

Willaston Residents' and Countryside Society

Minutes of the AGM held on 27th September 2013 in Willaston Memorial Hall

1 Welcome & Apologies

Chris Hampshire welcomed everyone present to the Annual General Meeting of the Willaston Residents' and Countryside Society (WR&CS). He explained that a new format was being tried with presentations on various activities that are currently being undertaken in the village.

Apologies had been received from Shirley Cadman, Paul Janvier, Hilary Morris, Margaret Smythe and Kath Walker.

2 Minutes of the AGM held on Friday 28th September 2012

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. There being none, the minutes were proposed by Leanne Kershaw and seconded by Rob King. By a show of hand, the minutes were accepted as a true record of the meeting.

3 Chair's Report

Chris outlined some of the main events that had been undertaken over the past year.

Jane Townsend, the Footpaths Officer has redesigned the village walks leaflet and secured the installation of kissing gates to replace styles on a number of walks. She has also done some work to improve footpath signage around the village.

Barry Vowles, the Planning Officer has maintained vigilance on planning applications. A considerable amount of time has been put into objecting to an application to build on green belt land at Goss Moor, Mill Lane. Unfortunately this was approved on appeal and we are now concerned about the precedence this makes for future applications on green belt land around the village. We will continue to keep an eye on this.

We have improved the lighting in the alleyway between Old Vicarage Road and Hadlow Road, thanks to support from Cllr Hogg and some funding from his budget, which paid for part of it.

We have tried to improve communication with the village. We now produce summary minutes which are available both on the website and on village noticeboards. Our website is now fully functioning and has had 18,000 visits to the home page, with 1,000 hits in the last month.

Chris then thanked the committee and explained that the majority of the committee were representatives from local organisations or are individual representatives of the community. With the voluntary participation of these individuals, we are able to maintain Willaston as the community that we live in and take for granted most of the time. Chris also thanked the Officers and said that a lot of hard work goes on behind the scene to make things happen, albeit slowly at times! Finally, Chris thanked Cllr Myles Hogg for attending our meetings and taking up issues with various council departments. His limited budget has also enabled us progress a variety of projects.

4 Annual Accounts and Treasurer's Report

Hilary Booth, Treasurer, presented the accounts which had been placed on seats prior to the meeting. She explained that the Residents' Society relies on income from the Lottery account, which generates a minimum of £400 a year. We also are able to apply for grants which are for a specific purpose – for example, this year we received £892 for the installation of kissing gates. We are holding £1028 for the children's play area and have recently received a further grant of £1972. A separate account has been opened for the play area. Similarly there is a separate account for the Willaston District Plan, which we hold the money for. This money will continue to decrease as the plan is developed.

Hilary then explained that the lottery account shows receipts of only £81 because this has now been brought into line with the financial year for WR&CS (ending 31st August). Last year, Lottery monies were collected for 16, rather than 12 months and the small amount received this financial year represented those who joined later. We paid out an additional prize of £10 to comply with the gambling rules that 60% of takings must be given in prize money. We currently have 118 paying members and one member who got a free subscription as a prize in the community plan prize draw. This will enable us to pay a 4th prize each month and if our membership increases to 125, this prize can increase from £10 to £15.

Hilary then stated that the accounts have been audited by Mr Nigel Pratten as an honest record and asked for questions. There being no questions, the accounts were proposed by Keith Butcher and seconded by Jane Townsend. By a show of hands, they were accepted as a true record.

5 Election of Organisational Representatives, Officers and Resident Representatives

5.1 Election of Organisational Representatives

Chris explained that the Willaston Pre-School Playgroup Association had been approached and agreed to have a representative on the committee. Myles Hogg proposed, Rob King seconded and all present agreed that they should be added as a member.

5.2 Election of Officers

Chris explained that officers are elected for a period of three years on a rotational basis. This year the posts of Footpaths Officer, Publicity Officer and Trustee to the Memorial Hall are up for election.

