

**MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL MEETING OF  
THE PARISH OF WASPERTON  
HELD AT WASPERTON VILLAGE HALL  
ON MONDAY 15 APRIL 2013 AT 7:30PM**

Present: M J Metcalfe (Chairman)  
Cllr J V Murphy (Chairman of the Joint Parish Council)  
Cllr L Caborn (WCC)  
Thirty Wasperton Electors

**Minutes.**

- 1 The Minutes of the meeting held on 23 April 2012 were approved as a true record.
- 2 Matters Arising:
  - 2.1 Minute 6.1. *"Speed Limit. WCC had published a list of villages in which a 30mph speed limit was to be imposed; it included Wasperton notwithstanding the carefully argued case which had been submitted earlier for a 20mph limit. The case was resubmitted and accepted and the speed limit reduced to the lower figure. This limit is now legally in force and will be subject to random speed checks by the police."* Notwithstanding the new limit, there was concern that some drivers habitually drove at unsafe speeds in the village.
  - 2.2 Minute 29. *"Mr David Hunt was concerned about the restrictions on access to the riverside and to the Commonwealth War Memorial imposed by landowners. The Chairman suggested that this was likely to be a temporary state of affairs which might be best alleviated by a "quiet word". Mr Hunt clarified the landowners' motives; the restrictions were intended to discourage catching fish for food.*

**Report by Chairman of the Joint Parish Council.**

- 3 Cllr J V Murphy reported:

2012-2013 has again been a busy year – 9 routine JPC meetings, numerous Planning meetings, numerous Working Party or subcommittee meetings and the three Annual Parish Meetings and one Special Meeting this year!

Our year got off to a very difficult start with the tragedy at the weir in Barford. A young family was swept over the weir and despite heroic efforts by residents and emergency services alike a father and young child lost their lives. Whilst this serves to remind us all of the ever present danger near rivers it also reassures us of the incredible community spirit which we enjoy here – something which was noted by all the emergency services and by the coroner at the inquest.

**Difficult financial times** continue and all levels of government strive to achieve best value and minimize service reductions. This year we have not kept the parish element of the Council Tax at the same level. The WDC, WCC and the Police have kept their requirement level. Changes to the way Council Tax rebates were administered threatened to seriously erode our finances and a modest increase – less than £2.00 for a Band D – was felt to be appropriate to ensure that we could maintain our services and maintain our funding in the future.

As the A429 slices through our parishes we are frequently considering its impacts. Our hopes were raised early in the year when funding was allocated to our problems and feasibility studies were started. Issues of major concern included the northern junction on the Barford Bypass, the speed of traffic in Sherbourne, the safety of Wasperton junction and the speed of traffic on the A429 itself. Various schemes were proposed but all were expensive against a backdrop of in truth of very limited funding – we could only have one scheme. The Wasperton junction scheme was deemed much too expensive due to the need to buy land to allow space for a refuge, the northern bypass junction scheme was just too expensive, the A429 speed limit was deemed to be impractical and unenforceable by the Police and the WCC Safety Engineers so we were left with the Sherbourne scheme. This will extend the weight limit and impose speed limits throughout the

village. The 40mph limit on Watery Lane remains controversial but is probably better than the current derestricted status. Even so some residents were not in favour of any scheme but the democratic will prevailed and the scheme will go ahead.

Last year we were successful in securing a Community Forum grant for £3000 towards the modernization and replacement of our streetlights. The latest scheme includes all the outdated lights in Barford and Sherbourne and subject to economies of scale the work should be completed this year.

Following the establishment of a Working Party to review the facilities at Barford Playing Fields there has been slow but steady progress. Several companies have now put forward proposals for modernizing the area and a new group of volunteers have proposed the provision of an all weather sports area with potential for use by the school along with young and old alike. The inspiration for this latter element came from a similar scheme in Stoneleigh village where it has been a great success. The change in plan has brought in extra delays but we think that such delay will be worthwhile if we get a much better facility.

