

GREAT GRANSDEN PARISH COUNCIL
Minutes of the Parish Meeting held on 4th January 2016

Those present were:

Stephanie Beaumont Chairman

Ian Selkirk Vice Chairman

Diane Taylor Clerk

Ann Cosgrave Parish Councillor

Jeff Gorton Parish Councillor

George Craze Parish Councillor

Michael Capps Parish Councillor

Alan Rowbotham Parish Councillor

Andrew Pett Parish Councillor

Debi Pearce Parish Councillor

District Councillor Barbara Boddington, County Councillor Julie Wisson

Nigel Finney Executive Director (Operations) Luminus

and 1 member of the public

1. The meeting was opened at 7.30 pm with a silent prayer.

2. Apologies. There were apologies for absence from District Councillor Richard West and for the late arrival of Parish Councillor Ian Selkirk (arriving during open forum).

3. Declarations of Interest.

Correspondence

11.2. Sand Path Stile. George Craze declared an interest as the land owner.

4. Minutes of the previous monthly meeting held on 7th December 2015 which had been circulated, were approved and accordingly signed by the chairman.

5. OPEN FORUM. The meeting was closed for thirty five minutes and members of the public were invited to speak. Councillor Julie Wisson reported that the Autumn Statement in December has left CCC with a £3 million shortfall but the percentage increase in council tax has not been capped. Previously if this was raised by more than 1.99% a referendum had to be held. Now there can be a 4% increase before a referendum is needed. Each 1% increase raises £2.4 million. Council tax increases will be discussed in February. The District Council is still capped at 1.99%, but no increase at HDC. Nigel Finney then spoke on behalf of Luminus to give an overview in the light of ongoing issues relating to Webbs Meadow. He had previously met both district councillors to discuss the problems. When issues arise, Luminus will investigate, talk to the tenants but there are limitations as to what can be done. Luminus lets some 500/600 properties each year with 2,200 people on the waiting list. There are 4 housing bands, with only those in the top 2 being housed; Band A are classed as homeless and Band B are those who have a medical need or are fleeing from a particular problem, Bands C and D are those classed as not having a high degree of need. He stated that with one of the properties in Webbs Meadow there were 20 bids, the successful tenant being highest on the priority list on medical needs. There was only 1 local person who bid but was refused as only aged 33. The other property had 19 bids and the successful tenant was second on the list as the first person was only 23. No local person bid. The highest priority when the bidding closes will be offered the property. Mr Finney went on to explain the choice based housing system whereby one application for housing is completed enabling details to be sent to all the landlords in the county. HDC is one of the authorities administering the system; a computer gives prospective tenants points and automatically sends details to the landlord when a property is bid for. When asked about matching peoples' expectations, Mr Finney explained that Luminus makes it clear what facilities are available but Webbs Meadow properties have no restrictions about the number of vehicles tenants can have. When asked about the suitability of the Webbs Meadow properties when tenants have adult children (originally the bungalow being retirement properties), Mr Finney commented

Open Forum – continued:

that it is all about supply and demand. If a person is in Band A and they meet the requirements, Luminus are required to house them. Once a tenancy is signed, there is no restriction on who is living there provided the tenant does not make the property overcrowded in which case environmental health can take action. Councillors raised concerns about the specific issues relating to Webbs Meadow. Mr Finney stated that Luminus is taking action and tenants have been told in the strongest terms that they must stop. They will be looking into the matter again this week and gathering evidence although they are governed by the Housing Act and the tenancy agreement as to what they can do. The chairman thanked Mr Finney for coming, commenting that had his staff answered the Parish Council's questions fully, he would not have needed to attend.

6. Matters Arising: 6.1. Anglian Water. Following the disruption to the water supply in the village, the clerk wrote to Anglian Water seeking recompense for the poor service. No response has yet been received.

6.2. Webbs Meadow. A meeting has been arranged between Luminus and one of the affected neighbours concerning the ongoing problems. Jeff Gorton reported that two neighbouring widowers had expressed concern that their lives were being made a misery. There had been a recent incident of abuse and people were urged to report such matters to the police if there was a re-occurrence.

6.3. Publication of Draft Minutes. Andrew Pett commented that whilst councils with an income of between £25,000 and £200,000 were expected to comply with the Transparency Code, they were not legally required to do so. Councillors with over £200,000 turnover are required to publish draft minutes no later than 1 month after the meeting. Great Gransden Parish Council is publishing its minutes as soon as they are approved at the next meeting. Michael Capps proposed publishing the draft minutes with a water mark for 12 months and to review this in a year's time, noting in that time how often minutes are corrected. Seconded by Ian Selkirk and carried with 7 votes in favour, 1 against and 1 abstention. Ian Selkirk comment that villagers had expressed concerns with the availability of up to date information on the council website and the length of time it takes to obtain notification of any action taken to points that have been raised. A resident had also suggested that supporting papers provided to councillors in relation to agenda items could also be available on the website along with a more detailed agenda to improve the council's transparency. Councillors considered it impractical to publish everything although links to other websites providing relevant documents/information could be noted on the website. Councillors did not feel it necessary to produce a more detailed agenda as draft minutes will now be published.