Jane Townsend has indicated her willingness to continue in the role of Footpaths Officer. There being no other nominations, she was proposed by Vicki Spraggon, seconded by Jim Goodwin and agreed by all present.

Sue Unsworth has indicated her willingness to continue in the role of Publicity Officer. There being no other nominations, she was proposed by Vicki Spraggon, seconded by Les Green and agreed by all present.

Keith Butcher has indicated his willingness to continue in the role of Trustee to the Memorial Hall. There being no other nominations, he was proposed by Vicki Spraggon, seconded by Sue Unsworth and agreed by all present.

5.3 Election of Representative on Johnston Recreation Ground Advisory Committee

Chris explained that Roger James had been the representative for this committee, which is appointed by WR&CS. As he is going to be out of the country, he has decided to step down. Sue Unsworth has indicated her willingness to take on this role. There being no other nominations, she was proposed by Leanne Kershaw, seconded by Lyn Jackson-Eves and agreed by all present. Chris will now advise the Council of this change.

5.4 Election of Resident Representatives

A number of nominations were made for Resident Representatives on the Society. These were:

- Roger James, proposed by Myles Hogg and seconded by Peter McDonald;
- Emma Sharpe, proposed by Vicki Spraggon and seconded by Sue Unsworth;
- Helen Mayles, proposed by Myles Hogg and seconded by Martin Collins;
- Fiona Ellis, proposed by Jane Townsend and seconded by Vicki Spraggon.

By a show of hands it was agreed that all four nominations should be resident representatives.

6 Presentations

There then followed a number of presentations on issues affecting the Village.

6.1 20mph restrictions through the village centre.

Les Green explained that the Willaston Traffic Calming Committee has existed for nearly four years. The key members have been himself, John Henrys, Jane Townsend and Peter Williams (representing cyclists). The group arose out of various public meetings in the village in 2010/11 when numerous concerns were raised about the excessive speed of traffic through the village. In October 2011, the Highways Department carried out a speed survey which confirmed speed by 40% of traffic up to 46mph at peak hours. On average up to 30% exceeded the 30mph limit on Neston Road. In May 2012 an opinion survey was carried out in which 377 residents responded. Of these, 77% supported a 20mph introduction. Since then, a number of meetings have been held with the Council and Police resulting in the suggestion that a 20mph speed limit should be introduced in the village centre. During June, residents and businesses on Neston Road, who would be most directly affected by the 20mph limit were asked to sign a petition supporting the proposal and 89% agreed to do so. Public consultation notices were then posted and as a result of the formal consultation, the Area Highways Engineer has recommended that the scheme go ahead. This will be from the British Legion junction on Hooton Road to Ness Acre Lane. Currently black boxes are monitoring the speed of traffic and this will also be monitored once the speed limit is implemented so that its effectiveness can be measured. If this is shown to be successful, the limit could then be extended further across the village.

Following Les' presentation, a number of questions were asked:

- How will the speed limit be policed? Les explained that it is really up to the community. If they want this measure to be effective, then they need to drive at 20mph so everyone else is slowed down. There will also be repeater signs along the route to remind people to go slower. In addition, the result of the activity of the Traffic Calming Group has meant that there are now a number of additional volunteers to help the PCSOs with radar so there will be increased monitoring.
- What consideration has been given to the potential impact of traffic diverting down Mill Lane. Les said that this is an unknown quantity. At 20mph it should only take an additional 20 secs to go through the village, whereas diverting down Mill Lane takes an additional 198 secs. Myles Hogg added that he has asked for a transport survey to be undertaken before the introduction of the 20mph limit and at a reasonable time after this. If there is a substantial increase, further measures will be considered.
- Could it bring back the idea of a by-pass for the village? This was thought to be unlikely.
- Whose decision was it to make the Legion the cut off point? Several members commented the difficulties people have getting out of roads/drives along Hooton Road. This decision was made by the Highways Department. If the scheme is successful, there may be the option to extend it later.
- When is it going to come into force? Myles Hogg confirmed that this is likely to be in January.