**All three village halls** have this year been supported by JPC grants with £1043 to each and the JPC also gave grant support of £418 towards maintenance of each of the three churchyards.

**Diamond Jubilee celebrations** took place in all three villages and the beacon, the Riverside walk, the new Barford flagpole, the Jubilee Oaks, picnics and lunches were all a great success. Well done to all involved!

The major planning issue has continued to be the slow gestation of the **New Local Plan**. In 2011 we learnt of the intended housing numbers for our district – 550 homes per year – and in May 2012 we saw the draft version of the **Preferred Options** which indicated proposed locations for those numbers. We had been assured that the rural areas would not have significant numbers imposed upon them so we were surprised when Barford was classified as a Category One village and expected to take 100 extra homes, with 40% affordables. Inevitably we have responded to all of this and we await the next stage when the **Draft Local Plan** is released in June, all in the knowledge that the Coventry Local Plan was recently thrown out as “unsound” largely on failure of adequate numbers and failure to cooperate with adjacent authorities. All of this is indeed worrying for us.

**Affordable Housing** – We continued to work to with the Rural Housing Enabler and having identified the Wasperton Lane site as the preferred option for a stand-alone site we were delighted when funding suddenly became available. Things then moved on quickly and a public consultation was held in September and whilst the scheme was not universally popular we were very disappointed when in the autumn we were given the news that the landowners, St John’s College, Oxford had decided that they would not release land at “Rural Exception Site” rates. Once again there is currently no funding available and we are advised that we must rely on a market homes scheme, sufficiently large to provide our needs through the WDC requirement for larger sites to provide 40% Affordable Homes. Recently there are two such schemes on the horizon.

Proposals on **land around Barford House** advanced considerably to a Planning Application for 58 homes. The proposal addressed many of the issues identified in the 2011 BRA survey along with other issues raised relating to the site. The JPC voted to object to the scheme on the grounds that it was contrary to all current local policies and failed to meet our perceived local housing needs. The WDC Planners refused the scheme on grounds of its heritage impact, local need and impact on an immediate neighbour. The applicants went to appeal in February and the Inspector recently announced that he recommended dismissing the appeal which now goes to the Secretary of State, Eric Pickles.

The site of the now closed **Sherbourne Nurseries** was also the subject of a Planning Application for 58 houses by Taylor Wimpey following a public consultation in June. This was also refused on grounds of impact on the Conservation Area, loss of the Police house and failure to meet local need. It may still go to appeal.

Through all of this the JPC had been working to develop a Housing Needs Survey to assess the requirement for both Market and Affordable homes in the three parishes. In May we had the results which confirmed our thoughts. There remained a need for about 10 Affordable Homes in Barford and two in each of Sherbourne and Wasperton, along with up to 24 market homes mostly smaller houses and bungalows. The final numbers are somewhat debatable due to the methodologies employed and whilst the WDC cannot fully accept the totals for lack of means testing they remain indicative of local need.

Over the year **Riverside land** left over from the Barford Bypass construction and taken over by the JPC has established itself well. The community orchard, a wild flower meadow and riverside walk are all looking good and are now well used.

All councillors have as always attended many meetings and generally have served their electors extremely well, working as a strong team with James Johnson our excellent Clerk/RFO. This year we have lost two councilors, one through retirement and one through failure to attend sufficient meetings. This presents the opportunity for new members to come forward and get involved in the local aspects of public life and such new members are actually quite a refreshing influence on a body such as ours, often bring fresh ideas and even an innocence to procedures. Many thanks to all for their input. Some have done much more than the expected minimum and these are particularly deserving of our community's gratitude.

