

# LITTLE WOLFORD PARISH MEETING

## MINUTES OF THE PARISH ANNUAL MEETING HELD ON 19 APRIL 2016 IN LITTLE WOLFORD VILLAGE HALL

**Present:** David Farman (DF) in the Chair; Gill Ablewhite (GA), Chris Cond (CC), Diz Farman (DiF), Charles Hobbs (CH), Simon Lewis (SL) and Henry Warriner (HW).

Mr Dave Webb, Executive Director of Stratford District Council and Parish Trustee, County Councillor Chris Saint and District Councillor Stephen Gray were also present for the initial part of the meeting.

The meeting **opened** at 7.37pm with a welcome to all from the Chairman, who introduced Mr Webb as the “Proper Officer” of Stratford District Council and thus the second Parish Trustee.

1. **Apologies:** Colin Ablewhite, Chris & Jim Heritage, Jane Hobbs, Chris Stretton, Roz Warriner
2. **Election of Chairman for 2016/17:** No nomination had been received in advance of the meeting. CC proposed and CH seconded the nomination of DF as Chairman for 2016/7; DF agreed to serve for one final year, and was elected unanimously.
3. **The Minutes** of the meeting of 21 October 2015 were approved (proposed GA, seconded SL) and signed by the Chairman as a true record of that meeting.

### **Matters Arising:**

- *Broadband:* CSW Broadband is still unable to confirm whether Little Wolford will be included in Contract 2, Phase 2 (2017-2020) of its fibre rollout programme. However, SugarNet went live in the village in December last year, providing speeds of up to 20 Mbps via a radio link.
- *Village Hall:* The hall’s management committee held an open AGM in February, which was attended by a number of villagers; future AGMs will be more widely publicised.
- *Gulley clearing:* County Highways claims to have jetted all of the gulleys in Little Wolford Road, and further jetting is promised.
- *Portobello crossroads:* Discussion was deferred pending Cllr. Saint’s report.

### **4. Chairman’s Report:**

- *Planning:* Planning consent has been refused in respect of additions to the Wolford Fields barn development
- *Highways:* County Highways has finally replaced part of the ancient surface water drainage culvert beneath Rosary Lane, between No.2 and the gully opposite The Rosary. However, the upper section of the culvert, between the fountain gully and No.2, is clearly unable to handle the volume of water to which it is regularly subjected (if, indeed, it has not actually collapsed), and efforts will continue to overcome County Highways’ reluctance to replace this.
- *Defibrillator:* Great Wolford Parish Council has decided to install a public-access defibrillator in that village’s redundant telephone kiosk, and invited Little Wolford Parish Meeting to do like likewise and to undertake joint fundraising. Little enthusiasm was shown by Little Wolford residents, however, and Great Wolford will continue with the project alone.
- *Bank Account:* The Parish Meeting’s current bankers are seeking to impose a £6 monthly service charge; further discussion was deferred until Item 10.

### **5. Parish Trustee’s Report (Mr Dave Webb):**

Mr Webb thanked the Chairman for inviting him to attend the meeting. He described recent senior management restructuring at the District Council, as a result of which he has become the Council’s Executive Director and its “Proper Officer” in respect of parish authorities within Stratford District. In this capacity, he is a Parish Trustee, the other being the current Chairman. He welcomed DF’s decision to

accept re-election as Chairman for a further final year, allowing options regarding the future of the Parish Meeting to be further explored.

The role of a Parish Trustee is defined in the Local Government Act, 1972. Had the meeting failed to elect a Chairman, Mr Webb would have taken the chair for the remainder of the meeting. It would then be his task to determine the parish's future governance arrangements; options would include the amalgamation of Little Wolford Parish Meeting with the Parish Council/Meeting of an adjoining parish, or merging the parish with another. Research and further discussion is needed to determine the best way forward, which would ultimately be determined by invoking a Community Governance Review. Mr Webb is happy to return to discuss matters further at the October meeting.

DF asked whether "direct rule" of the parish from Stratford would be possible as an alternative to merger or being de-parished, and this will be investigated. HW expressed concerns about the future if Great Wolford, the logical parish with which to join, declined an amalgamation or merger and Stratford District Council refused direct rule. Cllr Saint stated that parishioners have a legal right to meet and that a parish therefore has to exist, possibly under a Joint Parish Council along the lines of Cherington & Stourton. Stratford District is fully parished, but there are many examples in the wider County of places which are not, e.g. Rugby. DF emphasised the need to plan a way forward in the event that the Parish Meeting failed to elect a Chairman next year. DiF asked whether a job share could be considered for post of Chairman. GA advised opening discussions with Great Wolford Parish Council whilst awaiting further advice from Dave Webb, and DF will take this forward.

