

Minutes of the meeting of Weeley Parish Council held on 18 December 2023

Present: Cllrs C. Hamilton (Chair), K. Millar, V. Cauvain, T. Spong, J. Beady, L. Fitzpatrick, D. Botterell, K. Green and G. Foster. Also in attendance were K. Harkin Parish Clerk, TDC Cllr Peter Harris and 14 members of the public.

12/23.001 **Apologies:** The Clerk confirmed that there is 100% attendance with no apologies.

12/23.002 **Minutes of the previous meeting:** The minutes of the meeting held on 20 November 2023 were proposed by Cllr Botterell, seconded by Cllr Spong **RESOLVED:** To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 20 November 2023 as an accurate record of proceedings.

12/23.003 **Declarations of Interest:** The Chair invited councillors to declare any disclosable pecuniary interests relevant to the agenda. None were offered.

12/23.004 **Clerk's Report:** The Clerk summarised some of the issues in his monthly report, which is attached as Appendix A.

12/23.005 **Public Participation:** The Chair invited the members of public in attendance to raise any questions/issues.

The issue of the removal of public comments from the planning portal relating to planning application No. 23/01611/FUL. Cllr Harris explained that some of the residents who have submitted comments have expressed their concern about their identities being made public. So TDC has removed all the comments to protect residents identities. Reassurance was given that all comments submitted will be considered by the relevant officers/councillors.

12/23.006 **Tendring District and Essex County Councils:**

TDC Cllr P Harris:

- a) attended a residents meeting about the Gutteridge Hall Lane planning application. The main issue is recent flooding. The illegal filling of the ditch is an ECC matter. The people who did this have been instructed clear the ditch.
- b) Cllr Green raise the issue of the increasing amount and unacceptable level of litter along Gutteridge Hall Lane. Cllr Harris agreed to pursue this matter.
- c) TDC refused Weeley in Bloom's request for two brown bins in Weeley Heath. Cllr Harris suggested that a request is made to WPC.
- d) Amendments have been made to the proposed three residences in Verity Gardens. The new drawings are more acceptable and have addressed the major objections. A revised planning application is anticipated imminently.
- e) Cllr Harris confirmed that he and TDC Cllr Bray have left the Conservative Party and set up the Alliance Party.

12/23.007 **Correspondence:** The Clerk notified members that he had received a;

- a) thank you letter from St Andrews Church for the grant funding.
- b) letter from the solicitor who is preparing the scout hut lease

12/23.008 **Ducks Crossing Signage:** Cllr Hamilton reported that the existing sign is too close to Reed Pond to be effective. She proposed, Cllr Spong seconded and it was **RESOLVED:** That the Council purchase an additional two warning signs to be erected on Thorpe Road near Reed Pond to alert passing motorists to take care.

12/23.009 **Planning Applications:** The Council considered a single planning application 23/01611/FUL summarised in Appendix B. Cllr Hamilton proposed that the Council objects to the application, Cllr Botterell seconded the proposal. **RESOLVED:** To object to planning application No. 23/01611/FUL.

12/23.010 **Finance and Budget:**

- a) The monthly payments were proposed by Cllr Hamilton, seconded by Cllr Cauvain and **RESOLVED:** To approve the list of payments set out in Appendix C
- b) The Clerk provided a summary explanation of his Quarter 3 report and the annual budget and precept for 2024/25, which is attached as Appendix D. It was proposed by Cllr Hamilton, seconded by Cllr Cauvain and **RESOLVED:** To approve the annual budget 2024/25 and precept as set out in Appendix D.

12/23.011 **Weeley Parish Council Reports:**

- a) Street Lighting: Cllr Green reported that all the Council's streetlights are working currently.
- b) Tree Warden: Cllr Green reported that the tree surgeon was working in the Spinney today. When he's finished there, he will be undertaking some tree work in the playing field. The new trees recently approved by the Council will be planted in the new year.
- c) Playing Field: Unsurprisingly, it's very wet at the moment.
- d) Children's Play Area: The facility will close on 3 January for 2 months while the new play equipment is installed.
- e) Highways & Footpaths: Cllr Beady presented her report, which is attached as Appendix E.
- f) Transport: Further to a question raised at the previous meeting, Cllr Millar confirmed the bus schedule through the village. He went on to advise of a new application available from Google Play called Travel Essex - a journey planning app that allows you to search for sustainable travel options throughout Essex. You can plan journeys by walking, cycling and public transport.
- g) TDALC: The minutes of the last meeting have yet to be circulated.

