

**MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING OF WASPERTON
HELD ON MONDAY 24 APR 23 AT 7:30PM**

Present: M J Metcalfe (Chairman)
Cllr T Merrygold (Chairman of the Joint Parish Council)
Cllr J V Murphy (Vice-Chairman of the Joint Parish Council)
Twenty-three Wasperton Electors

1 Opening

The Chairman welcomed all to the meeting.

He was at pains to clarify the difference between a Parish Council Meeting and an Annual Parish Meeting.

The former is a legally constituted body in which elected Parish Councillors exercise their specified powers for the good of the community. The general public has access to their meeting but with very limited opportunities to participate. Wasperton has three seats at it.

In contrast, an Annual Parish Meeting is a public meeting at which anybody may express an opinion on any matter, whether listed on the agenda or under "Any Other Business". Parish Councillors, although present, are not performing that role; they are just part of the debating forum.

Present Representation

Until 9 May 23 the following have seats at the Barford, Sherbourne & Wasperton JPC:

- Cllr J D Billingham
- Cllr M J Metcalfe
- Cllr P B Phillips

After that date the composition of the Wasperton representation at the JPC will be:

- Cllr J D Billingham
- Cllr Mrs L Wallis

2 Minutes The minutes of the meeting held on 25 Apr 22. Were approved as a true record, there were no matters arising.

3 Report of Chairman of Joint Parish Council (Cllr T Merrygold)

I'll try and keep my report short, as we have a very full agenda, just focusing on a few local village matters and then a few that are affecting the wider three parishes.

Planning Applications

As you know we had an application to build five houses on a plot just up the road. Allegedly these were to be self-build, although no-one was identified as to who wanted to build them. We believed this was the Applicant trying to get brownie points for a little used wrinkle in the planning process and if outline planning permission was granted assumed they would sell the plot on to a developer to build all five houses. Anyway, the JPC, as well as what seemed to be most you, including those who signed your petition, objected to this.

They took it Appeal, which they lost for whole load of very strong reasons including so it looks as if this site will be safe from development for some while.

Now onto the wider things affecting the village.

Minerals Plan

The Local Minerals Plan saga continues to rumble on and has reached the stage where despite the objections of the JPC and numerous local residents, the Wasperton site has been included in the approved WCC Minerals Plan.

Following this, the appointed contractor, Smiths Concrete Ltd have submitted a detailed Planning Application to operate the Sand and Gravel Quarry at the site. Unusually this Planning Application is being handled by WCC and not WDC, so the consultation process is not as straightforward as normal. The JPC has submitted a lengthy objection to this on a number of grounds, which are not worth repeating in detail here.

There have also been over 2,500 other local responses to the consultation. Although the consultation period has officially finished, WCC will still accept some written submissions. The Sand and Gravel Action Group are commissioning a number of additional detailed reports which they hope will add more weight to their objections, and the JPC has commissioned a report on the predicted problems with generation of dust from the site.

WDC have also adopted a very robust stance on the Applications.

So, while we can't predict the outcome, the fight is not over.

South Warwickshire Local Plan

Last year I talked briefly about the South Warwickshire Local Plan which is being prepared jointly by Warwick and Stratford District councils. This is to replace the current plans when they expire (2029 for Warwick and 2031 for Stratford) and take the councils on to 2050.

They put out an initial 'Call for Sites' so that any landowners or developers could put forward any sites that they may want to be considered for any change of use. All of this has now been collated on an interactive map covering the whole of South Warwickshire and you can drill into this map and see all the sites put forward within the boundaries of all three of our parishes and the surrounding areas.

This has now moved on to the Consultation Stage and the JPC have submitted very detailed responses covering our concerns for the effects on the three parishes. In Summary we are concerned about the continual creep of Warwick southwards, and Wellesbourne in all directions with the potential to create a large South Warwickshire Conurbation. Among our objections and comments, we have cited the complete lack of any infra-structure planning and have suggested a 'red line' at the M40, south of which there should be no further development, together with a similar 'red line' to avoid any development to the west of the A429, heading north from Wellesbourne.

Wellesbourne Innovation Campus

On top of all this, and not included in the SWLP, Warwick University has issued an outline Master Plan for the Wellesbourne Campus (the old HRI site) with plans to turn it into an Innovation Hub with opportunities for commercial and industrial development for high-tech industries, all in a sympathetically sustainable design.

Sadly, the Master Plan contains no detail whatsoever, about sizes of units, numbers of jobs generated, amount of traffic generated, and all images have the caveat added that they are representative only and any buildings may not end up looking anything like them.

