

## **Whinfield Residents Association**

(inc. The Friends of Beech Wood)

[www.whinfieldresidents.co.uk](http://www.whinfieldresidents.co.uk)

### **Minutes of the meeting of 23rd January 2019 at Oban Court**

**Present:** David Milner (Chair), Judith Murray (Treasurer) [part time], Alan Hutchinson (Secretary), Simon Bainbridge, Jamie Bartch, Ralph Bradley, Jim Chalk, Dave Clark, James Eddy, Peter Voss, Chris Jackson, Roger Fitzpatrick-Odahamier, Jeanette French, Fred Greenhow, Mike Haw, Allannah Robinson, Ruby Keir, Janine Lee, Carol Milner, David Phillips, Chris Upton, Andrew Ward. Visitors: Peter Gibson, Jean Foster (24)

**Apologies:** Anne Rudkin, Tyler Nixon, John Thompson, Joan Thompson, Cllr Tom Nutt, Alan Macnab, Andy Keir, John Atkinson, Pat Newton. The Chair reported that a belated apology for the last meeting of 21/11/18 had been received from Cllr Helen Crumbie.

**Approval of the Minutes:** It was agreed that the minutes of the meeting of 21/11/2018 be signed by the Chair as a correct record, proposed by James Eddy and seconded by Allannah Robinson.

#### **Matters arising from the Minutes**

**Damage to grass verges:** The Chair reported that he will pursue this with Cllr Nick Wallis.

**Metal container:** The Chair had liaised with Cllr Helen Crumbie and it had been removed as promised.

**Broken litter bin, Whinbush Way:** Judith Murray reported that the replacement bin is brand new.

#### **Matters arising from the AGM**

The Chair reported that the process of the Committee looking at the Constitution had already started. The Secretary stated that the minutes of the AGM are available on the "Meetings" page of the website.

#### **Treasurer's Report**

Judith Murray reported on no significant changes to the finances. The AGM raffle had raised £34, expenses were £22 and the balance is £1288.43.

#### **Beech Wood**

Judith Murray reported that 2000 bluebells, 1000 snowdrops and 3 silver oak trees donated by DBC had been planted. The position of the trees was chosen to reduce the chances of being broken. She had discussed plans for the wildflower meadow with Pippa Smaling. Problems of parents digging out a BMX bike track will be reported. 1500 daffodil bulbs had been planted on Whinbush Way. 500 bulbs were donated by DBC, 700 were donated by a member and the rest came from the Friends of Fryers Field. DBC had installed dropped curbs near the bus stop on Whinbush Way nearest Barmpton Lane.

#### **Litter**

Judith Murray reported that the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary Big Spring Clean Event will take place between 19<sup>th</sup> Feb and 9<sup>th</sup> Apr. The WRA litter pick to support this will take place on Sunday 31<sup>st</sup> March, 10am, Asda.

#### **Chair's report**

David Milner reported as follows: Elm Tree Farm and the Local Plan is likely to dominate WRA work this year but many other important things must not be forgotten. Grants may be available if suitable projects can be found and fundraising is necessary to at least cover our running costs. Helen McIntyre had decided not to take up her post on the Committee but she will continue to support WRA in other ways. There are vacancies for 8 Committee members and a Vice-chair.

#### **Secretary's report**

Alan Hutchinson reported that:

- We currently have 92 members.
- May Green Marketing in Aycliffe had been visited several times, arrangements made and the transfer of web hosting had been smoothly completed. The website has been updated.
- Councillors had been contacted re. damage to the grass by DBC hedge cutting vehicles again this year but a DBC officer's reply is not very positive and no action will be taken to roll out the grass.
- PCSO Gemma Smith has moved on and there is a new PCSO contact, details on the website.

## **Fundraising**

Judith Murray reported that Haughton RA receive £250 a year grant from the Community Fund and she will ask Tom Medhurst to look into this in case we are also eligible. Ralph Bradley mentioned that the Cricket Club had received £1700 from the Banks Community Fund but Judith said that our application was refused because our claim was lower than the £2000 minimum. She will look into this again in the light of this new information. Definite projects are needed and ideas on how the money would be spent.

## **Elm Tree Farm**

The Secretary had sent in the WRA submission to DBC, as agreed. There were 81 comments plus other documents submitted by the public. The Northern Echo did eventually publish an article based on the WRA press release. A written report from Cllr Tom Nutt states that DBC officers are seeking planning clarifications from the developers and the application will probably not be sent to the Planning Committee before April. Tom had submitted an objection based on increased traffic and the necessity for a relief road, and also asked about the possibility of lay-bys on the north side of Sparrowhall Drive.

DBC had started to consult informally on a diversion of the public footpath across the site, WRA had again been omitted but the Secretary had pursued this and it was rectified. Barmpton Parish had alerted WRA to the diversion and information is being shared with them because of the cross-border nature of the case. The Secretary then outlined the WRA submission he had compiled suggesting that instead of the diverted path following the new estate footways and crossing roads it should be retained as a feature of the site, or at least sensitively allowed for around the side. After discussion it was agreed that this be submitted to DBC.

## **Local Plan**

The Chair had written to Chris McEwan about Theakstons applying for Garden Village status. A convoluted reply was received. A BBC Radio Tees interview with the Chair and Secretary had aired, and is on the website. Dave Clark had posted a superb YouTube video of photographs with the interview as a soundtrack.

Air quality figures had been received from David Phillips who explained the rationale behind them. There are 2 Town locations where NO<sub>2</sub> levels are higher than safe maximum limits. Traffic schemes are designed to reduce congestion, not pollution. FoE may repeat the tests and prefer independent testing. Discussion ensued about punishments for councils exceeding limits, DBC diffusion tubes being ad hoc, physical factors, the need to report other sources of pollution, such as bonfires, and more houses being built will mean poorer air quality because of increased traffic. David Phillips will keep WRA informed.

A written report from Cllr Tom Nutt states that there is no further news re. Muscar House Farm. Fred Greenhow is raising the issues re. development at the next Darlington Parish Council (DPAC) meeting, he has asked 4 questions of James Langler and David Hand of DBC and a reply is awaited. David Phillips commented that the government has revised its housing figures downwards, which might explain delays with the Local Plan, and there are apparently concerns about flood plains.

## **Northern Bypass**

A written report from Cllr Tom Nutt states that the Tees Valley Mayor and DBC officers are still progressing plans and funding requests. David Phillips observed that it seems as if the government is looking more at Teesside than a Northern Relief Road.

**Date of next meeting:** Wednesday 20th March 2019, at 7pm in Oban Court.

## **Any Other Business**

In answer to a question from Roger Fitzpatrick-Odahamier about **'The Friends of Beech Wood'** staying as part of the WRA name, the Chair explained that it had already been agreed by a WRA general meeting that further discussion on this has been deferred until sometime this year, there are no plans for a change, and that the Committee is looking at the Constitution as a whole. Issues were raised from the floor re. the need for a new bin at the **Beech Rise** entrance to Beech Wood and DBC not picking up fallen branches and leaves, leading to children's bonfires. Comments were made about improved litter picking in the area, making seats out of fallen tree trunks, and the legal position about an overgrowing hedge at the Firs. The Chair agreed to attend the next Councillors Ward Surgery to raise these.

The meeting closed at 8.10 pm.