



# WILLASTON

Residents' & Countryside Society

## Minutes of the Annual General Meeting

Friday 27<sup>th</sup> October 2023 at 7.15pm - Willaston Memorial Hall

Approximately 64 people were in attendance.

### **1. Welcome**

Brian Greenhalgh (Vice Chair) welcomed everyone to the meeting.

### **2. Apologies for absence**

Apologies received from Vicky Spraggon, Madeline Hughes, Ruth Hampshire, John Woodrow, Annette Troake, Rob King, Andrew Walton, Marilyn Hogg, Fiona Ennys.

### **3. Minutes of the AGM held on 7<sup>th</sup> October 2022**

These were proposed as a true record of the meeting by Roy Spraggon & seconded by Sarah Shannon.

### **4. Actions arising**

Two actions were raised from last year's meeting. Councillor Hogg confirmed that both had been completed.

### **5. Report of the year 2022-2023**

This was read out by Brian Greenhalgh.

- The main areas of activity continue to revolve around planning issues within the village, maintaining public footpaths and the local environment, together with supporting local events and activities by publicising widely through social media channels and the village noticeboards - one of which has been renewed over the course of the year.
- We continue to issue monthly Planning Reports, although there have been some co-ordination difficulties with 3 different Planning Officers over the year. The monthly lists are available on the website and hard copies are also posted on the village noticeboards. It was again clarified that the WR&CS is not the Planning authority, has no powers of rejection but tries to take a community-wide approach to its comments. We remain particularly concerned about conserving the green belt around the village.
- There have been co-ordinated celebrations for the Coronation, including an exhibition in the Memorial Hall. There is continuing support for events organised by Friends of Hadlow Road Station, the Rotary Club, the Memorial Hall & the Methodist Chapel.



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- Regarding footpaths and the environment, our footpaths officer, Margaret Smyth continues to do a sterling job in highlighting any issues with the footpaths around the village.
- The 'Environment Group' which was established last year, continues to hold monthly Litter Picking days (dates are available on the website & noticeboards). They have also completed flower box planting & maintenance.
- One of the highlights of the village year is the illumination of the Christmas lights on the Copper Beech tree on the Green. There have been some major issues regarding the electricity supply for these lights, and after considerable effort, the current Treasurer, Sarah Shannon, has negotiated a contract to keep the supply active for at least a further 12 months. One of the main stumbling blocks was that WR&CS is not an incorporated body (i.e. a separate legal entity) and we would like to thank Mark Mitchell for his assistance in overcoming that issue.
- A new notice board has been installed on Johnston Recreation Ground; two new kissing gates on village footpaths have also been installed with CWaC funding.
- The Toddler Group has been supported with insurance costs.
- A new website has been developed which has more community information & reading clarity.
- A new Facebook page, 'Willaston in the Past', has been set up which already has 250 followers.
- During September 2023, the Society received a major Subject Access Request (SAR) under the data protection legislation. This request is still being processed. It is the first time such a request has been received and as an unincorporated body with no central database, it has proved challenging, but salutary, to collect all the relevant information to which the requester was entitled. Significant costs have had to be paid out of funds which could have been spent on village projects. It has also necessitated a change to the WR&CS Privacy Policy and the new version is now available on the website.

## 6. Treasurer's report

This was presented by Sarah Shannon. A copy of the audited accounts was available for everyone. Sarah thanked Nigel Pratten for auditing the accounts.

- WR&CS started the financial year with £21,175.90 with a closing balance of £16,612.18. This is broken down as £1540.32 (general fund), £11,028.33 (Christmas lights), £2,283 (play area), £1,759.67. *NB. There has been no income for the play area or Christmas lights.*



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- The lottery is the main income for WR&CS. We pay out on the monthly winnings & there is an annual fee paid to the council for the license. Profit goes to local projects & the costs of running the Society.

Councillor Myles Hogg proposed the accounts & they were seconded by Jane Townsend.

## 7. Changes to the Constitution

This was discussed by Sarah Shannon. The proposed amendment relating to Associate Membership would enable WR&CS to widen membership of WR&CS to people eligible to become Officers. It would also be more open to business owners/representatives who may not live in the village, and others who have an interest in Willaston, such as ex-residents.

