

**Minutes of an Extraordinary Meeting of the Parish Council held in The Memorial Hall, Salford Priors, on Wednesday, 30 October 2013**

**Present:** Councillors J R Stedman, (Chairman), K Littleford, K A James, L Maude, M Muldowney, D C Penn and L W Wright,

**Also in attendance:** Ian Woodland, Development Manager, Jephson Housing, Neil Gilliver, Development Officer, Warwickshire Rural Housing, Phil Ward, Rural Housing Enabler, Warwickshire Rural Community Council; Phil Brown, JPP Consulting, Wendy Merchant, Estates Surveyor, WCC John Gordon Development & Enabling Officer Stratford on Avon District Council, S Harte, SPPC Clerk, Warwickshire County Councillor Mike Brain, District Councillors Maurice Howse, Jonathon Spence & and forty-nine members of the public.

**1. Apologies for absence**

None

**2. Co-option of new Councillor**

The Chairman invited Mr. Liam Maude to join the Parish Council.

Mr. Maude read out his declaration of acceptance of office and undertaking to observe the code of conduct of Salford Priors Parish Council.

Mr Maude accepted and signed the Declaration of Office of Parish Councillor

**3. Declarations of Office and Disclosure of Interests**

Members were reminded that they must act solely in the public interest and should never improperly confer an advantage or disadvantage on any person or act to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their family, a friend, or close associate.

**a. Register of Interests:**

Members were reminded of the need to keep their register of interests up to date.

**b. Dispensations**

The Clerk confirmed that there were no written requests for disclosable pecuniary interest's dispensations.

**c. Declaration of Interests:**

Members were asked to disclose any disclosable pecuniary interests in items on the Agenda and their nature. Councillors with a disclosable pecuniary interest were required to leave the room for the relevant agenda item. Members were asked to declare any other disclosable interests in items on the Agenda and their nature. No interests were declared.

**Open Forum**

Members of the public attending the meeting were asked if they wished to comment on planning application **13/01486/FUL** Land Off Tothall Lane, Salford Priors; Proposed: Demolition of existing sheds and construction of 6 no. affordable homes (5 no. 2 bed and 1 no. 3 bed) and associated works, including new dropped kerb, new access and footpath on County Council Land which had been made and subsequently withdrawn by Jephson Housing following strong objections from Salford Priors Parish Council.

A resident Mr Bury asked if the application was to be resubmitted and was advised that Jephson Housing's intention and hope was to resubmit if it could get the support of SPPC and villagers.

It was agreed that there is a strong requirement for social housing in the Parish but it was felt that the site at Tothall Lane was not the right location. A discussion into the seven different sites originally offered followed and the meeting was informed why Tothall Lane was eventually chosen. More discussion followed as to why the Parish Council had supported this location originally but were now opposing it, and the meeting heard that only two of the Councillors remained on the Parish Council and that planning matters had evolved in the intervening years. Particular reference was made to the progress of the district council's Core Strategy and the change also to national planning policy.

Resident Mrs Dare expressed her concern that the Parish Council had changed its mind resulting in £30k being wasted on the design process why was this allowed to happen why was this the only site that the Parish Council considered. Mr Ward agreed and responded that the parish council's change of stance was baffling especially with all of the correspondence between him and the clerk chasing finalisation of the scheme.

District Councillor Jonathon Spence said that the need for affordable homes was not being questioned and that was not the debate for this meeting. What was, was finding the right location which was accepted by both residents and the Parish Council. He suggested that the original seven proposed sites be re-examined through the Neighbourhood Development Plan and local consultation with residents and this would identify the most appropriate development site for the village. Mr Gilliver responded that this had already been carried out in the consultation exercise.

Resident Mr Band said that the first public consultation exercise was floored as some residents abused the process of sticking pins into the map it had not been policed, this comment was strongly refuted by Mr Gilliver.

Mr Ward then went through each of the seven prospective sites in detail, resulting why the land at Tothall Lane was identified as the option to be progressed and this had the support of the Parish Council.

One resident suggested that as a new planning application for up to eighty residences was due to be made, perhaps the Jephson's development could be considered outdated. Neil Gilliver of Warwickshire Rural Housing responded saying that the large development was still speculative, whilst Tothall Lane was ready to deliver six new homes now. The meeting was told Tothall Lane was a rural exception site and thus designated for affordable housing and all six houses would be available for people living in or with a connection to Salford Priors. The properties would be allocated through SDC's Home Choice Plus Scheme. The question of WCC tenant farmers being offered these houses was briefly discussed.

The representatives from Jephson's and Warwickshire Rural Housing fielded a number of other questions from residents and councillors.

Open forum closed at 19.52.

#### **4. Planning Application: 13/01486/FUL Land Off Tothall Lane, Salford Priors;**

The Chairman Cllr Stedman invited the representatives from the various bodies to present their case to the council.

Cllr. Stedman gave an overview of the application and whilst he acknowledged that the planning objections made about the application were weak the Parish Council had to acknowledge the amount of opposition from a large number of local residents

Representatives from Jephson Housing, Warwickshire Rural Housing, Warwickshire Rural Community Council, JJP Consulting, Morton Wykes Kramer, WCC and SDC were asked to comment on the planning application.

