

Draft Minutes

THE PARISH MEETING OF WHISSENDINE 2016

This was held in the C of E Primary School, Main Street, Whissendine on Wednesday, 16th March, beginning at 7.35pm

Present: Mr Will Farr (Chairman)
Mr Kevin Smith (Ward Councillor)
Mrs Linda Arnold, Mr Rob Comber Mr David Hatton, Mrs Pat Lake, Dr Sue Lammin
and Mrs Cynthia Moss (Parish Councillors)
Mrs Jen Lacey (Parish Clerk, taking minutes)

Mr James von der Voelsungen (Parking Officer, RCC) PC Laurie Appleton, community police officer, two representatives of Whissendine Primary School, and 22 local government electors were present for all or part of the meeting.

Apologies were given on behalf of Dr Andrew Moyce of Whissendine Environmental Group.

1. Welcome

The Chairman thanked residents for coming along to attend the meeting. All were welcome to give their point of view on any of the topics for discussion during the course of the evening, and there were two occasions when the Parish Council would be particularly wanting to get an idea of village opinion.

2. Minutes of the 2015 Annual Parish Meeting.

These had been available in advance from the website and paper copies were at the meeting. They were accepted on the proposal of Mrs P Lake and signed by the Chairman.

3. Police Comments

PC Appleton began by giving some statistics of the crime in Whissendine over the past year. There had been 12 incidents which were 3 (20%) down on those for 2014. However, the number of burglaries had not reduced. Homes had been broken into on four occasions, and outdoor sheds and garages amounted for four other instances. The team was focussing on prevention of this type of crime. Theft from cars, criminal damage and assault also featured in the crime list, but were very occasional occurrences.

In an effort to return any stolen items found, the police were running property marking sessions free of charge. 17 of the 26 villages they were responsible for had been covered so far. It was agreed that the school could be made available for one in Whissendine. People would be invited to attend with items such as lawn mowers that were not kept indoors, and could not easily be identified individually otherwise.

There were now only three members of the team to cover the villages of north Rutland, but back up could be called out if required. PC Appleton urged that incidents that caused concern were reported via the 101 number, or social media, as patterns of events could be identified from these and police attendance could be directed if needed. This method was currently being used in the prevention of hare coursing.

When questions were invited the one issue that was raised was parking, and whether there had been any outcome from PC Houghton's survey of opinion at the 2015 APM. It was explained there had been an RCC consultation into the practicality of yellow lines in Main Street to prevent dangerous parking. PC Appleton said his recommendation would be that they should be limited to the bend at Bishops Corner. Enforcement of any parking restoration was now a matter for RCC unless it involved zig-zag lines (child safety) or was an issue of dangerous obstruction. If pavements were blocked for wheelchair/pushchair users so that they could not pass then PCSOs would intervene to try and get a resolution between those concerned.

PC Appleton then left the meeting.

4. RCC's Parking Officer - yellow lines in Main Street

Mr Von der Voelsungen explained that the outcome of the consultation on this had produced very mixed results. The Ward Councillor and Parish Council had been in favour, hoping that the most dangerous parking at school collection and delivery time would be deterred. Some residents had supported this view, but others were of the opinion that although this was a transitory problem it could restrict the use of the street outside their homes, for their own and visitor use, all of the time and therefore would be a definite disadvantage. There had also been concern that it pushed a problem from one area of the village out into others.

The conclusion was that as RCC had a policy of not putting yellow lines into villages, because of the difficulty of enforcement, and also there had been no united response it was almost certain that there would be no yellow lines introduced into Whissendine, but the Ward Councillor would be discussing this further.

Discussion then centred on what the school could do to help resolve the parking issues that occurred in Main Street.

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The headteachers said they were keen to work with the village as they understood the concerns raised, and they already tried to encourage parents to park without causing inconvenience or danger to others, and staff were often out at the finish of the school as the safety of the children was a matter of priority. Also an effort was made to get as many staff parked inside the school gates as possible (although acknowledged that the situation was exacerbated at present by roofing work being carried out). They believed it was not possible to make extra parking space within the school grounds as retention of the playing fields was a necessity, and the area for recreation had been agreed with Sport England. Staff could be asked to park at a distance from the school, but not forced, and shared travel was often not practical because of teaching staff needing cars to travel between the different schools of the academy group.

Residents and Parish Councillors stressed the congestion problems caused by parked cars. These impacted on other businesses, the transit of large agricultural vehicles, delayed buses and resulted in the over use of Cow Lane resulting in problems there.

As all parties concerned wanted a resolution, Mr Thomas offered to arrange a meeting as quickly as possible to discuss practical options. Representatives from the school, RCC Highways and the parish Council would be invited.

