW information on Facebook and the website. She said that NW is the largest crime prevention charity in the UK and she wanted to ask if we could raise the profile and make use of the resources they provide. Currently there are only six small groups in the village. They have a lot of information on-line including alert systems and scam information.

Ruth had put together three pages of information about getting things that could be shared. She also asked if we could re-instate the Community NW scheme and in the meantime share alerts including those from the Council Community Champions scheme. Sarah commented that these had not been shared because we try to keep the website and Facebook page just about the village.

It was agreed we would circulate the summary and if anyone is interested in setting up a group in Willaston, they should contact Ruth. **Action: Sarah/Ceri**

Chris thanked Ruth for her input to the Residents' Society meeting.

Committee Meeting

1. Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Paul Janvier, Madeline Hughes, John Woodrow, John Fisher, Liz Young, Mel Chapman, Barry Vowles and Helen Mayles

2. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

3. Minutes of Previous Meeting – 20th January 2020

The minutes were proposed as correct by Hilary Booth, seconded by Myles Hogg and accepted by members present as a true record of the meeting, with no abstentions.

4. Matters arising from the Minutes of 20th January 2020

There was discussion on the following matters, as the other matters were complete, or included elsewhere on the agenda:

4.1 Willaston History (item 4.2)

Jane said that she had got things stored and done an inventory. There is still a need to discuss what to do with it.

Action: Jane/Sarah

5. Results of Questionnaire and Agreed Actions

In April a questionnaire had been circulated to the village and the results discussed by the Officers' group and then circulated to all committee members by email for agreement. Fiona E felt 155 was a low response but Sarah explained we had not been able to distribute the questionnaire to people's houses so it was advertised and circulated as best as possible. Although 155 was low, there was a high degree of consistency in responses and some clear messages came through which led to the agreed actions.

5.1 Village Facilities

Myles explained that the Johnston Recreation Ground Advisory Group (JRGAG) supported the installation of two further allotments which would be against the wall by the surgery. They have a meeting in September when this will be further discussed. He commented that there is a long waiting list and people who neglect their allotments are contacted by the council and can eventually lose their plot. There was a discussion that some plots belong to residents from outside the village and Myles agreed to enquire if Willaston residents could have priority.

Action: Myles

Myles commented that the JRGAG is also interested in putting in an outdoor gym trail but they would need to fundraise. Sarah said she would be happy to assist with this.

5.2 Transport

Chris said that he had contacted PCSO Sarah Duffy about setting up a speed watch group in the village and is waiting for a further response. This needs to be followed up.

Action: Chris

Myles reported that the disabled parking bay is about to be made into a formal space and therefore enforceable. A notice has gone up to this effect.

There was discussion about setting up a community walking bus for school to try to help reduce some of the traffic congestion. Concerns were raised about issues of safety, liability etc. It was agreed that the first step was to see if school would be willing to work with us on this, when it returns in September.

Action: Sarah

The questionnaire had a strong support for 20mph zones in Hadlow Road and Hooton Road. A show of hands showed that the committee was unanimous in agreeing that Hadlow Road from just beyond the crossing to the village centre should be reduced to 20mph and a majority agreed that Hooton Road up to the edge of the village should be reduced to 20mph. It was agreed to write to the Highways Dept formally, as the Council is now in phase five of its speed limit campaign.

Action: Chris/Sarah

5.3 Environment

It was agreed that the Willaston walks leaflet should be advertised on Facebook. **Action: Ceri**

It was also agreed to apply for New Homes Bonus funding to print some leaflets. **Action: Sarah**

It was agreed that we should advertise how to report issues to CWAC more widely. This was included in the newsletter but it should also be added to the website and put on Facebook periodically. **Action: Sarah/Ceri**

It was agreed to set up an environmental sub-group to look at action on things like improving the village green, holding litter picking sessions, cutting back bushes on pavements etc. Ceri, Sandra, Fiona M, Myles and Sue agreed to form this group.