Mr. Ian Woodland of Jephson Housing said there was a need to build affordable housing for future generations and Jephsons were ready to proceed with this scheme. Public money had been secured, namely £110k from Stratford on Avon District Council and £76k from HCA and they had a site which the previous Parish Council had supported. He advised that the funding offers expired in March 2015 so there was a requirement to either progress with the scheme or to urgently look at another, more receptive, village. He stated that £30k had been spent on design fees and a large number of man-hours invested. Resources were still being put into the scheme up to 24 July this year when it was discovered that the Parish Council had lodged strong objections. He said that public money was not handed out easily and the HCA monitored every penny allocated and that having to go back and report that the Parish Council had withdrawn their support put everyone in an embarrassing situation. Jephsons wished to move forward with the project with the backing of the Parish Council and the village he did not expect the full backing of residents as there were always going to be local opposition to any site but the Parish Council had a duty to look at the broader issues.

Mr. Neil Gilliver, Development Officer, Warwickshire Rural Housing, advised that it had taken a couple of years to gain funding as small exception sites took a long time. They were difficult as they were outside normal planning consensus and securing funding was difficult. The development needed to be completed by March 2015 in order to retain the funding awards. If later it would be lost and therefore the building needed to start by spring 2014. He said the plans had been carried out in good faith and no information had been received from SPPC that their views were changing. If they had the process would not have got so far.

The support for the Neighbourhood Development Plan process and all the sites should be revisited was dismissed by Mr Gilliver it would just prolong any decision being made.

Mr Ward said he could not understand why the Parish Council had reversed its decision to support this proposal; he had been in contact with the previous clerk and not once was given any indication that support would be withdrawn.

In conclusion on summing up their presentation the developers stated they are requesting the Parish Council to fully support the development of land off Tothall Lane for development of an affordable housing scheme this would allow the scheme to progress to conclusion quickly despite the residents objections this is a normal reaction to any development affecting a locality but this scheme has wider benefits to the residents of the Parish who are desperately seeking affordable housing.

Mr Woodland said that the Parish Council had an opportunity to support the development of the land at Tothall Lane and despite what are basically local objectors the Parish Council could make a vast difference to six families in desperate need to be housed.

The Chairman thanked those that had contributed to the meeting and said that members would consider the issues raised during discussion at the ordinary meeting of the parish council on the 20th November 2013.

## **5. Staffing Matters**

### **Exclusion of the Public from the Meeting**

**The Chairman moved:** “That in view of the confidential nature of the business about to be transacted, it is advisable in the public interest that the press and public be temporarily excluded and they are instructed to withdraw”

**Agreed**

Prior to receiving a report from the Staffing Consultative Group the Clerk to the Council read out a personal statement advising members that she had withdrawn her notice of intent to resign, that she had been subjected

to unfair criticism and being incompetent, the Clerk wished to seek redress from the council in the form of a public apology.

In accordance with the Standing Orders the Clerk withdrew from the meeting to allow the matter to be fully debated in the employee's absence.

The Chairman invited Cllr. James to make a report on behalf of the Staffing Consultative Group.

Cllr James preceded what he was going to say by stating the intent of requesting this item on the agenda was to discuss the Clerk's notice to resign and to set in progress temporary arrangements for the November meeting, however, following the Clerk's statement that the resignation notice has been withdrawn he would now comment on the probationary period and issues raised in the personal statement.

Council debated at length the various issues raised in the statement, and the process required to take the matter forward.

Cllr James said that any grievance the Clerk or anyone had against any member of the council should be made in writing in accordance with the Standing Order, the council would investigate the matter, it was not for the council this evening to act on a verbal statement, a member of the council has the same right as anyone to be made fully aware of any allegation in writing prior to the council investigating any matter and the member(s) would not be identified until any investigation was complete.

The Clerk's probationary period interview had not taken place, the Council resolved to extend the Clerk's employment probationary period until Thursday 21<sup>st</sup> November 2013 to allow the Staffing Consultative Group to carry out the interview with the Clerk week commencing Monday 11<sup>th</sup> November 2013.

Cllr James asked members to e-mail him any issues they wished the Staffing Consultative Group to raise with the clerk during the interview meeting.

The council noted the role of the Clerk's mentor Mr. Mike Philpott over the last three months and his input.

The Staffing Consultative Group will report back to the November meeting of the Parish Council.

Communications – It was agreed that there had been a breakdown in communications between all parties some relating to technical issues with e-mails, however, it was agreed that there was a need for improvement as a matter of urgency.

The breakdown in communication had affected the ability of the council to operate in an efficient manner and had led to unforeseen embarrassment of the council in public.

The council's mobile telephone number to be issued and made known by the Clerk without further delay.

All councillors commented during the wide ranging debate and raised various issues, concerns together with expressions of support and agreement on various points that were being debated.

Cllr Maude requested that the Staffing Consultative Group make known to the Clerk at its earliest opportunity the council's decisions relating to the extension of the probationary period, the arrangements for the interview and the requirement for the release of the mobile telephone number.

Cllr. James gave assurance that this would be done in person the next day Thursday 31<sup>st</sup> October 2013.

The Chairman thanked members for the thoroughness of the debate and the time given to this item following what had been a contentious item Tothall Lane Planning in the evening.

**6. Closure of meeting**

The Chairman closed this part of the meeting at 22.10

Signed.....

Date.....