

## **WHINFIELD RESIDENTS ASSOCIATION**

**(inc. The Friends of Beech Wood)**

whinfieldresidents@gmail.com

### **Minutes of the meeting of 17<sup>th</sup> July 2019 at Oban Court**

**Attendees:** Judith Murray (Treasurer), Jean Foster (Fundraiser), Ralph Bradley, Linda Davison, Alan Macnab, Roger Fitzpatrick-Odahamier, Mike Haw, Amanda McEwan, Ruby Keir, Chris Upton, Chris Jackson, John Atkinson, Allannah Robinson, Dave Clark, Alan Hutchinson, John Thompson, Cllr Andy Keir, Cllr Jamie Bartch, [David Milner \(visitor\)](#)

**Apologies:** Anne Rudkin, Tom Watson, Simon Bainbridge, Peter Voss, James Eddy, Joan Thompson.

**Chair of Meeting:** It was proposed that in the absence of a Chair, Ralph Bradley would act as chair for this particular meeting. All approved.

**Approval of SGM Minutes:** It was agreed that the minutes of the SGM held on the 15<sup>th</sup> May 2019 be agreed as a correct record, proposed by John Atkinson, seconded by Linda Davison.

**Approval of the Minutes:** It was agreed that the minutes of the meeting of 23/01/2019 be agreed as a correct record, proposed by Roger Fitzpatrick-Odahamier, seconded by Mike Haw

**Matters Arising:** There were no matters arising

#### **Committee Vacancies**

The committee are pleased to say that we have been approached by a further 3 volunteers who would, with members approval, like to join the WRA committee they are Chris Upton, Chris Jackson and Tom Watson. If members approve then they will serve on the committee until the AGM in December when formal elections will take. Members were asked to approve this.

Further to this the committee were approached by another member, Ruby [Keir](#), with regards to joining the committee. Ruby is currently Treasurer of her Church group so after some discussions the Committee decided to ask the members if they would approve of the current Treasurer temporarily moving to the role of Secretary and Ruby joining the committee as Treasurer, both on a temporary basis until elections at the AGM in December.

This would strengthen our Officer position and enable the WRA to work more effectively.

Members voted on both of these motions with 15 being in favour and with 2 [abstaining](#).

#### **Treasurer Report**

There have been no changes to our balances since the last meeting so the balance currently stands at £1,174.43.

The Public Liability Insurance was due for renewal in April but given the situation the WRA was in at the time, this was not renewed and remains so. In order to undertake Litter Picks we do need Public Liability Insurance e so [are](#) our members happy for this to be taken out again? The cost will be around £90.

John Thompson raised the subject of DOVES and that if we joined DOVES we would be covered by their insurance. The acting secretary explained that this option had been considered before but it meant that the WRA would have to adopt the DOVES constitution and this was not felt to be appropriate as we have our

own. John Thompson said he did not believe that you had to adopt the DOVES constitution so the acting secretary agreed to explore again the option of joining DOVES in the future, but in the meantime we would need to organise our own insurance.

### **Fundraising Officer Report**

Jean Foster presented a project of knitted & crochet poppies made by herself, to be sold on behalf of the WRA and Royal British Legion. Poppies to be sold for £2 plus any donations gratefully received in to the fund for both the groups mentioned. Members were happy for this project to be put into action.

Car boot sale planned for beginning of August.

### **Local Plan**

Update on position to date. Scrutiny proposed removing the access road through Springfield Park but ultimately this will place pressure on other access points, particularly Barmpton Lane.

Approval of the Local Plan by Cabinet for statutory consultation has now been deferred for further investigations into the road infrastructure and access to the development

Other headline changes to the Local Plan so far is the replacement of the 422 net additional dwellings per annum with 177 net additional dwellings per annum to match the Government's figure for housing requirement. This however is emphasised as a minimum requirement and DBC will also introduce a higher housing target of 492 dwellings per annum to reflect their aspirational growth for jobs and additional homes required to meet the need for additional workers.

Banks development have now also brought forward plans for development in Beaumont Hill which are separate from the Skerningham Development but which will ultimately impact on the infrastructure in the Whinfield area.

Cllr Keir gave a brief update on the position regarding the proposed access road through Springfield Park to say that it needs to be approved by cabinet but he was confident that this road would be removed from the Local Plan, unless further investigations highlighted otherwise. He also said that, contrary to what was said in the local press, approval of the plan was being delayed so that further consideration could be given to it as a whole. As Darlington now has a number of new Councillors, it is only prudent to allow them time to consider this. Cllr Keir also said that one of the issues he and Cllr Bartch will be questioning is the housing requirement need.