The Chairman thanked Mr Webb for his contribution to the meeting and for his offer to return to advise the next assembly of the Parish Meeting.

#### 6. **County Councillor's Report** (Cllr Chris Saint):

- *Portabello Crossroads*: The earlier proposals for a staggered junction have been replaced by new proposals for traffic lights at the junction of the A429 and B4035, a major accident blackspot.
- *Warwickshire Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH)*: This initiative will bring various agencies together to provide a consistent and co-ordinated approach to safeguarding children and vulnerable adults.
- *Warwickshire Fire & Rescue Service*: Responsibility for Fire & Rescue Services has recently passed from the Department for Communities & Local Government to the Home Office, but no change to local service provision is expected.
- *Council Tax*: The County Council precept will rise by 3.99%, half of which is to allow for increased costs, the other to provide further support for adult social care.
- *Devolution*: Coventry City Council, with which Warwickshire County Council has a long history of joint working on economic development issues, has voted to become part of the proposed West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA), but the County Council is still assessing the economic benefits of joining. Such Combined Authorities would not represent mergers of existing local authorities, but opportunities for them to group together to undertake local control of decisions that have previously been the province of central government.
- *Bus Services*: Some local bus services to Banbury are under threat, but Warwickshire bus passes will still be valid for travel to Banbury and back after 9.00 am.

The Chairman thanked Cllr Saint for his contribution to the meeting.

#### 7. **District Councillor's Report** (Cllr Stephen Gray):

- *Council Tax*: The District Council component of Council Tax will rise by 3.9% in the year ahead.
- *Joint Working*: The District Council has voted to join the West Midlands Combined Authority, which is likely to bring an end to some existing joint working relationships.
- *Core Strategy*: The District Plan is expected finally to have been completed and approved by the Inspector by July, following which a reduction in planning applications for large-scale housing developments may be expected.

- DF enquired as to the future of Wellesbourne Airfield: Cllr Gray reported that the Inspector examining the proposed District Plan has agreed that the airfield should not be redeveloped for housing. HW reported a recent local planning difficulty when a resident who would be affected by a proposed development had not been informed of the planning application: Cllr Gray stated that he had lodged an objection to the application.

The Chairman thanked Cllr Gray for his contribution to the meeting.

Mr Webb, Cllr Saint and Cllr Gray then left the meeting.

#### **8. Expenditure incurred under delegated powers:**

The Chairman, as Responsible Financial Officer (RFO), reported that the only expenditure incurred under delegated powers since the last meeting had been 63p on postage, which was within budget. This expenditure was approved unanimously (proposed SL, seconded GA).

#### **9. Accounts and Annual Return for the year ending 31 March 2016:**

DF, as RFO, tabled the summary accounts for the year ended 31 March 2016, following internal audit by SL. CH proposed, HW seconded and all present agreed that the accounts be approved and adopted. Electors will now be given 30 days in which to exercise their right to inspect the accounts and to raise any issues with the appointed external auditors, Grant Thornton LLP.

In addition to SL's formal Internal Audit Report, the Annual Return contains two elements – the Annual Governance Statement and the Accounting Statement - that the Meeting must approve before they are signed.

9.1SL proposed, HW seconded and all present resolved that the Annual Governance Statement 2015/16 for Little Wolford Parish Meeting be approved; DF signed the Statement as Chairman of the Parish Meeting.

9.2CH proposed, HW seconded and all present resolved that the Accounting Statement 2015/16 for Little Wolford Parish Meeting be approved; DF signed the Statement as RFO and confirmed their approval as Chair of the meeting.

#### **10. Issues of particular local importance:**

- *Bank Account:* Unity Trust Bank has recently announced that, with effect from June, it will impose a monthly service charge of £6 to operate our current account; over the course of a year, this would equate to 15% of income. The meeting agreed that such a charge was unacceptable, and the Chairman was instructed to identify an acceptable alternative bank (proposed GA, seconded CC).
- *Future of the Parish Meeting:* Further discussion was deferred until the next meeting in October, pending further advice from the District Council's Proper Officer, Mr Dave Webb, and preliminary discussion with Great Wolford Parish Council. If, by the time of the October meeting, it appears unlikely that any elector will stand for election to the post of Chairman for 2017/18, the Parish Meeting will invite Mr Webb to instigate a Community Governance Review to determine the future governance of the parish, taking into account the wishes of electors and of any other parish authority with which amalgamation may be considered.

#### **11. Matters raised by an Elector of the Parish:**

SL suggested that the village road marking were in need of re-painting; DF will take the matter up with County Highways.

12. **Next Meeting:** The next meeting will be held in October (date to be confirmed), when business will include further discussion on the future of the Parish Meeting and, if still appropriate, setting the budget and parish precept for 2017/18.

The Chairman **closed** the meeting at 8.45pm and invited all present to refreshments.