12/23.012 **Other Reports:**

- a) Rural Policing: Cllr Hamilton advised that nine crimes had been reported in Weeley last month.
- b) Speedwatch: Cllr Beady presented her report (attached as Appendix F).
- c) Weeley Residents Ass: Mrs Miles presented her report, which is attached as Appendix G.
- d) Weeley in Bloom: No report this month.
- e) Petanque Rink: Mrs Holt presented her report (attached as Appendix H).

12/23.013 **Public Participation:** The Chair invited the members of public to raise any questions or issues they have.

- Mr Burrows thanked the Parish Council for its support in opposing the initial unsuitable development proposals in Verity Gardens.
- Mrs Bannister raised the issue of the National Planning Policy Framework and noted its relevance to the planning application considered earlier in the meeting.

The Chair closed the meeting at 9.34pm and invited those present to join her for pre Christmas refreshments.

APPENDIX A

Clerks Report – 18 December 2023

Topic	Action/issue	Who	Status
New Children's Play Area	Complete installation.	KPH	The playground will be closed and fenced off from 3 January for up to two months until the new playground installation is completed.
Emergency Plan	Annual update.	Cllr H	The final draft has been circulated for comment.
Litter Bins	Install additional bins	TDC	TDC has completed it WPC's proposals for additional bins and is now calculating the costs.
Scout Hut	Prepare a new lease.	KPH	The scouts representatives have made clear that the scouts want a 21 year lease. WPC's solicitor has confirmed that this will complicate the lease and make it more expensive to prepare. The Clerk gave the Scouts approval to cut back the hedge.
Weeley bypass	Determine options for the avenue of poplars		The Clerk has agreed to contact ECC Place Services to chase for a firm proposal including numbers and species of trees to plant.
Bank Account	Process two additional signatories. Set up BACS payment process	KPH	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appointment of additional account signatories remains outstanding. • Set up a BACS payments.
Electricity Supplier	Appoint an electricity broker.	KPH	Outstanding.
Reed Pond	Initiate Management Plan	KPH	Obtain costs to install a chlorine pump Speak with R. Ransom regarding the proposed surveys. Publish report on website.

In addition to preparing the 2024/25 budget and precept this month, the Clerk's attention has focused finalising the operational details of the playground contract.

APPENDIX B

Planning Applications for month to 18 December 2023

Application No.	Details	Address	Resolved
23/01611/FUL	Proposed change of use of land to mixed use comprising erection of stables for non-commercial equestrian; siting of two mobile home gypsy traveller pitches; and associated hard standing, and touring caravan parking.	Land On The South Side of Gutteridge Hall Lane Weeley CO16 9AS	Objection.

Planning Determinations – Nil since the Parish Council's October meeting.

APPENDIX C

MONTHLY PAYMENTS: DECEMBER 2023

Invoice Date	Invoice No.	Cheque No.	Payee	Service	NET £	VAT £	GROSS £
07/12/23	Yet to be processed	DD	Castle Water	Reed Pond - Water Standing Charge	8.57	0	8.57
04/12/23	IN09122865	DD	NPower	Street Lighting Electricity	439.31	21.97	461.28
30/11/23	INV-0423	103340	Goldacre Contracting	Playing Field 10 th Cut, Verges and Reed Pond	415.00	83.00	498.00
20/11/23	17189	103341	EALC	New Councillor Training	300.00	60.00	360.00
13/12/23	3261	103342	DM Payroll Services Ltd	Admin of payroll Oct-Mar 2024	60.00	0	60.00
31/12/23	Yet to be processed	103343	K Harkin	Salary - Dec	661.84	0	661.84
18/12/23		103343	K Harkin	Phone and B/B	27.18	5.43	32.61
18/12/23		103343	K Harkin	Mileage	23.52	0	23.52
				TOTALS	1,935.42	170.40	2,105.82

Bank balances as at 14 December 2023; current account £34,453.20; deposit account £84,722.58.

