

Minutes of the Annual Parish meeting

Thursday 12th April 2018 at 7pm

Held at the Edgar Sewter School

Present: Councillors;

Peter Dutton (Chair), Anne Fleming, Keith Greenberg, Rosemary Lewis, Karen Prime, Maureen Took, David Wollweber (Vice Chair).

In Attendance: N J Rees (Clerk)

Apologies: Cllrs; Sandra Leverett, P Widdowson

Members of the Public: A register was kept on the door, manned by Mr M Fleming, 14 members of the public attended the meeting.

The Chair explained that this meeting was the Annual Parish Meeting and not a Council meeting, there was no formal agenda but instead it would follow the usual format of a question and answer session.

The subjects for discussion received from residents were as follows:-

- 1) Traffic in the Thoroughfare
- 2) Planning applications, the resident was particularly interested in old Station Road
- 3) Community Transport
- 4) Communications
- 5) Flooding and in particular any new initiatives.
- 6) London Road Building
- 7) Barrow Crossing
- 8) Teen Shelter

Traffic: The Chair explained that the Council's Urban Improvement Working Group had been looking at how to reduce the traffic in the Thoroughfare as the Council had received complaints about how many vehicles were using it. The Thoroughfare currently has restricted access but there was no effective means of enforcement in place. The Group had conducted a survey at the Library in January and one of the important statistics was that 91% of those who took part wanted the Thoroughfare fully pedestrianised. The Council would shortly be arranging a meeting with the Thoroughfare traders to discuss the issues involved. There was some frustration with delivery van drivers using the Thoroughfare to deliver small parcels which could easily be delivered via the car park. Private vehicles were also causing problems by accessing and even parking in the Thoroughfare. A resident asked about the civil parking enforcement changes that were due soon. The Chair confirmed that the civil parking enforcement would be undertaken by the District Council from 2019 and this may mean parking violations would be more rigorously enforced. Another resident asked whether electronic bollards could be implemented. The Chair confirmed that this had been considered but the cost and complications with emergency vehicle access meant this was ruled out for the time being.

Planning generally and Old Station Road: Cllr Greenberg explained that the Town Council were only a statutory consultee and whilst the District Council would take the Council's views into consideration it was bound by Government policy and this meant that the decisions were often contrary to what the Town Council had recommended. Cllr Greenberg stressed the importance of the new WDC Local Plan covering the period 2014 – 2036 and how this would affect developments in the town. There were currently four major developments planned for the near future; Hill Farm road (which had already been passed by WDC but recommended refusal by HTC), Land south of Chediston Street

(recommended refusal by HTC but to be reviewed by WDC's Planning Committee), Town Farm (awaiting an application) and Dairy Farm (awaiting an application). This would represent the bulk of the 700+ houses planned for the Town and would mean roughly an additional 2000 residents. The Town Council had serious concerns over the infrastructure to support this additional population.

As regards to Old Station Road, the latest application for approval of reserved matters had been rejected by the Town Council but Cllr Greenberg asked the resident what the specific concerns were. The resident, who had raised the question, was concerned over the type of 'Designer Homes' which she felt was not needed for the Town and that the latest application had suddenly appeared without warning. Cllr Greenberg explained that the Council had concerns, primarily about the surface water drainage and flood risk but also over the category of 'Self build/Custom' which would allow the applicants to avoid paying the Community Infrastructure Levy. This had been strongly challenged by the Town Council but WDC had accepted the application under this category. A resident asked what the latest situation was with the Hill Farm Road site. Cllr Greenberg explained that an application for reserved matters, appearance, layout, scale and landscape had been considered by the Town Council but this had been recommended refusal for various reasons in these categories, notwithstanding that the Town Council were still unsatisfied with the access and surface and drainage issues which were still unresolved.

Community Transport: Mr Doug Gray explained that the Community Transport in England was currently under threat by the Governments' interpretation of EU regulation 1071/2009. This regulation would categorise community transport such as HACT (Halesworth Area Community Transport) as a commercial enterprise and this would mean they would need to employ a Transport Manager and apply for an Operator's Licence. The additional costs involved could mean that this vital service for the town may have to close. Mr Gray appealed to the Council and residents to lobby their local MP and provided leaflets explaining the issues in more detail. The Council were very concerned by this news and asked Mr Gray if he would provide a template letter which the Council would distribute via newsletters and the website etc.