Councillor attendance records:

2012-13	Meetings	Present	%
Cllr Mrs W BARLOW	9	8	89%
Cllr R CLAY	9	9	100%
Cllr Mrs J L LONGFIELD	9	5	56%
Cllr S J McVEIGH	6	1	17%
Cllr P A P MORRIS	9	5	56%
Cllr D MORROW	9	7	78%
Cllr J V MURPHY	9	8	89%
Cllr A RHEAD	9	7	78%
Cllr R A SHOTTON-OZA	9	7	78%
Cllr Mrs A GORDON	9	9	100%
Cllr Mrs NEWSOME	9	8	89%
Cllr Mrs P K PAYNE	7	6	86%
Cllr M J METCALFE	9	8	89%
Cllr N F J THURLEY	9	9	100%
Cllr J T WRIGHT	9	8	89%
Cllr J M HAWKESFORD	9	8	89%

### Report by Wasperton Councillors

- 4 Mr John Wright, in his capacity as a member of the JPC representing Wasperton, drew the following achievements to the notice of the meeting:
  - The imposition of a 20mph speed limit in the village.
  - The upgrading of street lighting.
  - The laying of red road surfacing in turning lanes on the A429 at the Wasperton junction to deter overtaking there.
  
- 5 Mr Neil Thurley added to this list the achievement of obtaining a unique post code for JAA Growers so that HGVs with that destination would not be brought into the village through faulty satnav navigation.

- 6 Mr John Wright went on to list the numerous activities in Wasperton which all served to make it the close-knit community it was:
- The Parish Magazine being co-edited in the village.
  - The Coffee Shop which provided a focus for the village on Saturdays and which yielded valuable income for the village hall.
  - Book sales which contributed £900 to the village hall.
  - The Arts Group which meets in the village hall
  - Tai Chi in the village hall.
  - The annual raft race
  - Men's Fellowship
  - The War Memorial Booklet continues to sell with proceeds to the village hall.
  - The village hall acting as a polling station earning a hiring fee.
- 7 He concluded by reiteration the benefits of living in Wasperton and ensured that the village's representatives on the JPC would maintain their efforts both to collaborate with the two other villages there represented whilst protecting the interests of Wasperton.

### Report by County Councillor

- 8 Cllr L Caborn reported:

This is really an end of term report as we approach County Council Elections on May 2nd  
 What has the Conservative Administration achieved in the last four years in sole control of WCC ?  
 0% council tax rise for past 3 years whilst taking £65 million out of cost of running WCC. Staff numbers reduced from 4088 FT to 2993 FT and 3635PT reduced to 3093 PT. (excluding schools)

#### **Adult Social Care and Children.**

Personal budgets for individuals, Extra Care dwellings for elderly and disabled, Transfer of Care homes to Runwood homes

Streamlined our Fostering and Adoption processes, though numbers in care risen from 536 to 709. Best Ofsted for safeguarding in West Midlands. Developed children's centres to embrace the whole family and reduced the need for pupil referral units by giving schools flexibility over failing pupils. A level and GCSE pass rates up.

#### **Community**

Following strategic plan turned fire service into fire and Rescue Service New road accident unit and boat unit Reduced the economic cost of fire by 50% and become the top performing fire service in U K with regards to accidental dwelling fires. Achieved with home fire safety calls and small fire units. New station for L/Spa will be delivered.

Road accidents (killed or seriously injured) down from 348 to 313

Spending on roads maintenance up from £34.75m to £35.12m

Local schemes

Still able to grit over 46% of roads and reviewing--policy to see in can improve ie around schools

Worked to improve community forums, one-stop-shops ( new Shire Hall layout)

16 libraries moved to community control successfully

Recycling with Boroughs and Districts up from 43.2% to 48.7%

Shire Hall and Old Courts to be let to partner

#### **Health and Wellbeing**

Public health moved to County council

Work with partners, as health affects everyone and every age

Reduce carbon emissions through street lights-saving 3000 tons co2 and £500000

Future Growth is vital

Apprenticeships and support for businesses to take apprentices on

LEP -- City Deal --Top 60 firms in WCC area visited -- Junction 12/ 14 improvements

£8 m for Broadband especially to rural area

Rural growth centre at Stoneleigh. Small business loans. Market towns initiative.

