

BRERETON AND RAVENHILL PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of a Parish Council meeting held at the Parish Hall, Ravenhill Park, Brereton, on Tuesday, 7th February 2017.

Present

Councillors Miss IJ Brown [Vice-Chairman in the Chair], K Ansell, Mrs P Ansell, Mrs DM Easton, R Easton, Mrs G Harvey, TA Jones and GN Molineux.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors H Farnath, PA Fisher [Chairman], Miss C Harvey, N Parton and Mrs HJ Southwell.

Mr PG Davies, the Parish Clerk, was also in attendance.

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest given at the commencement of the meeting.

2. MINUTES

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting held on 10th January 2017, be approved and signed as a correct record.

3. POLICE MATTERS

The Chairman welcomed Chief Inspector Geoffrey Knight and PC Jo Manser [Neighbourhood Officer] to the meeting.

Chief Inspector Knight updated the Parish Council as follows:-

- To improve visible policing in this area, two Police Officers were now based in Rugeley and they were supported by four PCSOs and a significant number of special constables who were mainly on duty at weekends. Details of shift patterns were explained to Members.
- Following a review of Police resources, one armed response vehicle now served Brereton, Rugeley and Cannock.
- In the next two years the Police could lose up to 25% of its officers. Most of this reduction was due to officers retiring from the service.
- A recruitment drive was underway and interviews were being held for both new recruits and for officers being transferred from other forces,
- An update was given on crime statistics and details were circulated at the meeting.
- The Police were aware of reports of anti-social behaviour in Ravenhill Park and they would continue to monitor the situation.
- The Police undertook to make more use of the Police Office at the Parish Hall.

Views expressed by Members included the following:-

- There was real concern about burglaries from dwellings, particularly amongst the elderly. Members offered to help the Police with the circulation of leaflets highlighting the importance of security of dwellings.

- Reference was made to the fact that Staffordshire Police had not accessed Section 106 monies from developers. Examples were given of action taken by other forces and Inspector Knight undertook to raise this matter with his Senior Officer.

The Chairman thanked both Chief Inspector Knight and PC Jo Manser for attending the meeting.

4. BRERETON LIBRARY

The Chairman welcomed Lillian Thompson to the meeting.

Lillian confirmed that Redbrook Hayes Primary School was not in a position to take on the management of the library. A letter outlining the County Council's position had been circulated.

The Committee noted that the County Council intended to keep the library open but did not indicate how this would be achieved.

Councillor GN Molineux kindly agreed to ascertain whether the District Council could offer any support to ensure a library service was retained in the parish.

RESOLVED

1. That the school's decision not to take on the management of the library be fully supported and they be thanked for the considerable efforts they had made in assessing the viability of the proposal.
2. That the Clerk write to the County Council to seek clarification as to their future intentions for the library service in Brereton and Ravenhill.

[The Chairman, in thanking Lillian Thompson for attending the meeting, asked her to keep the Parish Council informed of future developments.]

5. ZIP WIRE – RAVENHILL PARK

The Clerk reported that the Parks and Open Spaces Manager at the District Council had advised that providers tried to avoid age distinctions as the abilities of children varied at different ages. He did undertake to keep the Parish Council informed as the scheme progressed.

The Parish Council expressed some concern with this response as they considered it absolutely essential that an age limit should be stipulated for children using the zip wire. This was the case in respect of the paddling pool where the age limit had been set at twelve years. Not to impose an age limit would create obvious problems and potential dangers for younger children

RESOLVED

That the Clerk arrange to convey these views to the District Council.

6. MAJOR ADDRESS CHANGE - BRERETON

The Clerk reported that responses were still awaited from Cannock Chase District Council and the Chamber of Commerce. He undertook to send reminders to both.

7. WORLD BOOK NIGHT 2017

The Clerk reported that the Parish Council had made a bid for up to 200 books to be used

as part of World Book Night 2017. Councillor PA Fisher [Chairman] had kindly agreed to receive the books on behalf of the Parish Council.

