



Darnhall Parish Council



MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF DARNHALL PARISH COUNCIL HELD AT DARNHALL VILLAGE HALL ON TUESDAY 23rd JULY 2024 AT 6.30PM

PRESENT: Cllrs R Lee, G Higgs, M Sherry (Chair), and R Strachan
Dr M Bailey (Clerk)

PART A

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Cllrs C Williams.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest submitted to the meeting.

3. MINUTES – 23RD JULY 2024 (PARISH COUNCIL MEETING)

The Chair signed the minutes as a true and accurate record.

4. MATTERS ARISING

The following matters were considered by Members: -

- Tree Planting – a formal request has been made to CWAC to plant a tree by the junction of Darnhall School Lane and Hall Lane
- Website – work is ongoing regarding Recoded Solutions.
- Bridge Closure – it was reported that the bridge had re-opened. It was also reported that the orange plastic blocks are still in place. Members asked for justification of this action and argued that the blocks are preventing safe pedestrian access as people must use the centre of the lane. It was also noted that the bridge is an historic structure that is synonymous with the character of Darnhall, but it was also argued that the bridge is unsightly and totally despoiled by highway paraphernalia that obscures the bridge walls. Members further stated that CWAC Highways should apply for Listed Building Consent as the blocks are an alteration to the listed building. It was requested that a strongly worded letter/email is sent to the Chief Executive of CWAC, copied to the MP and the CWAC Councillor for the area. It was requested that a number of questions are included in the letter such as why the blocks are still there, when they will be removed, and why CWAC has not applied for LBC. Members also asked that CWAC is requested to explain why communication with the Parish Council has been so poor and what work remains to be completed and what the plan is for the bridge longer term, including whether weight restrictions and speed limits are being considered.

5. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There were no members of the public present at the meeting.

6. CHAIR'S REPORT

The Chair presented a report and shared the following information: -

- Glad to see the bridge has been re-opened

7. FINANCIAL MATTERS

Members considered the following financial items.

7.1 Ledger/Bank Reconciliation Statement (1.4.24-31.8.24)

The ledger/bank reconciliation statement for the period 1st April 2024-31st August 2024 was presented to Members for note. Members agreed that the Clerk approach Utility Aid to review costs of utilities.

Members **AGREED** to update the following bank mandates: -

- Barclays Bank Current Account – Cllrs Strachan, Higgs, Lee, and Sherry (and the Clerk)
- Barclays Bank Savings Account - Cllrs Strachan, Higgs, Lee, and Sherry (and the Clerk)
- Barclays Bank 200 Club - Cllrs Strachan, Higgs, Lee, and Sherry (and the Clerk)

7.2 Internal/External Audit 2023/24

Members noted that the internal audit for 2023/24 had now been completed and the findings are set out below.

- No bank statement was provided to evidence the Barclays Current Account year-end balance used in the year end bank reconciliation.

Audit recommendation - year end bank statements must be obtained for all bank accounts.

Action - steps will be taken to address issues with the Barclays bank accounts to receive statements for all accounts.

- Total reserves at the year-end are £23,291. The council had previously set earmarked reserves as £10,000 for village hall maintenance and £4,222 for village hall improvements, however, no update on the earmarked reserves position was included in the annual budget setting process.

Audit recommendation - the council should ensure the levels of all earmarked reserves are disclosed at each annual budget setting round.

Action – there has been no change to the earmarked reserves, but this will be made clear for the 2024/25 audit.

- No VAT reclaims were received during 2023/24 or 2022/23.

Audit recommendation - VAT should be reclaimed on a timely basis and at least annually.

Action – this will be addressed during 2024/25.

Members agreed to **APPROVE** the Internal Audit report for 2023/24.

7.3 Authorisation of Payments

Members approved the following payments.

£382.20	Dr M Bailey – Clerk Pay – August/September 2024
£1,250.00	Ms. A Hancock – Caretaker Pay – Oct 2024-March 2025
£111.00	Brazendale – Boiler Service – Village Hall (1)
£111.00	Brazendale - Boiler Service – Village Hall (2)
£396.00	Netwise UK – Website – 2024/25
£462.00	JDH Business Services – Internal Audit – 2023/24
£750.00	Platt White Partnership – Survey – Village Hall
£35.00	NMC Design and Print – Newsletter

RESOLVED: Members approved the above payments.

8. PLANNING MATTERS

The Parish Council considered planning matters affecting the parish.

8.1 Planning Applications

The Parish Council received notification of the following planning application from Cheshire West and Chester Council.

24/01505/FUL	<u>Mill Yard, Hall Lane, Darnhall CW7 4DE</u> Erection of storage building for parts and equipment and construction of boundary mesh panel fencing (max height 2.1 m).
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Members made the following comments regarding this application: -

- Members were disappointed that the application was not supported by an appropriate planning assessment, including a review of the proposals against relevant national and local planning policy.
- The application is supported by a design and access statement, which makes no reference to

any of the relevant policies set out in the CWAC Local Plan and the Darnhall Neighbourhood Plan.

