

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

### **Minutes of the AGM held on Friday 8<sup>th</sup> October 2021 in Willaston Memorial Hall**

Approximately 45 people were in attendance.

#### **1. Welcome & apologies**

Chris Hampshire (Chair) welcomed everyone present to the Annual General Meeting of Willaston Residents' and Countryside Society (WR&CS).

Apologies have been received from Sarah Shannon (secretary), Helen Mayles (resident representative), Sandra Kettiros (resident representative), Liz Young (co-opted Publicity Officer), Jane Townsend (resident representative), Madeline Hughes (resident representative), Susie Dixon (Willaston WI representative), Sheila Greenhalgh (Rotary representative), Fiona Mosley (Rotary representative), Brian Greenhalgh (festival society representative), Fiona Ennys (resident representative)

#### **2. Minutes of the AGM held on Friday 11<sup>th</sup> October 2019**

Chris highlighted there was no AGM held in 2020 due to COVID-19 restrictions. Chris advised there were no actions from the 2019 meeting and no amendments were requested. Therefore, the minutes were proposed as a true record of the meeting by John Woodrow and seconded by Sue Unsworth. By a show of hands, the minutes were accepted.

#### **3. Chair's report for 2020/21**

Chris reported that WR&CS committee members continued to work through the pandemic, even without the ability to meet in person. In 2020 there were a number of committee places that were due for re-election and the existing committee members agreed to continue in post for another year.

Over the last year WR&CS has seen an increase in village residents joining our small village lottery. WR&CS also designed and launched a new logo early 2020.

The final third phase of the play area was completed. Funding for this was led by Sarah Shannon, with the support of Vicky Spraggon and Annette Troake.

A new Willaston 'welcome pack' has been developed in conjunction with Anita Mitchell for people new to village and this can be requested directly from WR&CS.

WR&CS supported the mobile Post Office including the use of the Memorial Hall. Chris highlighted that any business could apply for a Post Office license, which needs to be reviewed and approved accordingly. We hope the mobile PO service will continue whilst awaiting a permanent provision, but this is dependent on residents utilising the PO services.

WR&CS had distributed a survey to understand what was important to village residents and what the focus areas should be for WR&CS going forward. Due to COVID this had to be promoted online via our website and Facebook page. We also put surveys in the local shops but were unable to deliver door to door.

The Christmas lights continue to be managed by WR&CS and annual maintenance costs were £1,797.31 (includes power supply and health/safety checks). There are safety checks completed every 3 months through a supplier contract. In March 2020, a suggestion was made by a village resident to turn on the lights during Covid-19 lockdown.

Planning has continued to be a key feature. The McCarthy & Stone's latest submission for the old British legion site was objected to by WR&CS and turned down by CWaC for three clear reasons. Barry Vowles our planning officer for the previous nine years stepped down 12 months ago and during his time on the committee has done a significant amount of work in relation to various planning matters and especially the complex McCarthy & Stone proposal. Chris shared with the AGM that McCarthy & Stone have purchased the land of the former British legion and McCarthy & Stone will need to decide what is commercially viable and as a society we have no influence over this.

Mel Chapman was co-opted into the planning officer role as she did not live in the village at the time and thanked Mel for taking on this role. Chris also thanked Barry for all the work he has done for WR&CS including building the reputation of WR&CS with CWaC on planning matters.

Chris explained the process for planning that WR&CS adhere to. WR&CS make comments on planning applications where applicable, but WR&CS is an influencer and not the decision maker although we work closely with CWaC and WR&CS' comments on any planning application are taken on board and carefully considered.

#### ***The next 12 months for WR&CS***

Chris advised that WR&CS would continue to work on planning matters including McCarthy & Stone's planning application. Chris highlighted that WR&CS are not against the former RBL site being built on, but object to the current large footprint. If the planning application is right, then WR&CS will support it.

WR&CS have agreed to support the Hooton residents on their objection to the Hooton crematorium planning submission. Chris highlighted that individual Willaston residents can also submit their own comments (for or against) on this or any other planning application.

For the Queen's jubilee there will be a set of events running over the extended bank holiday weekend of June 2nd/5<sup>th</sup> 2022. There has been a joint committee set up between WR&CS and the Festival society to progress the planning of events across this extended weekend.

WR&CS is also establishing an environmental sub-group for litter picking and other tasks to benefit the village environment.

#### **4. Treasurer's report**

Hilary Booth explained the annual accounts 2020/21 and stated it had been a very quiet year due to lockdown. Hilary provided print outs of the accounts for attendees at the AGM.