Alan MacNab queried how many houses were needed and made presentation to members regarding the Skerningham development and the fact it may not be needed. He explained that he had attended a CPRE meeting where Skerningham and its garden village status had been discussed (see below).

### **Skerningham Strategic Development**

Is now the Skerningham Garden Village, DBC having been awarded a grant to further consider the proposed development.

Discussion then ensued with regards to how Theakstons have been awarded Garden Village status given that there is also another proposed garden Village development for Darlington and that Darlington could not realistically sustain 2 Garden Village Developments of the size proposed. The acting secretary suggested that the WRA write to the Minister for Housing, Communities and Local Government to oppose this status and question why it has been granted.

Dave Clark said that funds had been raised to employ a specialist consultant for 2 days to look at the Local Plan and highlight its weaknesses. This was being done external to the WRA.

It was suggested that the access road linking the Skerningham Garden Village to the A66 and A167 would need all 4,500 houses to be built in order to fund it, and realistically that would mean the road would not be built until this had been achieved.

The WRA committee will continue to monitor the situation and gather evidence to support our objections once the Local Plan Representation period begins.

### **Elm Tree Farm**

Bellway plans have not yet been approved and the understanding is that they are having to make some changes

WRA was approached by Bellway regarding the diversion of public footpath no 23 and our response to the informal consultation in February. Discussed maps and options and our position

Steve Petch (Public Rights of Way officer DBC) was contacted for update and the WRA were informed that the Diversion Order was on hold until Bellway submits revised plans for its planning application. Once this has been done, should a Diversion Order be necessary WRA will be informed and the next stage will be a public consultation on the proposed diversion route. Mr Petch cannot review any proposed amendments to the original diversion route for footpath no 23 until he has seen the revised planning application.

The proposed amended diversion route to footpath no 23 was shown to members and the general thought was to wait until the plans were formally submitted and then make our representations at this stage.

### **Northern Link Road**

Further work is being undertaken in order to increase the 'value' of the project in order to try and attract funding from the DFT

Concern that now Skerningham has Garden Village status other funding options for the road may become available through the Housing Infrastructure fund.

Cllr Keir said that both himself and Cllr Bartch will be putting forward their support for the Northern Link Road to Ben Houchen, TVCA Mayor, and will keep the WRA informed of progress.

It was raised that as it stands at present the link road offers very little value in terms of how the Department for Transport assess projects for funding, and that there may indeed be more value added schemes across the country which the link road will have to compete with.

### **Beech Wood & Springfield Park**

Wildflower meadow in Beech Wood is beginning to flower and members of WRA have been very busy weeding it to promote growth

Springfield Park – approach from Lisa Locke with offer to work with the WRA to look at funding for new play equipment in the park. WRA to meet with Lisa to discuss

John Atkinson gave a very detailed report on his work with DBC's Dean Scott in looking after Springfield Park, in particular the play area. It was reported that one of the items of play equipment had been damaged and the Council had removed the equipment for safety reasons until it has been repaired. John said that Dean was very keen to work with the residents to maintain and improve the park.

### **Website**

The account with May Green Marketing has now been split into 2 with WRA now having access to their own platform and hosting.

Previous website has been shut down

New website currently under construction at no cost to the WRA.

### **Speed Watch**

Initiative being promoted by police by which members of the WRA will be trained to perform speed watches with equipment provided by the police.

Advantage is the information is recorded and offenders sent warning letters and fines for repeat offending

John (from Fryers Field) added that Haughton Residents Association were also taking part in this initiative.

Agreed that we would invite the police traffic officers to come to our next meeting in September

### **Litter Pick**

Until insurance is sorted out we will be unable to undertake any litter picks.

If insurance is agreed then next litter pick may be Sunday 11<sup>th</sup> August and if so an email to be sent to members confirming this. If not one will be organised as soon as insurance is arranged.

**Date of next meeting:** Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup> September 2019, 7pm at Oban Court.

### **Any Other Business**

Dave Clark put forward a motion to confirm that WRA actually do oppose a road through Springfield Park. The acting Treasurer explained that the WRA's position had not changed and Chris Upton had said that he did not want to vote on something he wasn't fully aware of the details of. It was decided to leave any vote until the next meeting in September, by which time it may be the case that there is indeed no need for a vote as the road through Springfield Park may have been removed from the Local Plan.

The meeting closed at 8.25pm