6.2 Proposed Parking Restrictions on the Green

Chris Hampshire explained that there will be a consultation later in the year about putting a one-way system and parking restrictions on the Green. Traffic will enter via Hooton Road and leave via Hadlow Road. There will be illuminated one way and no entry signs at both points. Parking will be restricted on the Green side and marked bays will be put in. The end bay will be for disabled badge holders. The parking will be for three hours from 9am to 5pm Monday to Friday with no return within two hours. The reason for this is that it enables more flexible for people wishing to use the village facilities. Following the consultation at the end of the year, it will probably take several months for it to be implemented.

Following Chris' presentation a number of questions/comments were made:

- Where can cars park instead? Is this just shifting the problem? Chris said that there is no simple answer to the parking problems in the village and the shops felt that this scheme would be helpful as currently some cars park for days at a time.
- Why was the three hour restriction decided on? Chris explained that this had been discussed at meetings and there was an initial proposal for two hours. However, some businesses, particularly Style and Beauty had said that this was not enough time for some of their customers so a three hour limit was agreed.
- How will it be enforced? Myles Hogg explained that this is a responsibility of the Council and he will ensure that they come to the village regularly. This might not be popular as last time they came to the village, they issued 40 tickets of which 36 were to Willaston residents.
- Concern was expressed about white lines in the area downgrading the quality of the centre of the village.

6.3 Bus Stops

Leanne Kershaw described the work done by the bus stops sub-group. There has recently been a change to the route taken by buses through the village. The reason for this is that buses found it hard to get out of Hanns Hall Road as there are no lights. Therefore, they now go up Hadlow Road, rather than through the village. There is little the group can do about this.

The group has also looked at the positioning of bus stops on Hadlow Road and is arranging for them to be moved nearer the Green. One is outside a residential property. People use their wall as a seat and congestion means that they are not always seen by the bus driver. On the other side, the stop will be moved nearer the bench on the Little Green. The current sandstone shelter on Neston Road is not next to the bus stop and people waiting there cannot see when the bus is arriving. The group has therefore arranged for a small bit of sandstone to be removed to give better visibility. Finally the group has been looking at the options for putting in a shelter on the Green which would incorporate the noticeboard and current seating. Some options for designs of a wooden shelter had been put on people's seats to consider and vote on. Further consultation will also be done with bus stop users. When a preferred shelter was agreed, the group will seek funding with the aim of installing it next summer.

Following Leanne's presentation, two questions/comments were made:

- Had consideration been given to putting in a sandstone shelter? Leanne explained that they wanted to keep as open a view of the Green as possible and a sandstone one would block the view of the Green. Members were asked to write on the voting form if they would prefer a sandstone shelter.

- Concern was expressed that some of the designs had a flat roof which could cause problems.

6.4 Play Ground

Sarah Shannon described the work done by the playground sub-group. She explained that this was an issue raised at the last AGM of WR&CS and it was also an issue raised in the District Plan questionnaires, in which 22% of respondents had deemed the playground unacceptable. WR&CS put together a sub group which has also been supported by Mary Lavery from the Council. Over the summer the group had a programme of consultation, including an afternoon on the playground and at the Church Fair speaking to users and questionnaires that went to the school, toddlers and the pre-school playgroup. This resulted in 70 formal responses as well as many informal conversations. Things people liked about the playground was that there is a big open space, which is enclosed and it is near the school. Most of the current equipment is popular. However, the ground is uneven and often muddy making access for pushchairs difficult. The bushes are also overgrown. The equipment there is generally popular although there are difficulties with the slide which is dangerous for young children. Equipment that people most asked for was more swings for all ages, climbing equipment for older children, a slide for younger children, a roundabout and tunnels. A skate ramp was also mentioned, particularly in the District Plan questionnaire. Generally people felt that the playground looks dull and uncared for and many people said they went to other villages, rather than use this one.