One of the local concerns about the Quarry site is the amount of heavy traffic that will be generated and the extra traffic from the Wellesbourne Campus is likely to completely dwarf this.

This site is in the Stratford District and the JPC is not routinely consulted on SDC planning applications, but we have submitted a response to their consultation, expressing our concerns and insisting that we are included as one of the Statutory Consultees as the plans progress.

Summary

At the risk of leaving you all with a very gloomy view of the future of our lovely rural area and lifestyle you can at least be safe in the knowledge that we will keep a close eye on all of these and continue to influence them as much as we can.

Finally, I would like to thank all our councillors and parish clerk who have served their electors well throughout the year with particular mention of Mike Metcalfe who has been on the JPC for longer than me and has finally decided to step down.

As I am sure you know your new Parish Councillor will be Lucinda Wallis.

4 Report from Warwickshire District Council (Cllr Jan Matecki and Cllr Alan Rhead (in absentia))
Warwick District Council, (WDC), froze the District Council element of Council Tax for the second year running. The opposition, as they did last year, wanted to increase it by the maximum amount allowable, despite the Council generating around £1.5m per year through a joint venture by the local housing company that the Councils owns. £52,000 was allocated to food banks, which is £1,000 per week, as well as other measures to help the most vulnerable in our society.

A new Development Policy Document, (DPD), has been submitted to Government for approval. The DPD will force any new developments in the district to be built to a much higher environmentally friendly building standard, which will reduce carbon emissions and also provide more energy efficient homes. The Inspector has had a public review of the DPD, and we hope it will become part of the Local Plan by the autumn of 2023.

WDC will be moving out of Riverside House in Leamington. The backroom function will be moving to offices in Saltisford, Warwick, with a front office facility being introduced in the Pump Rooms in Leamington Spa. It is planned to have 'floor walkers' in the Pump Rooms to meet residents and help them with their enquiries. There will be private meeting rooms available, and a member of the housing team will also always be on site to deal with any urgent housing needs. The move is planned to take place around June 2023. A purchaser of Riverside House has been found, who will develop the site to include 40% affordable homes and retaining the protected trees.

The District hosted the Commonwealth Games bowls and men's and women's road cycle races.

These were a great success bringing a lot our tourism and business into the district, as well as showcasing Warwick and Leamington to the rest of the world. Bowls England are hoping to host more international events at the newly laid international standard greens in Victoria Park, and there has been an upsurge in interest from filming companies wanting to film around the area. This will bring more revenue into the local economy and into the Council.

An Additional Licensing proposal has gone out to consultation to look at making all houses of multi-occupation, (HMOs), licensable. Currently, only homes that have 5 or more occupants from 2 or more

households need to be inspected and have a license. The proposal is that all HMOs, defined as 3 or more people from 2 or more households sharing a property, in the district should be licensed. The extra revenue from the licensing fee will self-fund the extra staff required for inspections and enforcement. The scheme will also penalise those landlords that do not fulfil their duties in managing HMOs in an appropriate manner. It is hoped the scheme will be approved by October 2023. Two brand new leisure facilities in Kenilworth have started to be constructed. The sports centre at castle Farm and the swimming pool complex at Abbey Fields have been demolished and work started on the new buildings. The new swimming pools at Abbey Fields will have a pool with a moveable floor so that younger children and those with disabilities will be able to use the pool with depths to suit their needs. It will be a first in the district for a pool with such facilities. Finally, a grant of £250,000 has been secured from WDC for the new proposed Youth and Community centre in Barford. The grant is subject to conditions being met, which have been put in place to ensure that the project is a viable proposition. This grant being made available should help in secured other grants that were dependant on WDC funding and will hopefully now see the project more forward at an accelerated pace.

5 Report from Warwickshire County Council (Cllr Jan Matecki (in absentia))

The year has been dominated by the cost-of-living crisis. As well as providing advice to families, Warwickshire County Council has supported residents with financial support through various grants and schemes. £3.47m of grants was made available through the Household Support Fund, and a further £180,000 was made available to voluntary and community groups to establish projects that helped address the cost-of-living crisis.

The new all through school in Bishop's Tachbrook, Oakley School, was granted planning permission and work started on the school in December 2022. It is on target to open in September 2024, with the first year 7 intake scheduled to start in September 2023 spending their first year in Myton School's new 6th form centre, which is also currently being built and on target to be ready for the pupils to start in September 2023. There was no catchment area set for pupils wanting to start at Oakley school in September 2023. September 2024 will see the arrival of the September 2024 year 7 intake, as well as the year 8 pupils move from Myton 6th form centre. There will also be an intake of reception year children in 2024.