In the current account there has been only two items, which were both donations.

The Christmas lights see only one transaction a year (£450)

Play area account – we received a donation, and the balance of the money is held by the council (£120). The remaining money will be ring fenced to cover any repairs to the play area required in the future.

Hilary advised that she had been treasurer for the last 11 years and was stepping down and bidding farewell to everyone. She hopes the new treasurer enjoys the role as much as she has. Hilary also passed her thanks to Nigel Pratten who has audited the accounts for a number of years.

Chris expressed his thanks to Hilary and acknowledged that it was not an easy job which everyone present supported.

## **5. Election of Officers and Resident Representatives**

Chris explained that as the elections are taking place he is no longer Chair, but the committee agreed for him to act as Acting Chair for the rest of this AGM meeting.

Chris explained that in accordance with the constitution nominations are to be received in advance and a supporting statement is submitted. Chris advised that he would not be standing for Chair again, and no one has yet come forward to take on this role. If anyone is interested in the role, please get in touch with any committee member.

The role of secretary had been undertaken by Sarah Shannon who had previously indicated that she would not be standing for Secretary again. Chris formally thanked Sarah who had done a superb job over the years, and that he and Sarah had worked very well together. WR&CS has not had any applications for the role of secretary. If anyone would be interested in this role, please get in touch with Sarah Shannon or any committee member.

Vice Chair – we have received one nomination for role of vice chair from Brian Greenhalph. Brian was proposed by Cllr Myles Hogg, seconded by Eileen MacDonald. By a show of hands, the appointment was agreed by all present.

Treasurer – we have received one nomination for the role from Sarah Shannon. Sarah was proposed by Ruth Hampshire and seconded Lyn Jackson-Eves. By a show of hands, the appointment was agreed by all present.

Planning Officer - we have received one nomination for the role from Mel Chapman (currently co-opted) but is now a Willaston resident. Mel was proposed by Cllr Myles Hogg and seconded Barry Vowles. By a show of hands, the appointment was agreed by all present.

Publicity Officer - we have received one nomination for the role from Liz Young (currently co-opted). Liz was proposed by Mel Chapman and seconded Hilary Booth. By a show of hands, the appointment was agreed by all present.

Footpaths Officer - we have received one nomination for the role from Margaret Smyth (currently co-opted). Margaret was proposed by Roy Spraggon and seconded Barry Vowles. By a show of hands, the appointment was agreed by all present.

Resident Representatives – Chris explained that we have six positions on the committee for resident reps and there were four representative vacancies up for nomination. We had initially received five interested nominations but one of interested parties agreed to being co-opted at the next committee meeting thereby avoiding a voting process.

Resident representative 1 – we have received a nomination from Sandra Kettiros. Sandra was proposed by Barry Vowles and seconded Sue Unsworth. By a show of hands, the appointment was agreed by all present.

Resident representative 2 – we have received a nomination from Madeline Hughes. Madeline was proposed by Roy Spraggon and seconded Mel Chapman. By a show of hands, the appointment was agreed by all present.

Resident representative 3 – we have received a nomination from Roy Spraggon. Roy was proposed by Eileen MacDonald and seconded Hilary Booth. By a show of hands, the appointment was agreed by all present.

Resident representative 4 – we have received a nomination from Ruth Hampshire. Chris firstly declared a personal interest in this nomination with Ruth being his wife. Ruth was proposed by Roy Spraggon and seconded Councillor Myles Hogg. By a show of hands, the appointment was agreed by all present.

Ceri Jones on behalf of the committee wanted to thank Sue Unsworth (former Publicity Officer) for all of her work on the committee over many years, who stepped down during the pandemic.

## **6. Other Business**

Chris explained the planning application process and WR&CS's involvement. When a planning application is submitted it is considered by the WR&CS Planning Officer. If the Councillor does not agree with the proposed decision reached by the CWaC planning office, then this application can be called in for a full council committee review at which WR&CS are able to request a three-minute slot at a hearing to raise our case.

Chris then asked the floor for any questions on what has been covered.

Ruth Hampshire acknowledged the time-consuming process of reviewing planning applications and wished thanks to be put on record to Barry Vowles, Councillor Myles Hogg and all involved in the McCarthy & Stone objection.

Ruth Hampshire then said that the Cheshire West and Cheshire Council planning portal does not identify when changes have been made to applications. Individuals have relied on WR&CS officers to enable residents to know what has changed, to be able to have an educated view. Ruth asked if guidance could be given on what changes have been made to any planning applications. Chris advised in response that WR&CS already publish on a monthly basis planning updates on the village noticeboard, website and Facebook page.

