



ANNUAL PARISH ASSEMBLY

AT 8:00PM ON WEDNESDAY 10th MAY 2023

CRICKET CLUB, BLAGUEGATE LANE, LATHOM

MINUTES

Present: Parish Councillors Carol Blackledge, Roger Clayton, Ernie Pallas, Darren Steele, Andy Taylor and 7 members of the public.

Apologies had been received from Parish Councillors Andrew Beeston, Andrew Chanter and County Councillor Rob Bailey

The meeting was chaired by the Parish Council Chairman, Cllr Roger Clayton.

1. To sign as a correct record the minutes of the last Parish Assembly held on 11th May 2022

The Minutes were taken as read and signed by Chairman Cllr Roger Clayton.

2. Financial Report of the Parish Council

The following overview of accounts was made available.

INCOME breakdown

Parish Precept	£	10,948.00
Council Tax Support Grant	£	406.00
Concurrent Grant	£	630.00
LCC for footpaths	£	500.00
Bank Interest	£	809.41
National grid	£	302.17
Community Infrastructure Levy	£	0.00
VAT	£	143.58
TOTAL	£	13,739.16

Expenditure

staff salary, includes pension payments	£	7,022.98
Admin, includes bank charges & stationery	£	192.93
Training	£	383.00

Website	£	95.96	
Room hire	£	495.00	
Audit/Insurance/ICO reg	£	576.10	
Subscriptions, CPRE, SLCC, OPSTA	£	225.00	
Litter picking	£	855.00	
Signs incl footpaths	£	1,751.24	supported by LCC grant
Newsletters	£	529.96	
Section 137 grants	£	nil	
Community Infrastructure Projects	£	6,498.40	
Trees	£	225.99	
TOTAL	£	18,851.56	

It was explained that CIL money had been used on the maintenance of Jacobs Wood and Swells Wood to deal with the overgrown areas and invasive weeds. Two benches had been purchased and located in Jacobs Wood. A kissing gate had been erected at the main entrance to Jacobs Wood to try to stop bikers using the area. Two specimen trees had been purchased including a Platinum Jubilee tree and plaque which can be seen in Swells Wood. Saplings had been planted by Scouts to support more wildlife incl. Hazel, Blackthorn, Crab Apple, Elder, Dog Rose, Rowan and Wild Cherry. Residents commented that it would be a good area for a walk. The Parish Council advised that one of the long-term plans was to make a circular walk around the woods. It was explained that when purchasing Swells Wood, there was a give back clause for LCC to take back the section of dismantled railway line for the proposed Linear Park.

It was explained that the Parish Council have a sum of CIL money but there are regulations on what it can be used for, such as traffic calming on Firwood Road (widening the footpath, narrowing the road and introducing traffic light control for single file traffic across the bridge).

3. Report of the Parish Council Years – 2022/23

The Parish Council had been proactive in dealing with problems around the Wain Homes construction site and the footpath around XL business park. These items had been reported upon in the spring newsletter.

Three new Councillors had joined the Parish Council. One new Councillor commented on how they had found it interesting to walk the footpaths and really get to know the area. The two noticeboards highlighting the public footpaths had been helpful, a third noticeboard is being considered for locating in Jacobs Wood.

The recent Ward changes were explained - the Council had a review with the Boundaries Commission and it was approved that the Borough to be split into 15 wards, each with 3 councillors, Lathom South is now part of Rural South including Bickerstaffe, Westhead, part of Aughton, over to the boundary of Knowsley and parts

of Skelmersdale. The election of 4th May was postponed to 22nd June so currently Rural South is not represented.

Local Plan

The Local Plan sets the planning policy for an area to:

- allocate land for specific types of development; (housing, employment etc).
- protect certain areas of land from development (e.g. nature conservation sites).
- guide decisions on planning applications and future new development.

It is guided by the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and the Minerals & Waste Local plan, and heavily influenced by government planning targets.