- The proposed amendment would mean that Associate members are given a vote & can become an Officer. This would then enable people who do not live in Willaston to take on an Officer role to support the Residents' Society.
- The actual changes would be that Associate membership is available for those people who do not reside within the village boundary but have a specific interest in the village or are a business operating in the District of Willaston.
- It would be open to people aged 18 or over by application & subject to the agreement by majority vote of the Management Committee. It would be limited to 3 years, after which the member must reapply. An associate member can attend, speak & vote at the AGM/SGM. A maximum of 10 people may be associate members at any time. A maximum of 3 associate members can have the role of an Officer at any one time.
- Officers are elected at the AGM for a period of three years & must fulfil the full or associate membership criteria in section 4 at the time of election

An amendment to the above proposal was then put forward by Jane Townsend. This proposed that all associate members must be ex-residents of Willaston with this criterion applying to individuals and businesses. This was only discussed and a vote was taken; there were 3 votes in favour of this new proposal & 30 against. This proposal was denied.

A vote was then taken regarding the original proposal to amend the Constitution (as described above). There were 39 in favour and 3 against; hence the vote was carried. The motion to amend the Constitution accordingly was proposed by Sarah Shannon & seconded by Roy Spraggon.

## 8. Election of Officers

Vacancies are available for a Chair, Treasurer, Planning Officer & Publicity Officer. Despite widespread publicity (leaflet deliveries throughout village, website, Facebook, noticeboard publicity) there has been only one application which is for the post of Treasurer.

The application was made by Vicky Spraggon, who is currently a WR&CS Officer. This application was viewed, and a vote was taken which was unanimous. Vicky's election as



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Treasurer was proposed by Hilary Booth & seconded by Sue Unsworth.

Brian Greenhalgh again stressed that the Society still needed to fill the other positions & encouraged people to apply.

## 9. Accounts of Willaston War Memorial Fund

Nigel Pratten (Chair of the Memorial Fund) presented an update. He gave a brief history - that 11 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. This fund is separate from WR&CS. There has been no activity on the account for the period up to 31<sup>st</sup> August 2023 & the fund remains unchanged at £5,657.

## 10. Any Other Business

Jane Townsend informed us that she was greatly concerned that the land in Hooton Road that has been fenced off into 17 individual plots covering 2 hectares of land. Her concerns were that there was a great possibility for many applications for planning permission on these plots of land which would mean loss of the last piece of Green Belt between Willaston & Hooton. She urged residents to act now to prevent this happening.

Brian Greenhalgh declared the official meeting over at 8.37pm & the Open Forum session commenced.

### Open Forum - the following issues were raised:

- Barry Vowles encouraged all village residents to 'Love where you live' & look after the space outside their own properties in order to keep the village tidy.
- Michelle Swann raised the point that some villages may be unable to do this & suggested that perhaps the Environment Group could help such residents.
- Hilary Booth informed us that tickets are still available for the Sant's Grotto event to be held at Hadlow Road Station.
- Myles Hogg thanked Officers for all work undertaken in the past year.
- A resident asked Councillor Hogg why CWaC no longer cut grass verges in village as frequently as before? The reply was that unfortunately CWaC budgets have been reduced across the UK & as a result, some local services have unfortunately had to be reduced to ensure that priority budgets for young people and the elderly could be preserved (this is two thirds of the current budget).
- Sue Unsworth commented that some pavements in village are now dangerous & that accidents will take place. She also raised the issue of the limitations of the bus services for Willaston, particularly that there is no service to/from Bromborough where many people now shop. She encouraged everyone present to complain & comment to CWaC.



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- Councillor Hogg replied that more bus services will not be possible as these are commercial contracts & sadly the buses in operation are not used enough. He encouraged everyone to participate in the CWaC consultation that is on Facebook, social media, website & notice boards. This would enable residents to put forward their views & comments.
- A resident raised the issue of speeding vehicles through the village & said that she was gravely concerned. Myles replied that again this should be raised with CWaC as it has been an ongoing issue for many years.
- An audience member informed us that most speed enforcement activities reveal that the speeding motorists are actually village residents. This was endorsed by Councillor Hogg.
- The unacceptable & dangerous speed of tractors through the village was also brought up. Paul Jackson suggested that it may be better to communicate directly with farmers involved as this is more likely to be beneficial.
- A new village resident enquired if it would be possible to up signs on posts at entrances to village - with slogans that would engage more effectively with drivers, such as 'look after our children' etc. This was thought to be a good idea by many in the audience. Brian Greenhalgh suggested that the resident pursue this suggestion.

**Brian thanked everyone for attending. The meeting closed at 8.55pm.**