

ST. NICHOLAS HURST PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE PARISH COUNCIL
HELD VIRTUALLY VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS
ON MONDAY 24TH MAY 2021 AT 7.30 p.m.

PRESENT: Councillors W. Smith (in the Chair),
Curry, Holdstock, Lyon, I Smith and Watt (in part).

OFFICERS: Mrs. M. Bradshaw (Clerk).

PUBLIC: Thirty nine members of the public
Sue Corcoran, Wokingham Paper
Dom Palmer-Tomkinson, Leaper Land
Ben Marten, Leaper Land
Adam Towle, Leaper Land
Natalie Fellows, Rural Solutions

9133 Apologies for Absence

There were no apologies for absence.

9134 Prejudicial Interest

Councillor Watt declared an interest regarding application 211532 to be discussed under planning (agenda item number 9). The Chairman requested that, given the virtual nature of the call, Councillor Watt would be removed by the Clerk when this item was to be discussed. She would be re-entered thereafter.

9135 Election of Chairman

Councillor Wayne Smith confirmed that he was willing to stand as Chair again. No other nominations were received. This was proposed by Councillor Lyon and seconded by Councillor Curry. Agreed unanimously.

RESOLVED: that Councillor Wayne Smith is elected Chairman for the current Municipal Year.

9136 Election of Vice-Chairman

Councillor Lyon confirmed he was willing to stand as Vice Chair. No other nominations for Vice Chair were received. This was proposed by Councillor Smith and seconded by Councillor Curry. Agreed unanimously.

RESOLVED: that Councillor Alastair Lyon is elected as Vice-Chairman for the current Municipal Year.

The Clerk confirmed that, given the nature of the virtual meeting, she would ask Councillors to electronically complete their acceptance of office forms and return to her for signing.

RESOLVED: Councillors acceptance of office forms to be returned to the Clerk immediately.

9137 **Minutes**

The Minutes of the Meeting held on the 12th April 2021 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman. Councillor Watt confirmed that she had not yet had sight of the minutes. The Clerk confirmed that, now agreed, these would be circulated to her.

9138 **Matters Arising**

The following matters were noted:

- public complaints continue to be received regarding overflowing glass at the site of The Green Man Public House bottle banks. In addition to glass, rubbish is also being left. Bottle bins remain at The Castle Inn and the Chairman asked Councillor Curry if the Village Halls could once again be considered for housing bottle banks. Councillor Curry explained that the previous reluctance for this site was associated with the high footfall of young children and the potential for broken glass in the car park. She would, however, raise it again with the Village Halls committee;
- the Chairman is awaiting a quote from Volker Highways to paint the Village gates;
- an order has been placed for a replacement bench in School Road playpark;
- the Council's landscape contractor is hoping to secure the sleepers, which are required to complete the works at the allotments, this coming week;
- Councillor Watt queried when the donation, agreed at the last meeting, would be paid to the Church. The Chairman confirmed that it would be paid at the point the works commence. Councillor Watt believed they had started;
- the Chairman to seek an update from Wokingham Borough Council (WBC) as to the status of the planned pedestrian crossing at Dinton Pastures/Davis Street; and
- an order has been placed for a memorial bench for Howard Larkin to be situated at the allotments.

RESOLVED: Councillor Curry to ask the Hurst Village Halls committee to re-consider the location of bottle banks in the hall car park.

Public Forum

9139 The Chairman welcomed 40 members of the public, including a member of the press, to the public forum. Additionally, he welcomed Dom Palmer-Tomkinson, Adam Towle and Ben Marten from Leaper Land, alongside Natalie Fellows from Rural Solutions. These four representatives were in attendance to present their proposal for land off Broadcommon Road and to invite contributions to the design process at this early stage.

Mr Palmer Tomkinson explained the ambition to create up to 33 plots for new custom and self-build homes. The proposal includes on-site affordable housing, new public open space and extensive new planting.

It is the intention of the whole project team to create an exemplar custom and self-build project in Hurst which has enduring qualities and will stand the test of time. The design will be sympathetic to the village, the existing and the new community, the natural environment and the surrounding landscape.

Mr Towle went on to present a short video outlining the proposal. He further explained how custom and self-build gives the end-user control over the design of their home. The process empowers people to build a house which suits their needs, thereby avoiding the generic designs offered by corporate housebuilders which rarely reflect local identity or help build a greater sense community. Because the end-user is building their own home, they are more inclined to build to a higher quality, use better-performing materials and build more sustainably. A design code would control the overall appearance of the whole development whilst still allowing the end-user the freedom to configure the house design to match their needs and preferences.