There was a discussion about a new dog poo bin in Mill Lane. The suggested place at the end of the footpath may not be the best place. It was agreed to write to Environmental Services asking them to provide one in the vicinity of the footpath. **Action: Chris/Sarah**

It was agreed to write to the Council about the pavements in the centre of the village, noting the areas where they are worst and also to include gully cleaning. **Action: Chris/Sarah**

5.4 Footpaths

Margaret reported that she had met with the Council to look at FP28 which goes from Mill Lane to Street Hey Lane and is regularly too muddy to use. The cost for fully improving this is £16,000. However, they have a medium term plan that once the strimming is done, there will be a working party to widen the footpath and Helen Mayles will allow them to put rubble on the worst patches of the land she owns. This is likely to be in the Summer of 2022.

Sarah reported that she had been in touch with the Council about improving access to the Meadow and a path around Jackson's Pond and improved surfacing at the other two entrances will cost around £7,500. She is getting additional quotes and will be applying for funding for this on behalf of the Meadow. Any work has to fit around the great crested newts so is likely to take place in September/October 2022.

It was noted that there is increased footfall on Hooton Road because of the extra housing at Palladium Gardens. It was agreed to write to the council asking for better lighting and for the bushes on the path to be cut back to widen the path. **Action: Chris/Sarah**

It was agreed to cover themes four and five at the next meeting.

6. Other Business

As there was limited remaining time, Chris asked if there were any other urgent items members wanted to raise.

6.1 School parking

Sue noted that in the paper on correspondence, a proposal had been sent to WR&CS about developing the front part of the Recreation ground into a car park. She asked for committee members' views on this. Points were made including:

- Is it legally allowed through the deeds for the recreation ground?
- Children used to play in this area as it is safe.
- Cars parking in the area would be an added danger to children arriving at the school as they move in and out.
- Police have commented that it is safer for cars to park on the road, even if this causes congestion.
- Green space in the village should be conserved, not concreted over for parking.
- It is likely not to solve the problem that it wants to as local residents are likely to use the spaces to park so there are few available at school opening/closing times.

6.2 Benty Heath Lane

Myles reported that he has been in contact with the Council and the speed limit in Benty Heath Lane is going to be reduced to 40mph.

6.3 Remembrance Day

Myles reported that if a parade is wanted for Remembrance Day, there are various forms and risk assessments that need to be completed and protocols followed which make it quite difficult.

6.4 Green Waste

Myles reported that the proposal to charge for green waste collection is being decided by the Council tomorrow. There had been a strong response from Willaston, following our circulation of the proposals around the village.

6.5 Hooton Pub

Lyn asked if there was any news on the Hooton pub, which is derelict. Myles said that it was put up for auction twice and has now been sold. He is expecting a planning application which will probably be for housing.

6.6 Lydiate Lane Development

It was noted that the owner has sold and it seems likely that there will be an application for more development here. This is one that we need to keep an eye open for. It was also noted that the crossroads at Lydiate Lane now regularly flood.

7. Organisations' Reports

The reports below had been submitted in advance.

7.1 Christ Church

No report received

7.2 Friends of Hadlow Road Station Community Group (Submitted by Hilary Booth)

Maintenance - For those of you who get the Church Magazine, you will already be up to date with the activities at the station. During the latter months of lockdown work restarted and has continued at a steady pace. Two windows have been repaired in the kitchen (by Sash Windows). A 1950's replica clock has been fitted in the waiting room. Painting work has been done both inside and outside the signal box. Also clear glass has been fitted to the signal box so visibility is very clear to look inside. Don't miss the model Hadlow Road Station Railway, it is brilliant. Lots of timber around the station generally has been repaired and painted.

Gardening - Gardening was allowed to restart again by CWAC during September 2020 and has continued monthly ever since. Our thanks go to Jenny and Ben and the rest of the team for cutting back, weeding, and planting up pots (which also need regular watering, mostly by Jenny & Ben). The station grounds are now looking lovely again with plenty of colour. Thanks go to Sue U for litter picking the station grounds on a regular basis.

Pop-up Café - We had two successful "Take Away" cafe's in September and October 2020 then a further lockdown returned. We opened up again with tables outside, in April and we have continued fortnightly since then. We get well over 100 customers at every pop-up-cafe which is open from 10.00am to 1.00 pm. The village loyalty is absolutely amazing and very much appreciated. Please let us hope that we do not get any more lockdowns.

7.3 Friends of Willaston Meadow (submitted by Fiona Mosley)

We have plans to improve the paths into, out of and around the meadow and therefore access. Tim Lloyd the ranger has agreed to research options and produce specifications for us and we will then proceed with grant applications.

