



## Minutes of the meeting of the Wickersley Parish Council

Monday 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2024 at 6.30pm in the meeting room at the Wickersley Community Centre

**Members:-** Cllrs J Barber (Chair), A Bates (Vice Chair) P Beighton; K Davies, M Godfrey, C Grimes, E Harwood, G Pacey, H Pacey, J Robinson, M Scott, P Whitworth, M Woodhead

**Not Present:-** Cllr K Phillips (leave of absence); Cllr E Boswell (apologies given)

**In attendance: -** Anna Chester (Winthrop Organiser) clerking the meeting plus 1 member of the public

### **6538 To receive and approve apologies for absence**

Apologies received from Cllr K Phillips, leave of absence.

Cllr E Boswell sent apologies and reason for absence, however the email was not opened until after the meeting therefore will be considered at the February meeting.

### **6539 To note any declarations of interest on items to be discussed at the meeting**

None declared.

Cllr Bates questioned whether or not Cllrs Davies and Harwood should be excluded from voting and discussion of Item 11 - the Winthrop Business case for the Winthrop Development.

This matter was not pursued at this stage of the meeting.

### **6540 To resolve if members of the press and public are to be excluded from any agenda items of the meeting due to the nature of the business to be transacted under the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 S1(2)**

Cllr Barber, from the Chair, proposed press and public should be excluded from Items 12 and 14 – members supported this proposal.

### **6541 To consider Police and Crime matters.**

Cllr Barber, from the Chair, advised that the Police had not been invited to this meeting but he hoped to re-establish the position where the Police attended on a quarterly basis. He asked if there were any Police and Crime matters which members wished to raise – none were raised.

### **6542 To consider any matters from members of the public in attendance**

One member of the public was present who attended to raise two matters

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**6542.1 Harmony Energy Battery Development on Moat Lane** – the concern that having attended a meeting in early December the proposals seem ‘well developed’ and wanted to know if the proposals had been sent to the Parish Council and his difficulty in registering his interests / concerns.

Cllr Godfrey advised that Harmony Energy were at the pre-application stage of applying for planning permission and that it is accepted good practice for a potential applicant to inform and communicate their plans to interested parties at this stage. Some Parish Cllrs attended a Harmony led drop in session and raised a number of issues. Harmony sought a meeting with the Council which was declined at this stage of the proposal pending clarity on their planning application.

Cllr Godfrey also advised of a formal application from Newton Energy on an adjacent site and that the Parish would be discussing its response later in the meeting.

**6542.2 Newly installed Pedestrian Crossing on Morthen Rd by roundabout**

The member of the public in attendance was concerned that this was a potential death trap due to location and design as evidence by recent accident and damage to railing.

The member of the public was advised that it had made representations when Rotherham MBC (the responsible body) had consulted. Concern was expressed that the crossing was made more dangerous due to the delay in getting the traffic lights working (These lights were noted to be working on 23/01/24)

**6543 To consider any matters from Councillors in attendance**

**Work of Parish Handymen** - Cllr Bates raised his concerns about the work of the Handymen identifying a range of concerns about areas which he felt had been neglected / overlooked.

Cllr Barber, from the Chair, proposed:

**6543.1** Chair to discuss issues raised with Clerk in role as Handymen’s line manager

**6543.2** Environment and Recreation Committee to lead on Volunteer Clear Ups which all Cllrs would have the opportunity to support

**6543.3** Clerk to liaise with Cllr Bates and Cllr Beighton in their roles as Chair and Vice Chair of the Environment and Recreation Committee

It was **RESOLVED** to agree this way forward

**6544 To approve the minutes of the Council Meeting held on 11<sup>th</sup> December 2023**

Cllr G Pacey raised the lack of clarity of the information provided at 6553.1 and he was advised that this information is usually presented in spreadsheet format and will be in the future.

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting held on 11<sup>th</sup> December 2023 be approved as a true record.

**6545 To note any matters arising from the Council Meeting held on 11<sup>th</sup> December 2023**

**Item 6518.1** - Cllr Barber, from the Chair, advised that Cllr McNeely has resigned from the Council and that there is now 1 vacancy which, given the timescales, would be filled in the elections. Cllr McNeely gave thanks for the positive messages she had received from a number of councillor colleagues.

Signature of Chair ..... 

**Item 6518 .2** - Cllr Barber, from the Chair, advised that Elenore Fisher has agreed to be Interim Chair of the WCCA Committee during the leave of absence of Cllr Philipps, Cllr H Pacey will join the Committee to replace Cllr McNeely and Cllr Bates will join the Committee on an interim basis.

**Item 6518.3** – Cllr Barber, from the Chair, advised that it is intended to hold a WCCA meeting in early / mid-February to address the backlog of work.

**Item 6535** - Cllr Scott raised his concerns that the support of the Parish Council for a community Banking Hub had been used on party political literature. Cllr Barber advised that while the Parish had agreed to support a community banking hub he was concerned that the letter of support from the Parish was used in a way not expected and would raise this with the Cllrs for Thurcroft and Wickersley South.