8. STAFFORDSHIRE LOCAL COMMUNITY FUND

The Parish Council noted that no response had been received to date from the County Council or Councillor A Dudson regarding the bid which had been made for £500.00 towards environmental improvements in Wharf Road.

The Clerk undertook to speak to Councillor Dudson to ascertain the current position in relation to the application.

9. BEST KEPT VILLAGE COMPETITION

The Parish Council had been invited to participate in the Best Kept Village Competition administered by the Community Council of Staffordshire.

RESOLVED

That no action be taken.

10. MAJOR VILLAGE FESTIVALS AND EVENTS

The Community Council of Staffordshire had invited the Parish Council to list any major festivals and events taking place in Brereton and Ravenhill over the next twelve months.

RESOLVED

That in his response, the Clerk make reference to both Remembrance Sunday and Brereton Carnival.

11. CANNOCK CHASE DISTRICT COUNCIL – RUGELEY AND BRERETON IMPROVEMENT SCHEME

The Clerk circulated plans showing details of this improvement scheme. The scheme included cycle and other physical linkages in and around the Rugeley and Brereton areas. The District Council, who were formulating a bid of £535,000.00 to the Local Enterprise Agency had requested a letter of support from the Parish Council.

RESOLVED

That the District Council be informed that the Parish Council fully supports the scheme and would, in particular, highlight the following:-

- the proposed improved footpath link to Rugeley Town Station is strongly supported. It will not only relieve pressure on Wharf Road but also improve access for pedestrians;
- the Parish Council again strongly supports the proposed resurfacing of the canal towpath. It must, however, be of sufficiently good quality to allow cyclists and pedestrians to use at the same time. The surface must also be of sufficient width and quality to enable less able walkers and parents with pushchairs to use it.

12. POT HOLES

The Parish Council considered the contents of a letter from County Highways, a copy of which had been circulated.

RESOLVED

That the Parish Council place on record its thanks to Councillor PA Fisher [Chairman] for the work he had done in locating pot holes requiring repair and submitting these details to the County Council for action to be taken.

13. BREACH OF PLANNING CONTROL – OAK TREE FARM

The Parish Council considered the contents of letters from Amanda Milling, MP, and the Chief Executive of Staffordshire County Council.

Bearing in mind the history of this case, Members did not have confidence that the action being taken would satisfactorily resolve this matter. Reference was made to the County Council being informed in June 2016 that fires were burning, following which warnings were issued, and despite an initial short period of calm, the owner had since repeatedly committed serious offences.

The Parish Council continued to have serious doubts about the effectiveness of injunction relief for reasons previously stated. Members remained of the view that the use of compulsory purchase powers would have been far more effective as the landowner could not then again be in breach of planning and environmental law. Any compensation to the owner would be available to cover existing fines, court costs and civil claims.

RESOLVED

That the Clerk arrange to convey the Parish Council's views to the Chief Executive of the County Council, with a copy being sent to the local MP.

14. COUNCIL TAX REFERENDUM

The Parish Council considered the contents of a letter from the Department of Communities and Local Government [DCLG], a copy of which had been circulated.

Members pointed out that the problem was not about taking on additional responsibilities, as implied in the letter, it was rather the large cuts in funding from central government that had created the problem.

RESOLVED

That following conflicting information received by the Parish Council, the Clerk make a Freedom of Information request to the DCLG in respect of the following:-

- ✚ “Can you please advise as to whether Cannock Chase District Council received additional grant funding as was the case with neighbouring, more prosperous, District Councils in Staffordshire?
- ✚ Did the District Council make application by the deadline date for this funding or were they never invited to do so?”

15. PARISH HALL MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the Parish Hall Management Committee held on 11th January 2017, be approved.

16. FINANCE AND MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the Finance and Management Committee held on 11th January 2017, be approved.

17. PLANNING COMMITTEE

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the Planning Committee held on 10th January 2017, be approved.

18. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

RESOLVED

The Parish Council had previously agreed that the next meeting would be held on 7th March 2017, at 7.30 pm.

19. PUBLIC FORUM

There were no members of the public present at this juncture in the meeting.

[Chairman]