### **Sand and Gravel**

Discussions with officers after rumours about sand and gravel and HS2  
On 27 Mar 13 WCC under the new NPPF was informed it had to have available 7 years land bank of sand and gravel(mineral) sites  
We have 2 years 8 months  
Call for sites Oct/Nov this year followed by consultation  
Vulnerable to applications and existing out of date  
WCC believe the strategy for HS2 if built will be the borrow pit principle which means dig it put and replace with spoil from another site nearby

Finally thanks to chairman .clerk and councillors for support and co-operation  
Look forward to being back

### **Neighbourhood Watch**

- 9 PCSO Peter Groom reported there had been little crime in the Wasperton area during the year.
- 10 He noted the low interest in Neighbourhood Watch in the village but urged residents not to be complacent. To that end he suggested that the benefits of the electronic age (voicemail, text and email) should be exploited and stated that the police were compiling a directory of residents who wished quickly to report suspicious activities and to have warnings sent to them.

### **Report by the Parochial Church Council**

- 11 Mr David Hunt reported the following:
- The Open Gardens initiative continues and contributes the proceeds to the church.
  - The church recently had a quinquennial survey; nothing was found to be of immediate concern but the inspection revealed the following which require attention:
    - Floorboards (and joists?).
    - Wall-hung memorials.
    - Gutters.
    - Roof
- 12 He thanked the many voluntary helpers for their efforts in fundraising and other activities, mentioning in particular the flower arrangers.
- 13 He thanked the JPC for its generous grants to maintain the churchyard.
- 14 Finally he informed the meeting of the departure from the village of Mrs Barbara Peters saying the residents owed her a debt of gratitude for her numerous, invaluable contributions to community life.

### **Report by the Village Hall Committee (Maintenance and Structure)**

- 15 Mr Neil Thurley opened his report with the comment that one might think that for all its activities the Village Hall Committee had achieved little by way of improvements to the village hall.
- 16 Hitherto the committee had been hamstrung by lack of funds but, in the third year of a five-year plan and with reserves now standing above £10k, it was ready to break out of penury and invite tenders for essential repairs and renovation. A programme of work is being initiated which, when complete, will bring the hall up to the best of modern standards.
- 17 He clarified the status of the hall; the members of the PCC are administrative trustees acting for the owner, the diocese.
- 18 He made a plea for increased use of the hall over and above those listed at Minute 6. The present utilization rates of the hall were insufficient to persuade some grant-making bodies to contribute to its upkeep.

19 He thanked the JPC for its generous grants to maintain the village hall

### Neighbourhood Plans

20 In preparation for this agenda item the Chairman had distributed to every house in the village a copy of the note below:

**Wasperton Annual Meeting, 15 April 2013**

**Does Wasperton need a Neighbourhood Plan?**

Recent legislation enables local communities to produce a development plan for their neighbourhood. The Annual Meeting (Agenda attached) is an opportunity to discuss whether or not we should take advantage of this in Wasperton. At some point we will have to decide which of the following options we wish to take:

1. Produce a Wasperton Neighbourhood Plan (NP). This would require a clear vision for the future of Wasperton, together with a high degree of commitment, effort and probably expense. Note that the vision cannot simply be one of no development, and must be consistent with the District Council's Local Plan. If successfully adopted, however, a NP becomes a statutory document which could be used to guide decisions on, for example, how new development should be designed or located.
2. Contribute to a joint Barford, Sherbourne and Wasperton NP. This would be dependent on Barford, and possibly also Sherbourne, deciding to go down the same path. In this option the other villages would be involved in drafting and approving any proposals for Wasperton.
3. Do nothing. In this event planning officers considering planning applications for Wasperton would be guided (as now) by the District Council's Local Plan. A new version of this is currently under development. This may well be fairly benign, but inevitably rather general and non-specific.