**Item 6553** - Cllr Barber, from the Chair, advised that the issues with the Winthrop debit card remain unresolved due to the Clerks absence

**Item 6555** - Cllr Barber, from the Chair, advised that the temporary Clerk would be arranging a meeting with Cllrs Scott and Woodhead to address Cllr Scott's concern to make progress on policy documents before May.

**6546 To receive the resignation of Cllr B McNeely**

Received

**6547 To consider the authorisation of payments of accounts since the last meeting (documents circulated at the meeting)t**

The below payments were presented for approval

WICKERSLEY PARISH COUNCIL

APPROVAL OF PAYMENTS SCHEDULE

Full Council Meeting 22/01/2024

£625.00 Sam Business Service

£37.80 APC Ltd

£222.35 Kingfisher

£42.99 QDOS

£23.47 Kinspeed

£360.00 Kinspeed

£25.00 Yorkshire Local Councils


£1,353.67 Bothams

£1,353.67Bothams

£120.00 RWB

£705.89 RWB


£1.43 LMB Ltd

Signature of Chair ..... 

£236.18 A Chester expenses  
Various Dec £126.51 Winthrop debit card expenditure  
£157.80 Arco  
£25.00 YLCA  
£1,975.50 MP Electrical Solutions  
£37.80APC Ltd  
£987.10 RMBC  
£360.00 Valeside Tree Care Ltd  
£720.00 Kinspeed  
£288.00 Kinspeed  
£197.50 Royal Mail  
£372.00 RyCan Plumbing and Heating  
£22.12 British Gas  
£45.39 Npower  
£62.81Npower  
£199.47Npower  
£323.11 Rother Gas Company  
£34.29 British Gas  
£19.99 Amazon  
£10.99 Amazon  
£14.98 Amazon  
£13.96Amazon  
£15.99 Amazon  
12,944.47 PWLB  
£347.12 Ricoh UK  
£10,823.09 Staff Salaries  
£2,741.HMRC  
£2,419.63 SYPA  
Jan Total £40,393.85

There being no questions on the schedule of payments it was **RESOLVED** to approve the above payments.

**6548 To consider the Finance report relating to seeking agreement for the proposed budget for 2024/25 and the amount to request for the precept from Rotherham MBC**

Signature of Chair ..... 

Cllr Barber, from the Chair, spoke to the report circulated at the meeting, indicating that good progress had been made following the meeting in November. He highlighted a number of key points including some changes to the budget structure, the decision to move to a position where the Parish continues to support WCCA by not levying a administration charge but expects that any deficits are covered from WCCA reserves. In setting a balanced budget there would need to be an increase in the precept of 6% and the amount to be sought from Rotherham MBC for 2024/25 would be £235k.

Cllr Barber proposed and Cllr Bates seconded a precept for 2024/25 on £235K (an increase of 6%) – this was **RESOLVED** unanimously

**6549 To consider and seek agreement to the proposed business case for the Winthrop Development**

Cllr Barber, from the Chair, presented the proposal which was affordable, deliverable and well supported by the local community and which would give Winthrop a sustainable future giving all concerned confidence for the future and the continued development of the Winthrop offer.

**6549.1 Participation in the discussion of Cllrs Davies and Harwood**

Cllr Scott raised the issue that had been raised at **Item 6539** at the start of the meeting about the participation of these two Cllrs in the discussion and vote due to their being Winthrop volunteers leading the weekly Walking Group.

At this point Cllrs Davies and Harwood left the meeting

Cllr Scott took members through the relevant section of the standing orders indicating that in the case of a non pecuniary interest it was a matter for the member present to consider whether dispensation should be given to enable them to participate in full. Cllr Scott indicated his personal view that they should be allowed to participate in both the discussion and the vote.

Cllr Barber explained that their volunteering as volunteer Walk Leaders was in peripheral roles rather than a central involvement volunteering in either the Café or Gardens.

Cllr Bates expressed the view that although they did not have a financial investment n Winthrop their roles as volunteers prevented them from taking a balanced view.

Cllr G Pacey expressed the view that given the scale of the project and the 7 year legal charge they should not participate.

Cllr H Pacey endorsed the views of Cllr G Pacey and Cllr Bates


The matter was put to the vote as to whether the Cllrs should be able to take part and after a vote of 5 to exclude and 6 to include it was **RESOLVED** that Cllrs Davies and Harwood could participate on the discussion of this item and take part in the vote,

Cllrs Davies and Harwood rejoined the meeting and were advised of the decision.

**6549.2 Discussion of the Winthrop Business Case**

A series of questions, issues and requests for additional information were raised by members present:-

1. Detailed breakdown of the costs of the modular build and what it will / will not include;
2. What are the financial contingencies
3. How will the cost of furniture and other fittings be funded
4. Why are there such variations in the historic annual surpluses

Signature of Chair .....  .....