- A Member objected to this planning application on the basis that the new building by reason of its siting close to the Hall Lane boundary, especially through the removal of the existing hedgerow to be replaced by an unsightly palisade fence will be harmful to the visual amenity of the area.
- A Member also argued that the removal of the hedgerow will result in net deficit by diversity as a hedgerow provides habitats for a range of flora and fauna. Members did note, however, that planting will take place at the back of the property and note needs to be taken of what is to be planted.
- Members expressed the view that the application is welcomed as being from a local business but expressed concerns that the removal of the hedgerow is an unnecessary step which may harm the visual amenities and character in/of the area.
- Members asked CWAC to note that there is a national mandatory requirement to provide a minimum of 10% by biodiversity net gain (BNG) and that Darnhall NP policy CE1 (biodiversity) also requires throughout the proposals to result in BNG.
- Members stated their support of the applicant wishing to expand business and stated that it is pleasing to see that the building will remain within the plot of the existing development, without encroaching into the open countryside.
- Members expressed a preference for a better option of security fencing to be installed behind the retained hedgerow. If any palisade fencing is to be erected, it must only be on the proviso that it is not a replacement for the hedgerow (can go behind the hedge) and it is powder coated to a dark green colour.
- Members asked that CWAC highways to be satisfied that the erection of the additional building on the site does not remove parking and manoeuvring space required to support the servicing of the development.
- Members noted that, if there is insufficient parking available on the site, it will lead to unacceptable on street parking in Hall Lane and then nearby Beauty Bank.

- A Member argued that the proposals will cause harm to biodiversity and visual amenity and as such the application conflicted with relevant development plan policies set out in the Darnhall NP, namely policies: CE1 (Biodiversity), CE2 (Natural Assets), (CE3 (hedgerow, trees and water courses), RCLE 3 (employment development - scale, design and amenity).
- Members urged that CWAC seek to ensure that the application conforms to the requirements of the CWAC Local Plan and the Darnhall Neighbourhood Plan especially in relation to biodiversity.
- A Member suggested that their objections would be overcome through a re-siting of the building to push it away from the northern boundary with Hall Lane, which would enable the existing hedgerow to be retained. This would remove harmful impacts on both biodiversity and visual amenity.

8.2 National Planning Policy Framework

Members noted that a consultation is taking place on changes to the NPPF.

A Member stated that the draft changes to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) will bring about a significant shift in government policy in relation to planning relating to local councils' mandatory requirements to provide a five-year housing land supply to support the government agenda to boost the delivery of housing, including affordable housing.

It was further noted that the CWAC current annual housing target of 532 is uplifted to 2017 (279% increase), which may mean that the CWAC current five-year housing land position (which is 11 years of supply) will go into a deficit, once the government formally adopts its updated mandatory housing targets as part of the new NPPF.

Members also noted that the implications of the new housing targets are that the current Local Plan and plan settlement boundaries may become out of date as they influence the supply and distribution of housing.

Members stated that the Darnhall Neighbourhood Plan, which follows the planning and spatial strategy set out in the CWAC Local Plan, may be undermined and may not be able to prevent housing sites in the open countryside that are well-connected to the Winsford settlement boundary.

Members **AGREED** to write to the appropriate officer/Member at CWAC, asking for an urgent update on how they propose to address the impending changes to national housing targets; and to give advice on how the current five-year supply position will be updated. Members also agreed

to ask that CWAC offers an interim planning policy position statement to reassure the Parish Council that the Darnhall Neighbourhood Plan will not be undermined to ensure land in the open countryside is protected from speculative housing developments.

8.3 The Raven

Members considered the position with relation to the former Raven public house. Members agreed that the Clerk to the owner/agent for an update.

9. DARNHALL VILLAGE HALL

The following matters were considered by the Parish Council regarding the Village Hall.

Members agreed to seek quotes for the purchase of a new oven for the Village Hall.

Members agreed to seek quotes for installing an interior security door for the upper loft.

9.1 Survey of the Village Hall

It was reported that the survey had been completed. This has been laid out to allow the Council to provide any contractor with a schedule of work.

It was agreed to do the following: -

- To advertise this work as a tender via the website, social media and procurement portals
- The tender advertisement will include a cover sheet with a closing date for tenders
- To also contact local firms regarding advertising the tender

10. CLERK'S REPORT

The Clerk's report was noted.

- EV Chargers – it was reported that an offer had been made to install a EV charger on the Village Hall car park. Members agreed to re-visit this in the future.

11. SHARED INFORMATION

The following items were noted by Members: -

- Quiz Night – it was reported that this will take place on 12th October 2024.
- Newsletter – it was reported that it was nearly complete.
- Abandoned Car Hall Lane – it was agreed to write to Mellor Speakman to ask to arrange for it to be removed off their land.
- Beeston Young Farmers – would like to present to the Parish Council about their work.

12. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Members noted that the date of the next Parish Council meeting is Tuesday 19th November 2024 – 6.30pm – Darnhall Village Hall

13. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

Members agreed to exclude press and public due to confidential nature of items in accordance with section 1(2) of Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960. This is pursuant to Section 100(A)4 of the Local Government Act 1972 on the grounds that discussions may involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in the provisions of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972 and public interest would not be served in publishing the information.

PART B**14. DEFIBRILLATOR**

To consider quotes relating to the purchase of a cabinet for the defibrillator previously purchased by the Parish Council via funds from previous CWAC Councillor Malcolm Gaskill. It was agreed to defer this item to the next meeting.

Meeting closed at 8.34pm