Councillor Myles Hogg replied to Ruth Hampshire that the question raised was good. Due to lockdown the planning department have found that applications are up 40% for renovations, modifications etc. There is a push for the council to get more planning officers. Myles advised he would take the query back to the council regarding the current planning portal information that is made available.

Mel Chapman (Planning Officer) reiterated that she would like to get more involved with people within the community to understand their concerns on various planning applications.

## **7. Jubilee celebrations**

John Woodrow (Treasurer of the Jubilee festival committee) presented an update.

There will be a series of proposed events and celebrations across the village from Thursday 2<sup>nd</sup> to Sunday 5<sup>th</sup> June 2022 including an exhibition, art trail, picnic, tea dance, events at the village churches and at Hadlow Road Station. The proposed development of an art trail was being undertaken in conjunction with students at Chester University.

Vicki Spraggon asked if the artwork was going to be discussed with neighbours, particularly if outside their homes. Roy Spraggon then asked if planning permission will be needed for the artwork. John Woodrow stated that if required relevant requests for approval will be submitted.

A number of residents expressed some concern at how the plans were presented. John advised that these are currently early proposals, and the Jubilee committee are aware that the village will need to be involved. Chris re-iterated that what has been discussed is solely an outline plan

and residents will be consulted when firmer ideas are available but as yet ideas are still in the early stages of discussion with Chester University

Eileen MacDonald advised that in her experience as a founder member of WR&CS that what has been shared at the AGM has been perceived that it is set in stone. Chris then re-confirmed to the floor that what has been shared is early work in progress and ideas only.

Ruth Hampshire advised that in April 2021 there was a request for festival suggestions. In the village there are lasting legacies including the tapestry and a WI stained glass window. Ruth then asked whether another tree could be planted like the copper beech tree and outdoor gym equipment. Ruth asked whether a vote had been undertaken on what is being discussed and suggested.

Chris wrapped up this section saying that John's presentation tonight was to raise awareness of the legacy Jubilee work being considered and the early-stage planning.

Ceri Jones then advised that the members of the Jubilee committee are all volunteers who are working to bring together a celebration next year for the benefit of the community.

### **8. Willaston Memorial Fund Update**

Nigel Pratten (Chair of the Memorial Fund) then presented an update.

Nigel gave a brief history to the Memorial Fund. Nine years ago, the war memorial was damaged, and the theft of the bronze plaque occurred. A small committee was then formed to look at what could be done to replace the plaque

Nigel then stated that he wanted to use this WR&CS AGM meeting to put on record the position of the finances. As of 31<sup>st</sup> August 2021, there had been no activity the previous year. Currently there is £5,657 remains in the account and the remaining monies are ring fenced for the war memorial purposes.

Nigel thanked Follyfield Nurseries who have continued to maintain the flower beds in front of the memorial.

### **9. Any other business**

Ruth Hampshire advised that she is still looking for old photos and memorabilia from 1952 for the Jubilee celebrations.

Ruth Hampshire then put on record thanks to Sarah Shannon for her personal dedication, work on the playground appeal, being a point of contact and to thank Sarah for all the time and effort she put into the role as WR&CS Secretary for the community.

Eileen MacDonald wished to put her thanks on record to Chris Hampshire and the committee members as it is not an easy job and can be a thankless task.

Councillor Myles Hogg advised the meeting that the Christmas lights switch on is confirmed as Friday 26<sup>th</sup> November at 6pm. It will be a smaller event than normal, which will be organised by Willaston & South Wirral Rotary Club with more details to follow in the coming weeks.

Councillor Hogg also advised that he has allocated some of his Councillor's fund for a new village noticeboard for the Johnston's recreation ground.

Councillor Hogg also discussed that with the development of the Roften (Palladian Gardens) estate in Hooton, more of the residents are walking into Willaston so please make them feel welcome to the community.

Councillor Hogg wished the new WR&CS committee all the success in the future. Tonight, culminates a busy 9 to 10 years for Chris Hampshire as Chair, and he has worked tirelessly for the benefit of the village and residents. Chris will continue to be an integral part of the Friends of Hadlow Road station, with the station becoming a local attraction.

Chris said the role of being Chair has not always been easy, but he would like to thank all of the committee members for their support and contribution.

Chris closed the meeting and thanked everyone for attending the 2021 AGM.