The current WLBC Local Plan was agreed in 2013 and runs from 2012 - 2027. It sets out a requirement for 302-350 new homes per year. There is a national requirement for a 5 yearly review of the Local Plan, looking ahead to a minimum of 15 years.

The new Local Plan drafted through 2017 to 2019 outlined the inclusion of 16,000 new houses in 'garden villages' and numerous industrial complexes. This was based on largely unsubstantiated housing requirements and business needs, assuming a rail line into Skelmersdale was created and an influx of people and jobs from the Mersey region. This new plan only got to the 'preferred options' stage when it was challenged and subsequently abandoned. The Senior Planning Officer and a number of other colleagues left the WLBC planning team.

The drafting of a new Local Plan commenced early 2020 to cover April 2023 – 2040.

Following delays due to the pandemic, WLBC ran a consultation, Nov 21 – Jan 22 on potential content of the new Local Plan. The results of this consultation at the time of the APA had not been published. The WLBC website states, 'We are processing the material received and will consider the points made as we prepare the next stage of the Plan'.

The WLBC Strategic Housing and Employment Land Availability Assessment, or SHELAA, was refreshed in July 21. This will form the 'pool' of sites from which any necessary proposed land allocations will eventually be chosen in the new Local Plan. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was refreshed in July 2021.

WLBC are currently gathering an evidence base with input from Liverpool City Region using projected needs of Liverpool. The figures are based on the 2014 figures adopted by government and inflated to set local targets. In 2016 independent statisticians gave their own forecast predicting lower figures.

The timeline going forward:-

July - Sept 23 - extra public consultation on potential policies and site allocation (preferred options)

July - Sept 24 - publication/pre-submission of the Local Plan

Oct 24 - submission to planning inspectorate

Oct 24 - June 25 - Public examination

July 25 - adoption of new the Local Plan

Concern from residents is that there will be very little will change from the abandoned Local Plan. The influencing factors include the community response to last Local Plan, the recent scrapping of government housing targets, changes to the National Planning Policy Framework, the regeneration of Skelmersdale being a preferred option and other political pressures ahead of a General Election.

Swells Wood

Swells Wood requires a lot of work and a volunteer working party is being arranged to remove tree guards, straighten saplings and perhaps do a 'Balsam bash'. Anyone wishing to volunteer should contact the Clerk for details.

Website

A new website had been launched via Hugo Fox with a monthly fee. The new site is more user friendly and includes a direct link to planning applications.

4. Matters Raised by Members of the Public present

A local resident enquired about the use of land to the west of Lyelake Lane. Lots of soil/spoil had been deposited, on what was agricultural land, raising concerns with residents.

Two local residents had made enquiries with the current landowner of the 17.9 acres of land behind Blaguegate Lane, to see if they would be open to residents purchasing the land. The land has a public footpath going through it. Circa 30 local residents had shown an interest in making a community purchase of the land.

Instead of extending the private gardens of the housing backing onto the land, the proposal was to turn the land into a community wildlife space and nature area. Residents were currently looking at who might be able to support the proposal. The land could retain agricultural status and trees could be planted. Initial enquiries had suggested that the value of the land was £10,000 -£15,000 per acre i.e, circa £250,000. A greater number of purchasers would be required if a community purchase was to take place. The landowners had asked for a proposal to be put to them.

It was noted that the land may be listed as a potential development site for housing in the new Local Plan. The landowners had confirmed that they were not currently in conversation with building contractors.

Upon residents enquiring if the Parish Council would support the proposed purchase, it was suggested that the proposal first needed to be firmed up beyond the concept stage. The Parish Council were sympathetic to what residents wished to achieve and it was suggested a firm business plan be produced to outline how the project would work and how income would be generated to maintain the area.

Time scales may be an issue with the new Local Plan in progress and may also be an influence on the future of the land. It was suggested that, in order to move forward, a few more residents could form a working group.

5. Forward Plan

This item had been covered under items 2 – 4.

6. Questions and answers session

There being no further questions, the Chairman closed the meeting at 9.30pm.

Chairman

15th May 2024