

## MINUTES OF THEALE PARISH COUNCIL

*Minutes of an Extraordinary Parish Council Meeting held on Tuesday 30th January 2018 at 7.30pm in the Peter Gooch Room, the Pavilion, Englefield Road, Theale.*

*Present: Councillors D. Wood, B. Williams (Chairman), S. Coker, A. Clark, J. Richardson, I. Hopcroft, P. Clifford, D. Lye, D. Baker & Z. Fenwick*

*In attendance: Clerk to the Council Jo Friend. There were fifty three members of the public present.*

*Apologies for absence: None.*

*Declarations of Interest: None.*

The chairman asked if anyone present was intending to film or record the meeting. The response was a negative.

### **190/17/18 Open Forum for Members of the Public**

Numerous members of the public spoke on the subject of this evenings meeting, including:

Paul Dinsdale – Thought it was good to have tonight's meeting and a good idea to have a parish poll as there are those who are in favour of a new school and those against it and this will give them an opportunity to be heard. What will the poll question be and when will the poll take place?

The chairman replied that neither the question nor the date for any such poll is known yet.

Member of the public – can residents of North Street have a say, after all these residents will be affected more than most of the Theale residents if the building goes ahead?

The clerk replied that the legislation dictates that it is only those local government electors on the Theale electoral roll who will be permitted to vote in a Theale poll. The chairman suggested North Street residents speak to their parish council about how they may get their views heard.

Liz Quinnell – wished to clarify something after Mr Dinsdale's comment, it is not people for the new school and people against it, there are people who are against the chosen *location* for the new school not the school itself.

Mr Ward – tomorrow is the last day for the deadline so why are we holding this meeting, we won't be able to hold a poll before tomorrow?

Pamela Sergent – Will the poll be impartial, concerned as there is a lack of trust in WBC? Pamela listed some reasons for this lack of trust and some of the reasons people had for objecting to the proposal including – land cost details; issues over details of pipes, field users, replacement land, current school figures; funding deadlines; highways reports etc. She said it was clear that WBC has always been determined to go ahead with its proposal even though the information provided has been flawed at best and often incorrect. Just because valid objections were overruled by WBC does not stop them being valid objections. She referred to the Planning Inspector's report on the Lakeside appeal and the issue over the village hall land.

Theale is a village. To fill the school with catchment children a 315 place primary school needs a village that's 50% bigger than it currently is. A 420 place primary school for catchment children needs a village that's 100% bigger.

WBC has now issued this ultimatum. WBC needs to know that bullying is not acceptable.

*There was a round of applause from the public.*

Member of the public – WBC did confirm to a resident that the deadline has been extended. The clerk replied that no one from WBC had contacted TPC with regard to any changes in the deadline.

Member of the public – if TPC release the land will you get best price? The chairman confirmed that TPC had yet to take a view on the issue of whether or not best price had been achieved.

Member of the public – have you been offered anything from the freeholder, ie money? The chairman replied that no money had been offered.

Member of the public – Had noticed that a clarification had been published on TPC's website regarding tonight's meeting. It would appear that there was some confusion over the purpose of tonight's meeting, had a mistake been made in the agenda? The clerk replied that, in a way, yes. A parish meeting has to be held at which a poll can be called, the poll cannot be called from a parish council meeting. WBC were aware of the type of meeting TPC was going to hold this evening. At tonight's meeting the parish council chairman can call for a parish meeting to be held.

Member of the public – WBC are here tonight, why don't we let them clarify things such as the deadline?

The clerk and the chairman said that WBC knew there was a parish council meeting this evening, they have even sent three representatives, therefore if they have new information to give to TPC they have had plenty of opportunity to send it through before the start of tonight's meeting. New information should be received in writing, previously it had come in correspondence from Nick Carter.

Cllr Graham Jones (leader, WBC) said he was Nick Carter's boss and Mr Carter was answerable to him, it was not necessary to go back to Mr Carter for confirmation.

The chairman agreed that, as members of the public, the WBC representatives could speak.

Cllr Lynne Doherty (WBC) addressed the meeting – she said she was under the impression this was a parish meeting tonight. The issue of the new school is deadline driven, after the meeting with TPC, chaired by Alok Sharma MP, she said she would go away and work on whether or not the deadline could be extended. Legislation dictates that WBC has to decide by 28<sup>th</sup> February who will go where in September 2019. Therefore there is a timescale issue around this poll.

Member of the public – said he lives in Theale and his child couldn't get in because WBC are accepting children from outside catchment in to the current school. It's this that's causing the problem.

Member of the public – we have never had all the information about the other sites and why this one, NSPF, is the only suitable one.

Cllr Doherty – TPC have had all the information on that, they were involved in the site selection process of the eleven sites.

There was a noisy reaction from those present in the room and Cllr Williams (chairman) informed Cllr Doherty, very firmly, that her statement was not true – Theale Parish Council had not been consulted during the site selection process, it had not been involved with the selection of the site.

An member of the public suggested that if a poll is to be held then could we hold a public meeting so that people can find out the facts?

The chairman closed the Public Open Forum at 8.05pm.

## **SECTION B**

### **191/17/18 Parish Poll**

The chairman read out guidance on how a parish meeting could be called. She suggested that a parish meeting should be called but added that the date could not be set tonight as, judging by the attendance at tonight's meeting, a larger venue would be required. There was general agreement that a larger venue was essential.

Cllr Clifford said that the purpose of the meeting would have to be stated. The clerk confirmed that the agenda for a parish meeting would reflect the purpose of that meeting.

It was proposed that a parish meeting be called. Proposed Cllr Williams; seconded Cllr Wood. Councillors voted, eight in favour, two against, the motion was carried.

The clerk confirmed that once the parish meeting had been arranged, full details about that meeting would be published.

The chairman reported that a resident had submitted a list of questions to the office quite late today, questions they wanted to ask at tonight's meeting, questions that would require a fair bit of work from the clerk and chairman in order that answers could be provided. Before closing the meeting the chairman asked that everyone, residents, WBC and parish councillors, bear in mind the size of the parish council. It does not have the resources of WBC with its hundreds of staff, offices and equipment – Theale Parish Council has one member of staff to do all the work and the majority of the parish councillors work full time, they fit TPC in around their jobs.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 8.15pm.

.....  
*Chairman to the Council*

.....