At the Annual Meeting I propose that Councillors explain in greater detail their understanding of how the neighbourhood planning arrangements are intended to work. Perhaps the most important feature is that a viable plan is not possible without community engagement and ownership. This would require volunteers! There would also appear to be little point in proceeding unless there is a shared vision of what we would like to achieve. Hopefully the meeting will provide a first indication of whether this is likely to be the case.

If you wish to learn more, have views on whether a NP would be worthwhile, or have ideas about how Wasperton should be developed, please attend the meeting if you can. If you can't attend, please could you make your views known to Neil Thurley, John Wright or myself (preferably in writing), or e-mail them to me at [michael.metcalfe@btinternet.com](mailto:michael.metcalfe@btinternet.com).

Mike Metcalfe  
Chairman, Wasperton Annual Meeting

21 With a delivery which was a model of clarity and coherence the Chairman briefed the meeting on the options open to the village, aided by contributions from Cllrs Caborn and Murphy. The salient points were:

- A Neighbourhood Plan had to be community led. Parishioners could not rely upon the JPC to get on with it. Therefore "No volunteers" = "No plan".
- There would be a cost; how much was not yet known for but for certain it would be thousands of pounds, although some funding is available.
- The timescale would be protracted. A Wasperton Neighbourhood Plan could not be approved unless and until the Warwick District Local Plan had previously been approved and this would only be possible once all the contiguous authorities ensured that their own local

plans were not at odds with that of any of their neighbours (therein an existing delay because Coventry City's Local Plan has been rejected by the Inspectorate).

- On the other hand a Wasperton Neighbourhood Plan (if more than 50% of those voting in a referendum chose to adopt it) would give the village a far greater measure of protection against unwanted development.

22 In open forum there were surprisingly few questions:

- "How does a Neighbourhood Plan differ from a Parish Plan?" Neighbourhood Plans are similar but not the same as Parish Plans, they being much more planning orientated. If adopted the former becomes planning law but the latter remains an advisory document only.
- "Would a Neighbourhood Plan enable the village to block unwanted development of the type already experienced?" Yes, if the plan contains details of the type of development wanted in the village.
- "Does this have any effect upon Conservation Areas?" No, Conservation Area planning law is unaffected, indeed conservation is increasingly an important factor in determining planning applications.

23 In his note the Chairman had written: *"Perhaps the most important feature is that a viable plan is not possible without community engagement and ownership. This would require volunteers!"* None was forthcoming.

24 He had also written: *"There would also appear to be little point in proceeding unless there is a shared vision of what we would like to achieve."* None was on offer at the meeting.

25 These responses leave only one option:

*"Do nothing. In this event planning officers considering planning applications for Wasperton would be guided (as now) by the District Council's Local Plan. A new version of this is currently under development. This may well be fairly benign, but inevitably rather general and non-specific."* Cllr. Caborn pointed out that a revised Local Plan document would be issued on 4 Jun 13, and that this would give a more detailed picture of likely rural area policies. It would be important to consider these in the context of the "do nothing" option.

26 In summary no decision to embark on a plan was taken although there was a view that exploring a joint plan with Barford (and perhaps Sherbourne too) should be considered. Cllr Murphy agreed that Wasperton could have observer status in the deliberations about Barford's plan but, bearing in mind the need for a community (not JPC) led initiative, it is unclear who would be Wasperton's observer.

### **Any Other Business**

27 Concern was expressed about the deterioration of grass verges as vehicle wheels eroded them. Kerbs (to which some objected on the grounds of destroying the rural ambience of the village) were unaffordable (Cllr Caborn estimated £100k-200k). It was agreed therefore to ask the Highways Department to inspect the damage and recommend and carry out repairs.

### **Appointment of Chairman for 2013-14**

28 Mr M Metcalfe was appointed Chairman for the ensuing year.

### **Closure of the Meeting**

29 There being no other business the Chairman closed the meeting at 9:30pm, thanking those who had attended.