The number of volunteers has increased and we have a band of enthusiastic residents to do maintenance work. In the autumn we will work to cut trees back from the ponds.

Some residents of the new houses at the back of the meadow have been cutting down and pruning trees and dumping garden waste in the area of the meadow near their properties. The council have written to them asking them to desist.

We now have 3 new bird boxes some of which have been occupied already. Baby blue tits have been seen. In the meadow itself, we have orchids and snakes head fritillary.

Forthcoming events include a fruit tree pruning workshop in October, and the AGM will be held in the Methodist Church on 17th August 2pm.

7.4 Hadlow Green Singers

No report received

7.5 Horticultural Society (submitted by Pam Irving)

I am pleased to say that our September meeting will be going ahead. We will be having a glass of wine and some nibbles and perhaps a silly quiz and generally try to get back to some normality. This also means we will have our October meeting and with a lot of luck The Christmas Dinner in November. We will be supporting the 2022 Willaston Festival with a stall selling plants, more on that in the New Year.

7.6 Johnston Recreation Ground (submitted by Sue Unsworth)

Johnston Recreation Ground has been a real boon for the villagers during these difficult times. Part of the field has been left unmown. This may help with the flooding along the path at the side of the allotments. Some work has been done to the path. We will have to wait and see if it improves. Moles are still a problem. Part of the Rec is cordoned off in order to treat the worst areas and try to get rid of them. Mole holes have been the cause of some injuries. Dog walking has increased somewhat and some owners are still not picking up the dog poo.

Play area – very well used and appreciated.

Tennis Club – this is used more than ever. Quite a number of children are having lessons.

Allotments – new posts and fencing are still desperately needed. Some plots are beautifully kept, others are a disgrace. The Council will contact renters if they don't improve.

Sports – plenty of football is being played. There is now a Ladies Team. There is also a Ladies Keep Fit group using the field regularly. There was some while ago talk of a Trim Trail around the perimeter but funds would be needed for that.

7.7 Memorial Hall (submitted by Rob King)

We are pleased that at last we have been able to meet, our last meeting being on 13th July 2021. Meetings have been held via Zoom bi-monthly throughout the pandemic period. After a considerable period of time without an appointed chairperson we have been delighted that, after a period of observation at Zoom meetings, Catherine Jones from Eastham agreed to take on the position. Our thanks go to our Treasurer, Keith Greenfield, who agreed at each meeting to act as chairperson. Keith has indicated his wish to stand down, ideally by the end of this year so, as with a number of organisations, we are looking for a volunteer to take over the role as Treasurer. A job description is being prepared and anyone interested in finding out more as to what is involved should, in the first instance, contact our Secretary, Doreen Francey.

Obviously the lockdown has had a significant impact on our financial position but we have had S4YC (Pre-School Group) using our facilities during term time which has provided us with an income stream. As we move to the next stage with easing/removal of restrictions we hope that bookings will start to firm up and improve our finances. Certainly the number of booking enquiries has escalated significantly recently. Our average monthly outgoings for the first 7 months have been £857 (gas, water, electricity, cleaning, wi-fi and waste disposal). On top of that there have been significant one-off areas of expenditure totalling £1,849 some of which has been unexpected! We are currently running at a deficit and our end of year position is projecting a deficit in the range £355 - £4,690. Much will depend on how bookings pick up between now and the end of the year. We still do not know how many of our previous regular hirers will be coming back let alone demand for casual bookings.

We have been investigating ways of being able to exercise better control over the heating of the Hall. Over the next few weeks two HIVE heating control systems are being installed to control the two boilers in the Hall.

This will mean that we can exercise control over the heating remotely. A fire safety review has been carried out and this has resulted in a new control system being installed.

We have considered our position should we receive a request for the Committee Room to be used to provide a Post Office service. Many of you will be aware that Neston Post Office is scheduled to close so it is important that we try to maintain a facility which has been much appreciated by many people in the village and beyond. It has been agreed that we will again offer the Committee Room for 2 x 2 hours per week with no charge with the proviso that we can review our position after 6 months. The reason for the "no charge" decision is that a Post Office is considered as being an important community facility and we wish to do what we can to encourage continuation of service.

7.8 Scouting

No report received.

7.9 Willaston CE Primary School

No report received.