APPENDIX D

**BUDGET REPORT (QUARTER 3) 2023/24 and
PRECEPT PROPOSAL FOR 2024/205**

	2022/23 Outturn	23/24 Annual Budget £	Q3 Predicted £	EOY Estimate £	2024/25 Proposed £
Administration	15,312	14,790	17,410	20,000	19,220
Capital	522	5,000	0	5,000	5,000
Grants	1,400	1,280	1774	1774	1,300
Grounds Maintenance	7,289	6,500	6,000	7,300	7,300
Lighting	25,291	6,250	4,000	5,500	5,500
Parish Maintenance	2,629	4,200	900	2,000	4,000
Parks	1,309	3,150	2,985	3,150	3,150
TOTAL	53,751	41,170	33,069	44,724	45,170

Quarter 3: The financial statement for the third quarter of 2023/24 shows the Council has spent 73% of its annual budget. The report includes some one off expenditure detailed below and shows that the Council's financial position is on profile with its annual budget.

Administration: Expenditure for this budget heading is normally predictable. It is estimated that this budget head will overspend by £6,000 in 2023/24. The reason for the overspend is due to expenditure on a number of one off expenses including, a new PA system, the coronation party, speed limit signage, website domain and email set up, and election expenses.

Capital: The Council has not made any capital expenditure to date this year. It is judged prudent to maintain budgetary provision to fund unforeseen items of expenditure that crop up periodically. Whilst, TDC has agreed to release S106 receipts to fully fund the installation of the new playground, the Councils capital budget will allow the Parish Council to make any necessary additional unforeseen improvements necessary at the end of the project which were not budgeted for.

The capital budget will be needed in 2024/25 to fund the Council's commitment to increase the provision of litter bins in Weeley Heath. The cost of this is yet to be confirmed but is likely to be in the order of £5,000.

Grants: The Council has increased its grant funding of local bodies a little since the pandemic in 2020. Hence budgetary provision has been made to allow the Council to continue to grant fund local organisations at similar level as in recent years.

Grounds Maintenance (GM): The GM budget was increased in 2023/24 to fund an increased level of GM across the Parish. It is proposed to increase this budget again in 2024/25 to allow for continuing improvements.

Lighting: In 2022/23 the Council invested in excess of £15,000 of its financial reserves to convert all its street lights to LED lights. The benefits of this include a reduction in maintenance costs and reduction in electricity use. Even factoring in an increase in electricity prices it is proposed to reduce this budget in 2024/25 by 12%.

Parish Maintenance: It is estimated that this budget will be underspent this year for the second consecutive year. It is important that adequate budgetary provision is maintained to fund unforeseen expenses. It is however, proposed to reduce this budget slightly in 2024/25.

Parks: This budget is used for planned and reactive maintenance. The costs of works in The Spinney and the new trees on the playing field that the Council recently agreed will be funded from this budget.

The cost of the work identified in the Reed Pond management plan i.e. dredge and deepen the pond is yet to be ascertained and would be funded from this budget and/or the Council's reserves.

Financial Reserves: The Council's financial reserves at 31 March 2023 were £94,844. This figure represents a significant increase on the previous year. The Council's internal auditor indicated that it is prudent to maintain a level of general reserves of say up to 12 months operating costs. To assist financial planning it is prudent to earmark some of the Council's reserves to fund expenditure that is not budgeted for but that is anticipated.

Earmarked Reserves
The costs of the projects set out in this table are indicative only. There is no approval to undertake any of these projects at this time. Before any these projects could proceed detailed costings would need to be obtained and formal approval given by WPC.

		£
1.	The planting of additional trees in strategic locations around the village.	3,000
2.	Improve drainage (e.g. French drains) on the playing field	10,000
3.	Avenue of Trees on B1441	20,000
4.	Children's Play Area	5,000
5.	Improved Provision of Litter and Dog Bins throughout the Village	5,000
6.	Vehicle Activated Speed (VAS) signage x 4	12,000
7.	Possible necessary land procurement in Hilltop Crescent	10,000
TOTAL		65,000

Precept Proposal: Councillors are aware of the financial difficulties being experienced by many residents at this time. The Council is committed to making efficiencies in order to avoid the need to increase the Council tax burden unnecessarily. Set out in the table below is a summary of the Parish Council Precept for the last four years together with a proposal for and the 2024/25.

	Precept 2020/21 £	Precept 2021/22 £	Precept 2022/23 £	Precept 2023/24 £	Proposed Precept 2004/25 £
Precept required for the year	46,172	46,172	50,170	45,170	45,170
Tax Base	£724.3	£773.5	833.1	874.9	886.1
Council Tax	£63.75	£59.69	£60.22	£51.63	£50.98

Precept: The amount of precept the Council receives depends on the Tax Base. This is a calculation that uses the number of properties in a Parish. The formula includes consideration of the number of exempt properties and the number of homes where residents are entitled to claim benefits. The Tax Base for Weeley has followed an upward trajectory in recent years largely due to the increase in the number of residential properties in the village.