Ms Fellows explained how the results of the Neighbourhood Plan survey (dated September–October 2019) confirmed 32% of respondents or their family members will require a new home in the next five years with 22% of the respondents stating that there is a need for more self-build homes within the parish. For this reason, she believed the proposals appear to be of interest locally, based on the results of the parish questionnaire.

Ms Fellows confirmed that the pandemic had not enabled them to present an exhibition in the way they would have liked too. However, she did invite any questions and confirmed that she would like to hold further virtual workshops or organise some exhibition boards in a suitable outside space if possible.

To maintain order, the public were asked to raise their virtual hands if they had a question and the Clerk would admit them in order. The Chairman confirmed that any questions pertaining to any part of the agenda would need to be raised at this point of the meeting and questions from the public would not be dealt with outside of the Public Forum.

Question 1 from Mrs Lou Robinson:

Bearing in mind this development is outside of the development limit and on a green field site, how confident are you that this application will be approved and why?

Answer 1 from Natalie Fellows:

WBC's Local Plan is not up to date and is based upon an out of date housing provision. WBC has not provided sufficient self-build plots and the latest NPFF guidance requires a broad range of property types. We have been engaging with WBC since last year and are extremely keen to work with Hurst with their emerging neighbourhood plan. WBC need to re-examine development boundaries and we consider that this is an appropriate development given the size of Hurst. A balance needs to be struck which caters for everyone and growth needs to be proportional.

Question 2 from Mr Victor Boardman:

The video you have shown is wonderful and shows an image of mature trees across the site. However, the field currently has no trees. The road is a single track with no passing space and potentially 66 cars, requiring access and parking, will be generated. Visitor parking will additionally be required. What is the affordability and price range of these properties? What are public transport links like?

Answer 2 from Natalie Fellows:

The plan is for a range of landscaping and specimen trees to be planted. Experts have been engaged with from the start. If the plans are approved, there will be further reserved matters. There will be one point of entrance/exit from Broadcommon Lane with a separate pedestrian access. Technical studies have been undertaken by highways consultants and it is defined as a low traffic lane. In terms of car parking, we will be providing as much parking in the plots as possible with scope for visitor parking on verges. We will be overproviding. A small communal car park will be situated at the rear of the apartments and some of the 2/3 bedroom dwellings will have garages. I can come back with exact figures.

We will work with WBC to find a suitable split between social rented and shared ownership properties. Our aim will be to deliver in a traditional way with people with a local connection to the area being able to apply.

Answer 2 from Adam Towle:

One of the major benefits of self-build is the ability to phase the works which can ease cash flow and enable a specification to develop over time. Properties usually cost two-thirds of the price of properties purchased directly from a developer. It is found people often spend the same amount eventually but consider they achieve more for their money.

I understand there is nearby Twyford Station and national cycle routes. A bus runs from School Road on an hourly basis.

Question 3 from Mr Robert Coates:

What previous discussions have you had with WBC and the Parish Council and what level of confidence in approval being granted do you have? Whose idea was it to place the maximum number of dwellings bordering the existing properties nearby? Do you think local residents may look at things differently to you? What percentage of the development is a buffer and could the village green you envisage (in the centre of the development) be added to the existing planned buffer?

Answer 3 from Adam Towle:

We have engaged with WBC as part of the pre-application process and have been in conversation for some time. We have been refining our plans over the last 18 months. Layout and density, along with highways and access, has been a key focus. We wish to continue having ongoing dialogue with WBC, the Parish Council and residents. We want to go about things in the right way, constantly refining our plans and welcoming feedback.

Our current density per hectare is lower than Hurst's current density. As you head towards the countryside, you would reasonably want to see density reduce.

We are working closely with neighbours and exploring the possibility of "giving" land to maintain their privacy. I do not know off the top of my head the percentage of the development which is denoted "buffer". In urban design terms, the site identified as the village green would not be removed to add to the current planned buffer.

Question 4 from Mrs Maggie Sanderson:

If there are 33 planned homes there needs to be more than one entry/exit point.

Answer 4 from Natalie Fellows:

We are only required to provide one access for this development.