7.10 Willaston Football Club (submitted by John Fisher)

A very strange stop start year which had a late start and indeed 3 starts. Covid affected all teams but had the greatest affect on the adult team. There were numerous changes to playing regulations and it was necessary to provide relevant covid protection especially in the Pavilion. The Club followed all necessary track and trace requirements. The season ended late with teams playing well into June to complete the season.

Key Achievements:

- Competitive football within the youth development phase and adult and vets teams, with the men's adult team pushing for promotion until the end and both youth teams challenging for top 4 places.
- Establishing and developing the Willaston FC Ladies team, to play competitive football.
- Key improvements in the performance and development of the foundation (junior) phase, with increased attendance and participation among all teams at training and match days.
- Establishing sub-committee with a female football development officer and youth ambassadors.

Coaches Development: Our coaches have gone above and beyond for players, taking on additional sessions during phases of the lockdown where only limited players were permitted, to providing extra training days on non-competitive match weeks. This excellent and supportive approach of coaching has also been highlighted by glowing reviews from parents and the development demonstrated by the players as the season has progressed. Support from parents and volunteers has also not gone unnoticed with parents supporting transport of goals, equipment and even the organisation of matches.

Player Development: Player development has continued at an excellent rate. With players developing not just technical football skills, but also social and psychological growth. With the unfortunate regular breaks players have also been supported remotely, with coaches providing their teams with challenges and club games uploaded to social media.

Future Objectives:

- Use the group WhatsApp as a forum for effective practice, integrating session plan templates and programs for coaches to apply and share.
- Build on providing sporting provision to young girls, looking to establish Willaston Wildcats (Foundation Phase Girls Only) and Willaston Tots (U5/U6) on a regular basis.

The Club still requires more ladies and male players, coaches and volunteers to cater with the increased demand locally. Anyone interested please contact Football Development Officers Steve Blackledge (07899 063336) on Harry Mates (07947 749742)

7.11 Willastonhey W.I. (submitted by Susie Dixon)

Although we have been prevented from taking part in our usual activities during the past year, we have nevertheless kept in touch with our members through email and WhatsApp groups. Members were given gifts at Christmas and Easter, and activities have continued via Zoom for Bridge and Knit and Natter and in the garden when the weather is suitable. Cheshire Federation have organised some very interesting Zoom talks on a wide range of subjects. The Rambling group have had some lovely walks when Covid restrictions allowed.

We are having a welcome back meeting on Tuesday July 27th, which will be a social evening. Speaker meetings will recommence on August 24th. An afternoon tea is being planned for September in celebration of our 40th birthday last year.

Hopefully Bridge, Knit and Natter and Darts groups will be returning to The Memorial Hall in September.

7.12 Willaston Methodist Chapel (submitted by Sheila Smith)

The Chapel is happy to report that, subject to relaxing of government restrictions, our Sunday services are resuming as pre-Covid, with singing, participation and refreshments, and the building is now able to take bookings for the hire of rooms. Please see our notice board, or contact Jim Shaw (327 7183) for further information about services, and Carol Savage (327 3593) for room hire.

7.13 Willaston and South Wirral Rotary Club (submitted by Sheila Greenhalgh)

Rotary began meeting in June on Zoom last year and has continued to do so until the beginning of June this year. Last Christmas, we managed to organise a socially distanced Santa's Sleigh around the village and although we could not knock on doors we had a great response from the village which enabled us to donate a significant amount to our two charities for the year: Wirral Dementia Together and Stick and Step.

We have held several book sales on the Green but had to cancel our quiz in March last year. We hosted an online cocktail making evening which also raised money for our charities.

Socially, we have held on Zoom some wine tasting evenings and held two safari suppers.

We have a quiz proposed for Saturday 13th November in the Memorial Hall and are now meeting back at the Nags Head on the second and fourth Wednesdays of the month.

7.14 Willaston Surgery Patient Participation Group (Submitted by John Woodrow)

Nothing to report

7.15 Willaston Toddler Group

No report received.

7.16 Willaston Village Festival Society

No report received. However a separate paper had been circulated before the meeting with details of a joint group with WR&CS to celebrate the Queen's 70th Jubilee.

Dates for future Committee Meetings:

Monday 20th September 2021

Monday 15th November 2021

AGM: Friday 8th October 2021