Communications: A resident complained that the meeting had not been adequately advertised and the notice had only been sent in the last couple of days, she said. Cllr Wollweber agreed that the Council could have performed better at advertising the event. However the Clerk confirmed that in fact all the statutory meetings, including the Annual parish meeting had been advertised on the Noticeboard, the Library and the website since January. There was an additional separate A3 notice for the Annual Parish meeting on the Noticeboard which had been in place for the last two weeks. The Council had also sent a reminder email to all those on the mailing list on Monday 9th April but this would have been helpful if it had been sent earlier. One resident requested that this email is sent a month in advance and another resident suggested that it might be produced automatically a month in advance. Another resident had difficulty in reading the 2018 Calendar of Council meetings on the Noticeboard and the Clerk agreed to make this larger. The Clerk also advised that the Council's Facebook page was soon to be in operation and this might alert residents to these types of meetings. However some residents advised that they did not use computers. Cllr Wollweber suggested that the Council would also advertise in the Community News in the future.

Flooding: The Chair explained that there were currently three initiatives regarding flooding and water quality underway. There was the Flood Project which was currently surveying and cataloguing all the small water courses and streams in the Halesworth area. There was the Environment Agency's flood prevention initiative which, amongst

other ideas, hoped to implement 'leaky dams' designed to hold up the flow of water into the Town. However this required the co-operation of landowners. Finally, there was the Yellowfish Project which was an attempt to inform residents of how they could help improve the water quality and reduce litter in the watercourses.

London Rd building: Cllr Rosemary Lewis explained that the Council had been negotiating with WDC over the transfer of the building for the past 2½ years but no decision had been made so far. Originally the negotiations had started as a discussion about the purchase of the building but had more recently involved the maintenance of the Park and Toilets. The Council did not want to burden the Town with an ongoing debt for taking on the Park and Toilets and therefore other options would need to be considered. It was noted that the Badger Homes site had a .44 hectare of land that WDC's Local Plan had set aside for a Community building. The Council would be exploring this option in more detail. The Chair also emphasised the fact that Halesworth was the only local town without a Community Centre and many villages had better facilities.

Patrick Stead Hospital (PSH)

The Chair explained that there had been an application to register the PSH as an Asset of Community Value but it was not possible for the Council to lead any project to convert the building for other uses. The Council had limited resources and this building could potentially cost a great deal of money just in repairs and maintenance and running costs alone. Southwold had successfully registered their hospital but this was a smaller and more modern building and they also had the benefit of three key individuals, with the relevant knowledge, who were able to devote a considerable amount of time on the project. The Council would be happy to provide support to any group who wished to take on the task but it would not be able to be involved directly.

Barrow Crossing: The Chair reported that Network Rail continued to regard Halesworth as one of the most dangerous crossings and they currently had the Railway Police monitoring the station. A resident reported that he had witnessed a 65 year old woman running across in front of an approaching train recently. Another resident asked why the trains were not using the warning hooter to signal they were leaving the platform and why the trains seemed to wait for several minutes before leaving, which encouraged people to cross while the train was in the station. Cllr Wollweber advised that it might be because the driver was waiting for a signal to leave. A resident asked if volunteers could police the Station, it was noted that the East Suffolk Travellers Association were also monitoring the Station and advising residents on the safety regulations.

Teen Shelter: Cllr Wollweber had produced a letter for everyone at the meeting explaining the Council's proposals to replace the Teen shelter in a new location opposite the River Lane Bridge, adjacent to the Basket Ball Court. The Council had engaged the Police, WDC Community officers, Youth Workers, the Youth and residents about the proposals. It was hoped to arrange a meeting shortly with residents of the George Maltings who were nearest to the new site. The Council had also produced a Teen Shelter Protocol which outlined the responsibilities of all those groups listed above. A resident asked why it had been reported that the Park had become a no-go area. The Chair said that this was probably taken out of context, the meaning, if the term had been used, was that it was perceived to be a no-go areas for some residents at certain times late at night. If necessary, the Council will be engaging the services of detached youth workers as soon the shelter was relocated. It was understood, hopefully by all the groups concerned that if the anti-social behaviour persisted the shelter would be removed permanently. A resident asked if the shelter was removed where the Council thought the drug dealing would go. The Chair said that the Council only had powers to deal with areas such as the Town Park and drug dealing was a Police matter. The Council regretted that there were not more

facilities for the town's youth but it would be open to ideas of how to improve the situation. The Chair offered to talk to the resident who was asking further questions about the Teen Shelter, after the meeting.

Mr Doug Gray paid tribute to the late **Dame Tamsyn Imison** and praised the valiant efforts of all the Halesworth in Bloom volunteers who were continuing Tamsyn's legacy of improving the appearance of the town for all residents.

The meeting was closed at 8.30pm