Question 5 from Mr Matt Ratcliffe

The field has not been touched for years and is full of wildlife including nesting buzzards and great crested newts. Why can you not build on a brownfield site?

Answer 5 from Natalie Fellows:

We have looked at the biodiversity and undertaken ecological studies. We want to enhance the ecology and create wildlife corridors. People want to live in an area like this and we want it to be green.

Question 6 from Mrs Jo Newbold:

Mrs Newbold confirmed she was the newly appointed Chair of Hurst Village Society and had listened to the presentation with interest. She questioned the feasibility of the traffic study taken on Broadcommon Lane given that we have been in lockdown for so long. How realistic are the results? At last 66 cars and visitors will be down a single track lane which has ditches each side.

Answer 6 from Natalie Fellows:

We recognise these are not normal times. However, transport consultants have looked at the data and we feel confident that we may not revert back to pre-lockdown volumes of traffic.

Question 7 from Mr Wayne Loader

What is the impact on utilities/amenities and the local school of this proposed development? At what point will Hurst no longer be a village?

Answer 7 from Natalie Fellows:

We have closely looked at the level of growth and what the village can sustain. It is important that there is population growth as families wish to stay in the village. It will remain a village.

Question 8 from Ms Nikki Uwart:

The lane is dangerous in the winter with ditches each side and limited passing spaces.

Answer 8 from Natalie Fellows:

A clear emerging theme is concern regarding the lane and its suitability. We will feed this back and respond. We note an increase in cyclists and walkers during the pandemic and hope this continues so easing the volume of cars going forward.

Answer 8 from Adam Towle:

We also have the safety of our home owners to consider and this is a priority too.

Question 9 from Councillor Wayne Smith:

The Chairman explained his role as Executive Member for Planning for WBC. He is responsible for looking after the Local Plan. The favoured site at Grazeley (which would have provided a land supply until 2052), was quashed due to the extension of the evacuation zone. This has required all land to be re-looked at within Wokingham Borough and master planning is being undertaken now. WBC is hoping to go out to consultation in October 2021.

During the pandemic 1100 homes have been built within the Borough and we have a healthy 5 year land supply. WBC's preference is for packaged sites with schools and SANGS included.

When will this application be presented to WBC? We need to erect a marquee in an open space where further information can be presented.

Answer 9 from Natalie Fellows:

Following consultation, we are hoping to have 1:1 sessions with residents with a view to an outline application being submitted by the end of June 2021. Covid has not been ideal and ordinarily we would welcome workshop style meetings.

Answer 9 from Adam Towle:

We would welcome the opportunity to speak face to face. We are very grateful for all of your time. Thank you.

The Chairman asked Councillors if they had any further questions which they did not. This concluded proceedings relating to the presentation by Rural Solutions.

Question 10 from Mr Paul Palmer

Councillor Watt has recently submitted a planning application relating to the building of four properties in the village. Do you feel, in your role as a Parish Councillor, this may prejudice how you comment on other applications?

Answer 10 from Councillor Watt

The application is not in my name and I declared an interest in application 211532 at the beginning of this meeting. I do not believe it would prejudice my ability to comment on other applications pertaining to Hurst. I have no further comment to make.

9140 **Review of Committees and appointments to Outside Bodies:**

RESOLVED: that Members be appointed to the following bodies for the current Municipal Year:

Allotments – Councillors Curry.

Playing field and open spaces, including monthly risk assessments – all Parish Councillors.

9141 **Appointments of Representatives on Outside Bodies**

RESOLVED: that Members be appointed to represent the Council as indicated:

Village Halls – Councillor Curry.

Parish Web Site Co-ordinator – Clerk with support from Councillor Lyon.

Neighbourhood Planning Working Group – Clerk and Councillor W. Smith.

Police Interface & NAG – Chairman to check with NAG as to status of group.

Campaign Against Waste – Chairman to check with WBC as to status of group.

9142 **Planning Applications**

Members discussed the applications attached to these Minutes. It was agreed that Members had no adverse comments with regards to applications 210778, 211368 and 211598. They objected to application 211532. Application 21147 was still to be reviewed.

Discussion followed regarding application 211667 – prior approval submission of the installation of an 18m phase 8 monopole to be located at land at Broadwater Lane. Members agreed unanimously that they did not support the application. The Chairman noted it was very apparent that the applicant had not visited the site as there is no screening and no streetlights – both of which are referred to in the application.