5. Concerns that the historic Parish arrangements have the organiser salary costs part funded by the Parish and that to get a true picture of the Winthrop financial position and future viability, all salary costs should be costed to Winthrop
6. Desire for more information on how the footfall figures have been arrived at
7. The costs to the Clerking team of servicing Winthrop
8. The opening arrangements of Winthrop and possibility of it moving to a position of being open 7 days a week for 7 hours over more weeks of the year
9. Is there the potential to expand the demographic using Winthrop
10. Could Winthrop operate as an Arms Length organisation or wholly separate from the Parish Council?
11. Concerns re viability in the context of Organiser succession planning
12. Concerns re the 7 year charge on the Parish as part of the COF (Community Ownership Fund) grant

Cllr Barber responded to many of the points raised and at the conclusion of the discussion undertook to provide more detailed information on staffing costs, budgets and reserves to assure members of the sustainability of Winthrop.

Cllr Barber then proposed and Cllr Grimes seconded:-

- That the Parish Council consider the business case and the associated funding arrangements
- Approve the Business case at an estimated cost to £330,000 so that the implementation stage can commence
- Agree the grant condition relating to the legal charge on the new building
- Agree the ongoing project management arrangements and associated costs of £5,000

The matter was **RESOLVED** following a vote with 8 votes in favour and 5 votes against

At 8.30pm Cllr Beighton moved that standing orders be suspended to enable the consideration of other urgent matters on the agenda

#### **6950 To consider for approval the proposed Interim Staffing Paper**

Cllr Barber, from the Chair, advised members that he had consulted with members outside the meeting with a view to getting interim arrangements in place and that a further report would be given at the following meeting.

Cllr Barber proposed and Cllr Woodhead seconded the acceptance of the proposals which were **RESOLVED** following a unanimous vote by members present


#### **6951 To consider Planning and Licensing applications**

Cllr Godfrey spoke to a report circulated at the meeting and members **RESOLVED** to support the recommendations of Cllr Godfrey as follows:-

#### **RB2023/1714 2, Almond Grove – prior notification for enlargement of dwelling house of an additional storey to overall height of 8 metres**

Wickersley Parish Council has no objections, subject to the height of the new dwelling being no greater than the height of the adjacent two storey house.

#### **RB2024/0063 Land off Moat Lane – Erection of battery storage facility**

Signature of Chair .....  .....

Wickersley Parish Council strongly object to this proposal on the grounds of inappropriate and incongruous development that would seriously impact on the openness of the Green Belt in this location . It would undermine it's purpose of separating the settlements of Wickersley and Thurcroft and safeguarding the countryside from encroachment.

It is not considered that the very special circumstances put forward by the applicant of assisting with energy self sufficiency and security are sufficient to outweigh the very significant harm. Whilst the National Planning Policy Framework says very special circumstances may include the wider benefits associated with increased production of energy from renewable sources, this proposal is not directly linked to production of renewable energy although the Parish Council do acknowledge the benefits to be gained from energy storage. There is already a battery storage facility linked to the substation and a further consent for a 85MW facility in a location to the south of the substation which would have far less impact on the openness of the Green Belt. There are no very special circumstances in this case that outweigh the harm that would be caused to the openness and purposes of this stretch of Green Belt land.

A smaller development was refused on this site and dismissed at appeal in 2018. The circumstances have not materially changed since that date to justify a different decision in this case. Indeed the much larger size of this site and the development would have a significantly greater impact to that previously refused.

It is also the case that a further proposal for energy storage by Harmony Energy is proposed on another site north of the substation, that proposal currently being at pre-application stage. The approval of this application by Newton Energyi would therefore set a precedent for yet further encroachment into the Green Belt changing its whole character to one of industrialisation and seriously undermine the purposes of this stretch of Green Belt land.

It is also considered that the proposed access to the site via Green Lane which is only 2.5 metres wide in places, is inadequate to accommodate what will be a significant number of HGV and crane movements during the construction stage. The access track from Moat lane is very narrow and would involve these vehicles having to reverse to the site access for a substantial distance . Whilst the applicants state that they would temporarily widen that access, there is no indication as to whether they have the agreement of the landowner for such. Green Lane is regularly used by pedestrians and runners and the access track, whilst not a public right of way, is used by dog walkers in particular. It is therefore considered that the use of both the narrow part of Green Lane and the access track for construction vehicles would result in a danger to other road users.

Due to the strength of feeling of the parish councilors . this application is supported additionally by the following named Councillors Harwood, Bates, Grimes, Barber, Godfrey, Robinson and G Pacey

This application should now be considered by the Planning Board at RMBC.

### **6952 To receive an update on Wickersley Park**

Cllr Bates reported that there were lots of problems due to the clerking shortfall. He reported on work he has done to progress a number of issues - dealing with the roundabout at Wickersley Park, the replacement of damaged lights in Wickersley Park, a power point has now been installed at the side of the underpass, getting the contractor back to repair holes on the recently renewed footpaths.

Signature of Chair .....  .....

**6953 To receive an update on the contract tendering process on behalf of the Environment and Recreation Committee**

Cllr Bates provided an update and will present a report to the next meeting of the Parish Council on the outcome of the tender evaluation process.

Other items on the agenda were deferred to the February meeting due to time constraints

**6954 To note the date of the next meeting**

**Monday 19<sup>th</sup> February 2024**

Signature of Chair ..... 