

Willaston Residents' and Countryside Society (WR&CS)

Minutes of the AGM held on Friday 7th October 2022 in Willaston Memorial Hall

Approximately 45 people were in attendance.

1. Welcome & apologies

Mel Chapman (Planning Officer) welcomed everyone present to the Annual General Meeting of Willaston Residents' and Countryside Society (WR&CS).

Apologies have been received from Brian Greenhalgh (deputy chair), Sandra Kettiros (resident representative), Margaret Smyth (footpath's officer), Helen Mayles (resident representative) and Jen Williams (village resident).

2. Minutes of the AGM held on Friday 8th October 2021

Mel advised there were two matters arising at last years meeting were the McCarthy & Stone and the planning have now been approved. The Jubilee art trail was raised but is no longer progressing.

Therefore, the minutes were proposed as a true record of the meeting by Hilary Booth and seconded by Sue Unsworth. The minutes were accepted by all.

3. WR&CS report for 2021/22

Sarah Shannon (treasurer) reported that WR&CS held five meetings over the previous year (one cancelled due to COVID rises in the village).

Planning has continued to be a key feature. As a society one of our roles continues to be reviewing planning applications making comments and object to applications. We are particularly concerned about conserving the green belt around the village. Over the past year we have made nine objections and in the last four months we have seen an increase of planning applications utilising garden space. We have objected to the Hooton crematorium applications, because they are in the green belt and we were also concerned about ribbon development between Hooton and Willaston. The impact due to the increased traffic through the village was also a concern, although this is not a planning criteria.

We spoke at the McCarthy & Stone planning enquiry, and as a society we wanted to ensure the proposed development would be to scale within the village setting. The final development is smaller, with fewer apartments and more parking than the original plans.

Our footpaths officer, Margaret Smyth has regular contact with the Cheshire West and Chester Council to maintain and improve the local footpaths. Margaret with a group of volunteers help to keep the footpaths clear and are always looking to welcome new volunteers.

There have been a number of sub groups running this year. This included the Jubilee joint coordination group with the Festival Society. We would like to thank everyone involved,

especially to Anita Mitchell and all of her work. A decision was taken to put the art trail on hold. Villagers had requested for trees to be planted, which will be completed towards the end of year. There will be two trees planted on the Johnston's rec for the late HM Queen's jubilee/commemoration and a tree in memory of the Duke of Edinburgh.

We have an environment group who have undertaken litter picking sessions and bench painting. They are currently undertaking a big piece of work on the sandstone bus shelter opposite the green. They are investigating the restoration including obtaining specialist quotes for re-pointing, replacement of the roof and investigating funding options.

WR&CS tries to keep villagers up to date via the noticeboards, Facebook site which now has over 1,500 followers and our website. It is not just about WR&CS but what is going on in the village. We have recently appointed a website agency to re-develop our website over the next couple of months.

4. Treasurer's report

Sarah took over the role of treasurer last year. Previously WR&CS had four separate bank accounts with HSBC, who announced they would be charging for local organisation accounts. The decision was taken to amalgamate the accounts into one and then transfer to Lloyds Bank.

Copies of the last year's accounts were shared with AGM attendees and detailed the following.

WR&CS started the financial year with £17,675.39, we received donations of £110 and a grant for the new noticeboard of £2,526.00 from Cllr Hogg's budget.

There has been no income for the play area or Christmas lights.

The lottery is the main income for WR&CS and last year generated £1,835 in sales. For the new lottery (2022-23) we have generated £1,400 in sales. We pay out on the monthly winnings and there is an annual fee to the council for the lottery license. Profit goes to local projects and the costs of running the Society.

We own the Christmas lights and annual costs include the servicing by the electrician and electric costs. This year we turned the lights on for the late Queen's 70 years accession to the throne.

We have a total of £21,175 in the current account which is broken down as - £6,123 (general), £11,299 (Christmas lights), £2,283 (play area) and £1,158 (lottery - once prizes paid out). Out of the £21,175 we have £2,500 spare cash to support projects and £1,000 have been ring fenced for the website.

Nigel Pratten has audited the accounts and Sarah expressed her thanks to Nigel for his continued support and will complete them for one final year, next year.

Sarah discussed that the Christmas electricity supply is out of contract and like domestic supplies there has been a sharp increase in cost. We are continuing out of contract to ensure the lights will be switched on for Christmas 2022 with the standing charge being 50p per day.

Investigations were completed to find a new supplier and a working group has been set up to look at the different options available longer term. This has included the use of solar power, taking electricity from the lamp post and working with the memorial hall to run a cable from the hall. The electricity supply will be disconnected in January and we will continue to get a solution for the Christmas lights in December 2023.

Sarah invited any questions from the floor. Fiona Ennys asked what was the lottery fee to the council for. Sarah advised this is a fee payable to be able to run the lottery within the council borough.

Fiona Ennys proposed the accounts as a true record and Barry Vowles seconded the proposal.

5. Election of Officers and Resident Representatives

Mel discussed that there are a lot of people within WR&CS who do a lot of work and all people are volunteers. If people are interested in getting involved, please get in touch.

Mel explained that there had been no nominations for the role of Chair and if anyone is interested to get in touch with any committee member.