On the theme of education, a Task and Finish group has been set up to look into the inequalities of education throughout the county. The group are investigating why certain schools have children that underperform, while others in predominantly deprived areas perform well. I am part of the group and a report is expected to be issued later in the year.

A new on "on demand" bus service, IndieGo Plus, was introduced to replace the old No.16 bus service. Residents in an area from M40 to the south, A452 to the north, A46 to the east and A4177/Five Ways Road to the west can use an App or telephone to book a bus journey at times they need. Journeys can be booked within the area, or to Kenilworth and Warwick. Residents in Warwick can also book journeys into that area. It has been dubbed by many residents as the 'Uber' bus service and has received a very positive response. It is hoped that the service will be expanded to other rural communities if it continues to be successful.

The annual public health report has been issued. It highlights how the cost of living is starting to affect the health and wellbeing of residents, and that there is a risk of exacerbating further the health inequalities that already exist within the county. The newly formed Integrated Care System has been given recommendations on how to mitigate the impact of the cost-of-living crisis, and involves focus on food, housing and transport. The full report is available online.

The Warwickshire Minerals Plan was adopted, which included the Wasperton site for the extraction of sand and gravel. A planning application has been submitted for the site, but it is not expected to be presented to committee for consideration before autumn 2023. I continue to object to a quarry being at this site, and I am working with the local sand and gravel committee in their fight to have the application refused.

The WCC Council Tax increase for 2023-24 was set at 3.94%, which includes 1% for the Adult Social Care levy. The budget included investments of:

- £24.8m to protect elderly and vulnerable adults
- £8.2m for home to school transport
- £5.4m for children's social care services
- £1.8m to support children and young adults with disability placements
- £1.2m in the Waste Management service to meet increased demand
- £0.8m in Fire & Rescue Service to review current strategies and processes.

More locally, the JPC area of Barford, Wasperton and Sherbourne Parish Councils, has seen some improvements on the roads. White lines have been painted on parts of Barford roads to stop parking, new fencing installed along the A429, and the layby just south of the Wasperton turn has also had new

surfaces laid at the entrances. Funding has also been secured for 20mph limits to be installed in Barford along Bridge Street and Church Street/High Street, but I will push to have this extended to include Wellesbourne Road if at all possible.

6 Neighbourhood Watch (The Chairman)

There have been no incidents to report over the past year.

Mike Brook continues to be the nominal Neighbourhood Watch Coordinator, but he reports that the system no longer functions as it once did. This may be due in no small part to the changed attitude of the Warwickshire Police towards such an organization, and the growing availability of access to social media (Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp and the like) which are much more efficient at rapid and widespread information distribution than the telephone, email, and texting.

Warwickshire Police are in the process of reorganizing their management of local policing.

7 Parochial Church Council (Michael Porter)

The year had started on a dismal note with the illness of the Vicar and the death of a Churchwarden. Nevertheless, hope springs eternal and it behoves the congregation to look on the bright side.

8 Village Hall Committee (Diana Phillips)

Ali Dewhurst has taken on the role of looking at refurbishment of the hall working with the PCC. The proposal is to make the hall windproof and watertight over the next twelve months. Once this has been completed, a second phase of works is proposed to include external landscaping, sustainability projects, internal flooring and access etc.

The first phase will include:

- Renovation of Front Door
- Reroofing hall
- Rectifying damp issue

In the near future a survey of the village will be undertaken to understand what the residents would like from the parish hall.

In the past year The Wobbly Wasp pubs have been held on a regular basis with the emphasis on providing a social event rather than fundraising. A very successful Sunday lunch was held in February and a Christmas Fair in December.

Coffee stop has restarted and takes place on the first Saturday of each month.

9 Sand and Gravel Extraction (the Chairman)

Discussion of this matter quickly focused on to what degree, if any, a traffic-light controlled entrance to the proposed quarry would ameliorate the acute problem of vehicles leaving the village to join the traffic flows north and south on the A429. For lack of any certainty on the location of the exit and the phasing of the lights, no meaningful conclusions could be drawn. Nevertheless, the level of risk is deemed unacceptable and quarry or no quarry a resolution is urgently required.

10 Appointment of Chairman for 2023-24

Michael Metcalfe was elected unopposed.

11 Close

There being no further business the meeting closed at 8:30pm.