RESOLVED:

- The Clerk to communicate the Parish Council's planning comments to WBC.

9143 **Finance**

The following accounts were presented for approval this month:

May-21									
						Main Fund	CIL*	Neighbourhood Planning	Total
Previous Balance					£	45958.08	133407.59	-2898.12	176467.55
The following accounts are presented for approval this month:									
Ref	Expenditure - Payee								
2.1	5G (telephone April 2021)					28.86			
2.2	Thames Water (School Rd)					20.34			
2.3	Rospa Playsafety (Annual playpark inspections)					271.80			
2.4	SCS (Wild flower meadow at community orchard)					570.00			
2.5	SCS (new gates & maintenance at allotments)					2064.48			
2.6	SCS (additional planting at community orchard)					168.00			
2.7	David Weller (internal audit 2020/21)					50.00			
2.8	Cyan (memorial bench for allotment)					575.00			
2.9	Playdale (replacement bench for School Rd playpark)					370.80			
2.10	SCS (monthly grounds maintenance)					699.29			
2.11	M Bradshaw (reimbursement for tennis nets & posts)						411.54		
2.12	5G (telephone May 2021)					35.47			
2.13	CPRE (annual subscription)					36.00			
2.14	NSALG (annual subscription)					90.00			
2.15	M Bradshaw				Salary (April 2021)	1037.98			
					(Income Tax)	-8.20			
					(National Insurance)	-28.32			
					(Pension)	-41.52			
					Mileage (80 miles @ 40.9p)	32.72			
					Office	40.00	1032.66		
2.16	NEST April (Employee pension £41.52 + Employer pension £31.14)					72.66			
2.17	HMRC April (Employee's Income Tax £8.40 & National Insurance £28.92)					37.32			
						6122.68	411.54	0.00	6534.22
Income									
	Precept (40%)					17880.00			
	VAT refund (1/4/20-31/3/21)					3148.18			
	Allotment rents (Late payments 2021/22 season)					75.00			
Total Income						21103.18	0.00	0.00	21103.18
Revised balance c/f						60938.58	132996.05	-2898.12	191036.51

9144 **Annual Governance Statement 2020/21**

The Clerk confirmed that the Internal Audit for 2020/21 had been concluded and the resulting report would be circulated to all Members. Given the virtual nature of the meeting, the Chairman agreed to sign the following day, on behalf of the Parish Council, the Annual Governance Statement.

9145 **Accounting Statement 2020/21**

The Chairman would sign the following day, on behalf of the Parish Council, the Accounting Statements for 2020/21.

9146 **Neighbourhood Planning Update**

The Chairman explained that the Working Group had not met since February 2021 and a variety of issues including work commitments and ill health were adding to delays in reconvening. He hoped that a meeting could be scheduled in the near future but had no further update to bring to this meeting.

9147 **Rospa Play Park Inspections**

The Chairman confirmed that he was meeting on site with the Clerk this week to go through the inspection reports for School Road, Davis Street and Martineau Green playparks. A number of issues have been raised by the inspectors and require attention. The Chairman and Clerk will try and ascertain the work required and seek quotes from suitable contractors.

RESOLVED: The Clerk and Chairman to bring an update to the next meeting of the Parish Council.

9148 **Correspondence**

Youth Budget

The Chairman understood that following the pandemic the youth club is now looking to reopen in the village. To be run by local parents, the Chairman felt it important that the Parish Council supports their work for young people. He confirmed that a budget of £1000 per year is usually allocated to Youth but has been largely underspent in recent years. He proposed that an annual donation of £500 be made to the youth club. Additionally, the club should be asked if there is anything they specifically require additional funds for.

RESOLVED: members agreed unanimously to support an annual payment of £500 per year to the Youth Club. The Clerk would write to the Club asking if any additional funds were sought to support additional expenditure.

9149 **Information Reports**

Allotments

Councillor Curry advised that the allotment plots are now all fully taken with the new “quarter” size plots being an attractive proposition to new allotment holders. There is only one person currently on the waiting list. The Clerk and Councillor Curry to agree a tenancy agreement document to be given to holders.

RESOLVED: a tenancy agreement to be drafted by the Clerk for approval by Members.

The Chairman closed the meeting by thanking all those present for their input and participation.

The meeting ended at 9.38p.m.

Signed.....

Date.....