Current Year 2023/24 Precept Information	
Precept required for 2023/24	£45,170 (B)
2023/24 Tax Base	874.9 (C)
2023/24 Council Tax (B divided by C)	£51.63 (D)
Proposed Precept 2024/25	
Precept required for 2024/25	£45,170 (E)
2024/25 Tax Base	886.1 (F)
2024/25 Council Tax (E divided by F)	£50.98 (G)
Tax Decrease (% of G over D)	-1.3% (H)

Year	Tax Base
2020/21	724.3
2021/22	773.5
2022/23	833.1
2023/24	874.9
2024/25	886.1

Recommendation

It is recommended that Weeley Parish Council maintains its annual budget at the same level as the previous year and submits a request for a Precept of £45,170 for 2024/25.

APPENDIX E

Highways Report

The road breakups and potholes at the junction of First Avenue and Thornbury Avenue have been repaired. However the potholes at the junction of Thornbury Ave and Second Ave have not and are getting worse as are most of the problem areas already reported to Essex Highways.

As regards the potholes on the north side of Colchester Road I received an email from Essex Highways at the end of November, which was much the same as the one I received in January for the same issue. In essence the email read 'Essex Highways have risk assessed this issue and have prioritized it as not as serious as some other defects we are aware of, so for now we will do nothing but will consider it when planning future works in the area' and one of the last lines in the email read, Thanks for helping us to keep Essex roads in the best condition we can.

APPENDIX F

Speedwatch Report

At the end of October we were finally given permission to use an old working form. Two days after this, we were asked to co-operate with the Police in a special event being held across the region, we would have liked to participate but at such short notice we had already filled our week up with other appointments.

The Police did Speedwatch along Clacton Road for this event. which of course was published on social media as 'Beware, speed trap on Clacton Road'. The original poster was no doubt expecting lots of thank-yous for the warning and so were possibly disappointed when inundated with replies such as 'why are you warning people?' 'good on the police, they should do it more often' and 'are you a flasher? don't be that guy', with the total of one person writing 'thanks for the warning'.

We restarted Speedwatch sessions at the start of November and managed to fit two sessions in before having to call off five planned sessions due to bad weather conditions.

In those two sessions we logged 37 speeding vehicles, the fastest was driving at 50mph, there was one with no MOT, another with no road tax and three repeat offenders, one was logged for the third time.

As the temperatures were so low and Christmas fast approaching, we decided to stop speedwatching and will restart in the New Year.

APPENDIX G

WRA Report for the Parish Council December 2023

We are at the end of a very busy year. We have had our usual weekly, fortnightly and monthly activities and many weekend entertainments too.

We have had outings, the last of which was to Sandringham Christmas Market in November.

On the 4th December we had our annual Christmas Party for Members which was very enjoyable and the big raffle was drawn resulting in more than 70 prizes. At the lighting of the Christmas Tree WRA donated a gift for each child who visited Mrs Christmas.

We had a very interesting talk last month from John Wright, a master butcher in Frinton.

The ABBA night in November was very popular and many people are hoping to go to an ABBA event at the Arena in Stratford, in early 2024.

In the New Year we shall have the return of Andy Wilsher, who will be entertaining us with a 60s evening. We have a Race Night booked in February. The Summer Ball, a new event, will be in the Black Boy in June and tickets will be on sale from January. On the 9th June there will be the Community Day, that will include many of the organisations locally.

There are outings arranged to a variety of venues and they include a steam train ride with a roast dinner, in Norfolk. We are also planning a Saturday Family visit to the Weald & Downland Living Museum where The Repair Shop is filmed.

Weeley Residents' Association wishes The Parish Council a Very Happy Christmas.

APPENDIX H

Petanque Report

As 2023 draws to a close I can honestly say that the weather has been very kind to us this year, with not many days being rained off although, saying that, we have had a couple of our playing days cancelled this month. We still have good attendance, despite the cold, with numbers around 16 each session.

Last Thursday we had our Christmas Lunch, which was well attended and enjoyed by everybody and where we handed out trophies to the winners and runners up of our competition that we run throughout the year.

This concludes my report, but would just like to say a very merry Christmas to everyone and a happy and healthy New Year. Thank you.