In advance of the election, nominations are received in advance and a supporting statement is submitted.

Secretary – we have received one nomination for role of from Sue Hunter. Sue was proposed by Hilary Booth, seconded by Cllr Myles Hogg. The appointment was agreed by all present.

Planning Officer – Mel Chapman is stepping down from this role. We have received one nomination for the role from Chris Swanick. Chris was proposed by Sheila Smith and seconded Jane Townsend. The appointment was agreed by all present.

Publicity Officer – Liz Young is stepping down from the role. We have received a joint nomination for the role from Mel Chapman and Hilary Booth. Mel and Hilary were proposed by Liz Jackson-Eves and seconded by Cllr Myles Hogg. The appointment was agreed by all present.

Resident Representatives – Mel explained that we have two positions on the committee for resident reps and there are two representative vacancies up for nomination.

We have received a nomination from Jane Townsend and Fiona Ennys. Both Jane and Fiona were proposed by Roy Spraggon and seconded by Nigel Pratten. The appointment was agreed by all present.

At the end of the elections Mel gave an overview of getting involved in WR&CS meetings. Members of the village are able to come and sit in the meetings and during the first 15 minutes can share any issues/views they have. Continually looking for new people and voices for a diverse committee and people who are interested can be co-opted onto the committee.

6. Willaston Memorial Fund Update

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

Nigel gave a brief history to the Memorial Fund that eleven years ago the memorial was badly damaged. A small committee was then formed to look at what could be done to replace the plaque with money being raised locally and nationally. Funds are ring fenced for repairs and maintenance of the memorial.

The funds are separate from WR&CS. There has been no activity on the account for the period up until 31st August 2022.

The fund remains unchanged at £5,657

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

7. Any other business

Harriett Cleaves raised about the traffic concerns in the village, especially on the Neston Road 20mph zone. She had witnessed tractors and lorries at excessive speeds and whilst people talk about doing something, it is not actioned and village cannot wait for a fatality to happen. Would like to see a plan and group formed to tackle this.

Cllr Hogg responded that traffic is a big issue in the village and if people have ideas he is more than happy to hear them. Myles holds surgeries each month in the memorial hall which villagers are able to attend.

Michelle Swann raised that the new one-way traffic system implemented on Quarry Road has seen an increase in the traffic via Hadlow Road and has seen increased near misses. Cllr Hogg advised that it is not technically a one way and is currently an experimental system. Cllr Hogg advised if there is an incident to report it and pass on any incident numbers to him.

Michelle also raised that she had requested a mirror by her property for visibility and been declined. Cllr Hogg advised that the council have a policy in place and also unless the neighbours agree a request would be declined.

Sue Unsworth discussed that vehicles should utilise Hanns Hall Road with the new experimental system on Quarry Road and there needs to be a better sign for Willaston at the Chester High Road/Hanns Hall junction.

Vicky Spraggon raised during previous AGM's traffic had consistently been raised. Police have been to complete speed watch but no tickets issued. Vicky questioned how many times does the issue need to be raised. Cllr Hogg responded that some elements are out of our control and unable to influence. However, the initiatives to extend the 20mph zones on Hooton Road and Hadlow Road are example we can continue to push for.

Sarah Shannon discussed issues with roads and pavements are raised. People come up with ideas but then other villagers would not like so it is hard to find an acceptable solution. Identifying what can be done can be difficult and costly.

Sue Unsworth raised that when the McCarthy and Stone development is complete that the crossing area is dangerous. Asked for clarification that unable to have a zebra crossing outside due to village already having traffic lights. Cllr Hogg confirmed that is correct and would like to see the 20mph zone extended to Old Vicarage Road estate.

Fiona Mosley raised that the pavements outside the doctor's surgery that weeds are growing across the pavement. Mel discussed that these type of issues can be reported via the council website to be actioned.

Angela Watson raised that the post box at the top of Briardale Road has not been reinstated as it is an important amenity for villagers who struggle to get into the village. Sarah Shannon has been in contact with Royal Mail who advised that the building work on the house where the post box was situated needs to be completed. We require confirmation that the work has been completed.

Lyn Jackson-Eves raised on behalf of a neighbour that the traffic during school times is dangerous. Mel advised that the school are aware and emails are sent to parents regarding responsible parking.

Chris Hampshire raised that non-disabled badge holders are parking in the space on the green and can WR&CS investigate who has responsibility to enforce. Sarah Shannon advised you are able to upload bad parking/driving into the Cheshire Police website. Cllr Hogg believes it is the police to enforce and will contact the local officer.

Action: Cllr Hogg

Barry Seedhouse raised that parking issues have increased in the centre of the village and no wardens have visited. Some cars have been parked for seven days. Myles fed back the last visit by the warden saw 32 tickets issued and will ask the enforcement team to visit.

Action: Cllr Hogg

Fiona Mosley asked the free car park on Buckley Lane has cars parked permanently and is this allowed. Cllr Hogg confirmed this is allowed and there is no time restriction.

Chris Hampshire wished to put his thanks on record to WR&CS, Officers and Cllr Hogg for their support.

Mel closed the meeting and thanked everyone for attending the 2022 AGM.