The Parking Officer stated parking on pavement was not within RCC's remit unless it breached yellow line restrictions. This excluded all of Whissendine, therefore if obstruction was caused and pedestrians couldn't use the footway it was a matter for negotiation, as stated by PC Appleton rather than the issue of penalty. Many present seemed of the opinion that this was less than satisfactory.

Mr Van der Voelsungen left the meeting.

5. The new building at the primary school

It was explained that this was required to meet current needs rather than any expansion of the school. At present the number on roll was 196, giving class sizes of under 30, which was the ideal. If there had to be an increase the maximum would be 210. Therefore there would be no increase in the number employed at the school in the foreseeable future.

As well as much needed extra teaching space, both staff and kitchen facilities would be extended. The construction of the new building was modular. This meant construction would be mainly off site, then being brought and put into place, to cause as little disruption as possible. It was expected that this would be done in the summer term.

6. Chairman's report of the work of the Parish Council

The main points of Mr Farr's report were:

a) Councillors and the Clerk were thanked for their work over the past year. The Chairman introduced Dr Susan Lammin who had been co-opted to join the Council to fill one of two vacancies that had existed since the May elections. Any one else interested was welcome to a PC meeting to learn more.

b) It was disappointing that there had been a long wait for the speed reactor for Ashwell Road, as this had been ordered the previous spring, but information had recently come from RCC that it was due to be installed by the end of March. It was hoped this would be as successful as the one in Melton Road had proved. It was to be paid for by the PC to meet a village requirement.

c) It was acknowledged that the Grapevine had been in difficulties. In order to avoid its loss Mr Lake had resumed the post of editor for a temporary period and the Parish Council was extremely grateful to him for this, and to the Clerk who had assisted by liaising with the advertisers. It was hoped that a new permanent editor would take over in the autumn. The Grapevine was very much a village asset to be supported.

d) The Chairmen was very pleased to welcome the new Ward Councillor. It was felt that when Whissendine did not have a voice at RCC its needs came very low in any list of priorities.

e) The PC had purchased new signage for the two entrances to The Banks. They gave a little of the history of the area and included the footpath map of Whissendine, so it was hoped this information would prove extremely useful. Installation would be as soon as weather permitted.

f) Repair/renewal of the footbridge across the brook was also awaiting better weather as dry and firm ground was needed by the contractors to prevent damage. The plan was for an improved bridge to be sited just a short distance downstream, with the banks supported to prevent further erosion.

g) At present many of Whissendine's street lights were maintained by the Parish Council. That was due to change with RCC planning to take responsibility for them all, and making a charge back to the village for running costs. Definite plans for this and a timetable for action were awaited.

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h) Problems in Cow Lane had been touched upon. Mr Farr concluded his report by informing those present that the most recent request from the Parish Council to RRC was for provision of a hard surfaced passing place in Cow Lane to alleviate damage to the verges and private driveways in the lower stretch of the lane.

7. Consultations:

a) The Village Green

After outlining the need to remove the existing post around the Village Green, The Chairman asked the meeting whether or not they should be replaced, and with what. The consensus was that something was needed to prevent heavy vehicles going on to the Green on The Nook and Cow Lane sides, and it was better that it was edged completely to avoid damage, but allow for grass cutting. The Chairman responded that the PC would look into the types of edging available.

b) A seat to commemorate the Queen's 90th birthday

The replacement/renewal of the existing seat on the Village Green was preferred to the siting of a new seat at another location.

8. Ward Councillor Keven Thomas

Mr Thomas thanked all those who had voted in the recent election. It had been a high turn out (40%) and he had received 65% of this site, which indicated very definitely that residents wanted someone who lived in the village to represent them. He promised to do this to the best of his ability. He was already getting to grips with several issues, and was planning to visit all the local organisations to meet those involved with them and get an idea of any particular needs. His contact details would be in the next issue of the Grapevine and he also welcomed an informal approach when he was out and about in the village with his dog.

9. A Neighbourhood Development Plan for Whissendine

Mrs Moss gave a definition of a Neighbourhood Development Plan and its greater importance to the Village Design Statement or Parish Plan, as, once adopted, it would be part of the Statutory Development Plan for Rutland, relating specifically to Whissendine. It could be used for guiding and shaping development in the parish (not just within the village boundaries) until 2036. However, it was a contribution to planning, not an strident by which development could be blocked.

Because of importance it would take a lot of preparation, and she had consulted extensively with a prominent member of Langham's team to ascertain the details of this. It would take at least three years preparation and a team of about twenty people would be needed to commit to the entire period. The cost would be about £4000, most of this going on printing as there had to be repeated consultation with all village residents.