The sub-group then took the results of the consultation to a landscape architect from the Council and Sarah presented the plan for the playground he had come up with. This includes new equipment, a new entrance, a path around the area and some planting to make the area more attractive. The sub-group only received this plan a few days ago and would like to have comments from people about it. The cost of the new design is £82,868 and the sub-group will look at how to fund this. WR&CS has a separate fund for this and so far has £3,000, thanks to Cllr Myles Hoggs' fund. Sarah asked groups to consider if they could do some fundraising to support a playground appeal and said that the group will also be looking at grants from trusts etc to help. It is likely that the project will be broken into stages to make it more achievable.

Following Sarah's presentation the three questions/comments were made:

- What can be done about the moles? Sarah said that the Johnston Recreation Ground Advisory Group had tried hard to deal with the moles but they are difficult to get rid of. The plans assume that they will always be there.
- Who will maintain the playground? Myles confirmed that this is the responsibility of the Council.
- The wind across the ground can be strong so some planting by the tennis courts to protect them would be welcome.

7 Willaston District Plan

Barry Vowles commented on the Plan. There had been a general meeting two weeks earlier about the plan when residents had the chance to comment on the findings of the questionnaire. He said that he had summary sheets of the answers people gave available if people wanted to look at them later. The information is also on the WR&CS website.. The next stage for the District Plan committee is to develop some recommendations and an action plan which will form the basis of the final Plan.

A question was asked about parking. Barry said that both the preliminary questionnaire and final questionnaire had shown that it is a major concern for residents. However it is difficult to know what solutions there are as there is limited scope for land available. He asked for any sensible suggestions for the committee to consider.

8 A.O.B.

- 8.1 Library. Chris Hampshire informed members that the library now opens twice a week, rather than three times and currently uses a volunteer librarian. The Council has plans to consult on alternative arrangements including a mobile library.
- 8.2 Martin Collins commented that there is a kissing gate by the Pavilion on the Recreation Ground that could be better used on a footpath.
- 8.3 A question was asked about the footpath that leads from Pollards to the Wirral Way. Jane Townsend said that the Council has promised to repair that path and she is also trying to persuade them to do something about the ditches which don't function well, leading to flooding. She said that the path is not a bridleway so horses and cycles should not be using it and she is discussing this issue with the Council.
- 8.4 Ruth Hampshire asked how information is fed back after committee meetings. Some organisation

representatives described how they fed the information from the summary minutes to their members. Chris said that he would expect that if there was a contentious issue people would go back to their organisations to get a mandate. However, this is not normally necessary and people are able to vote on issues at the meeting.

- 8.5 Rob King commented that Hadlow Road Station seems to be falling into disrepair. Hilary Booth said that there are plans to start a Friends of Hadlow Road Station group and the possibility of having a tea room in an old railway carriage to raise funds had also been discussed. However any plans for Hadlow Station must be agreed with the Council first.

9 Close of Meeting

Chris Hampshire said that he hoped that attendees had enjoyed the new approach to the meeting, with presentations on work in progress and asked members to let us know what sort of structure they would like for future meetings. He thanked everyone for coming along and commented that if people would like an email alert when minutes are put on the website, this can now be done. Also anyone is able to raise an issue with the committee for 15 minutes before the start of the meeting. It helps to let us know in advance so that we expect you.

Myles Hogg thanked the Chair for an excellent AGM.

These Minutes are subject to ratification.
Sarah Shannon
Secretary

Date of the next AGM: 7.30pm, Friday 26th September 2014, in the Memorial Hall.

See the latest from Willaston Residents' & Countryside Society by visiting the Society's website:
<http://www.willastoninwirralresidents.org> or the AboutMyArea website:
<http://www.aboutmyarea.co.uk/Cheshire/Neston/CH64/Villages-in-CH64/Willaston>

Email Willaston Residents' & Countryside Society through the 'Contact' page on the Society's website, the link on the AboutMyArea website's WR&CS page or directly to admin@willastoninwirralresidents.org.
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