6.4. Haulage Lorries. Concerns had been raised by residents of the large HGVs coming into the village and along Mill Road to deliver to the grain store. The Chairman pointed out there is 2 routes into the village, along Eltisley Road and Caxton Road which are marked on HGV routes. A resident had suggested routing the lorries along Sand Road or from Longstowe using the private property of the gliding club. Councillors commented that neither of these routes were suitable, Sand Road has little tarmac with no foundation and the use of private property is not an option. Councillors also felt it inappropriate to route the HGVs through Little Gransden and agreed the preferred route is along Caxton Road, turning into East Street and along Mill Road although there is a problem at school times when traffic is parked near the corner of Caxton Road and East Street with some foreign drivers going through the centre of the village. Clerk to reply to Emma Saul who first raised the concern and write to the haulage company with the preferred HGV route. Councillors will keep an eye on the situation and should the problem increase will consider writing to businesses in the village.

Matters Arising – continued:

6.5. Parking in West Street. The chairman reported the concerns, raised by a resident, about the knock-on effect of more cars parking in West Street. Due to the restricted parking in Middle Street more cars were parking in West Street, creating a problem for children crossing West Street to walk along Little Lane to and from school. Parked cars restrict the line of sight and cars also travel quickly round the corner of West Street from Meadow Road. The chairman will take a look to see if there is a problem. Extending the length of the yellow zig-zag lines was considered impractical due to the residences either side of the existing hatching.

7. Ecops Report. The chairman read the report that is filed hereafter as Appendix No. 1. The clerk had written to Sir Graham Bright requesting the village to be prioritised and referred to the Problem Solving Team. A reply is awaited.

8. Financial Statement for December 2015. The sheet filed as Appendix No.2 had been circulated. The statement was unanimously approved and signed by the chairman. Councillors also noted the budget review as at the end of December 2015 which had been circulated.

9. Cheques for approval. Councillors approved for payment the 4 invoices as listed on the sheet and filed as Appendix No. 3.

10. Highways. Alan Rowbotham spoke about the cones on the corner of Little Grandsden Lane and Crow Tree Street. This had been reported and the cones remain to protect people from the damaged manhole cover that was flooding during heavy rain. The surface water pipe has been jetted and obstructions removed. 20 metres of the surface water sewer is due to be replaced together with two of the lids, one with the cones and another buried further down the road.

Debi Pearce reported an overhanging branch from a large ash tree suspended over the highway in Mill Road. Clerk to report this to the landowner.

Jeff Gorton reported the light in West Street opposite Little Lane is out.

Ian Selkirk reported a stretch of Meadow Road where the edge of the road is in need of repair. This was previously reported to Highways but not acknowledged that there is a problem. Clerk to report again. The section of patching along Meadow Road near the corner of Waresley Road has been completed.

Michael Capps reported a section of the dropped kerb for the access to 'Crossings' on East Street is loose and rocking and is a trip hazard for pedestrians. Also the culvert crossing Sand Road has collapsed. This has been reported but not yet been resolved. Clerk to report again sending photographs in support.

Andrew Pett reported the dreadful state of the sides of Waresley Road which are disappearing. Clerk to report.

The speed limit sign along Meadow Road is still obscured by vegetation and has been reported again.

11. CORRESPONDENCE. 11.1. Alan Rowbotham reported Phil Taylor's intention to step down as chairman of the GSRA. There has been friction in the past between the nursery and the football club as the nursery is encroaching on the club's space. The nursery is using more areas than identified in their licence agreement. Insulation work is needed for the building but the nursery has been storing equipment and until this is moved the work cannot go ahead. Changing facilities will also be needed next year as there will be an U16s team. (Julie Wisson left)

Correspondence - continued

11.2. The chairman reported that kissing gates have now been installed by the county council to replace 3 stiles including the one along Sand Path. Clerk to write to CCC to thank them for the work.

11.3. Councillors reviewed the Financial Regulations that had last been amended in December 2014. Nothing had been flagged up by the internal auditor and councillors agreed no further changes were needed.

11.4. Emails from 2 residents about the lack of fibre broadband to a small number of properties mainly in Middle Street and Whittets Close and the difficulties in getting information from BT as to when the work will be completed. Most of the village has had access to fibre broadband since March 2015 but there are still a few properties unable to have fibre connection. Barbara Boddington to provide contact details to enable the clerk to follow this up. If necessary clerk to contact our MP if no response is received to the request for information.

12. Planning. 1. 15/02213/HHFUL Proposed external alterations to existing ancillary residential accommodation and secure parking/storage, 33 Meadow Road.

Councillors commented that the planning issues of 2/3 years ago have now changed and such applications are dealt with on an individual basis. Jeff Gorton proposed 'Approval' on the ground that it is a sympathetic development of an existing building. Seconded by Ann Cosgrave and carried with 8 votes in favour and 1 abstention.

2. 26 Middle Street. Councillors noted that planning permission for a two storey extension was granted in 1997 and it is gradually being developed. The work so far appears to comply with the plans.

The Next Meeting has been arranged for Monday 1st February 2016

This meeting closed at 9.28pm