RCC was obliged to support any parish wishing to undertake an NPD, but allowed to prioritise on funding and personnel to assist. As Oakham was being encouraged to begin its plan this year, it was fair to assume that Whissendine would have low priority, particularly because the planned rate of development in the area was very low. It was estimated at 3 houses per year on average over the entire period,

Asked about the advantages of such an undertaking Mrs Moss said she had concluded that where there was a particular issue (Langham was driven by the need to retain green space between the village boundary and Oakham) the effort was worthwhile, but otherwise probably not, as there were not the number of people who were prepared to make the necessary commitment. So far very few had shown any interest.

Mrs Moss was thanked by the Chairman and from the floor for the effort she had made examining the possibilities of a Whissendine NPD.

10. Phil Tatham & Colin Miles: the Whissendine website one year on

Phil observed that his aim a year ago had been to create a good website that was informed the community it served, and was kept up to date on a regular basis. He felt a village passed on an impression via how well its website was looked after, and Whissendine now had a very positive profile. There had been around 9,500 visitors over the course of the year with about 100 pages per day referenced and a large volume of emails generated. The most popular sites were the home, news and calendar pages, as was to be expected, but the area dedicated to the mill and the Parish Council also attracted a number of visitors.

Colin explained the usefulness of the Twitter feed. There were 170 regular followers, though at times a particular tweet that attracted interest could be circulated to many thousand.

Both were thanked for the many hours they gave as volunteers to the village website. One resident commented that it was a 'first class effort'. Colin and Phil hoped others would become involved in uploading.

11. Community Action: reports from village organisations

a) The Village Hall

No one from the Village Hall Committee was able to be present this year

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b) The Sports Club

After emergency meetings following the resignation of officers a temporary secretary and treasurer had been found. Their present task was to sort out and establish the legal position of the club and its trustees, finding new trustees if necessary. Then would come the task of assessing the club house and ascertaining what was needed to keep it going. The next meeting was planned for 6 April, and support from the village was much needed. The Cricket and Bowls clubs were flourishing with plenty of members, and so there was an urgent need to establish a sound administration. The club house had found a new cleaner and bookings were being taken once again.

c) Whissendine Good Neighbour Scheme

The Good Neighbour Scheme had now been in operation for six years helping people in need. Although the demand had been constant the number of volunteers had fallen, but Mrs Griffiths (Chairman) was pleased to report that after a Grapevine Appeal the number had increased to 30 from 22, which made it viable. Gwen has special thank for Sam Asplin (retired Ward Councillor) as his support had lead to the charge made for travel outside the village being brought into line with that of VAR, which was about the half the rate GNS had had to charge. It had meant more paperwork and record keeping, but had brought a total annual saving to those who most needed it of £626.

d) Whissendine Environmental Group

Mrs Stimson had sent a report that was read to the meeting. Most of the efforts of WEG over the year had been put into completing the project to create a natural area out of land that had no owner and had been left derelict. Thanks to grants from Cory and the PC a hedgerow had been restored, native wildflowers planted, and bird boxes put up. After thirty years the area had been restored from scrub, and natural diversity created. The Group had been nominated for a Melton Times community award and received a 'Highly Commended' certificate. Other activities included maintenance of the area below the seat in the Village Green, with additional bulbs and low growing plants to be put in shortly. Advice had also been given to the PC on the replacement of the bridge on The Banks and tree planting in the area.

e) Neighbourhood Watch

PC Appleton had noted briefly that there were efforts to get this started again after a lapse. The police were in support of these.

12. The Long Clawson Charity Report

The Clerk reported that 20 people in Whissendine had received £100 at Christmas following the application and declaration as published in the Grapevine. This was given in the form of vouchers for the village shop and the full £2000 had been spent. This was under the total amount received in rent for the land, but the land agent's fees meant there was a deficit of just under £30. However, this wasn't a problem as there had been a surplus in the previous year, and in any case reserves were held. The balance sheet for the year would be published on the website following the auditing of all Parish Council accounts at the end of the financial year.

13 Public question time.

Concern was expressed about the recent severe flooding in the centre of the village. It had followed a night of very heavy rain, when flood warnings had been issued, and was one of a number of flooded areas. The water could not leave the village as quickly as it came in, but there was no agreement on the reason for this. Mr Thomas advised that he would learn more after a village meeting with RCC Officers.

There was also an objection that The Nook received no attention from RCC and was in much need of maintenance. The surface and drainage at the eastern side needed inspection and repair, and the bank on the Play Area access lane had been damaged by vehicles and was thought to be in danger of collapse. Mr Thomas said he would also refer to this at his forthcoming meeting.

The meeting closed at 9.37pm