

MINUTES OF THE EXTRA-ORDINARY MEETING  
OF OMBERSLEY AND DOVERDALE PARISH COUNCIL  
HELD ON TUESDAY, 10<sup>th</sup> AUGUST 2015 AT 7.30 P.M.  
AT OMBERSLEY MEMORIAL HALL

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Present: Cllrs: D Ingram (Chairman), W T Arnold, Mrs H Barningham, M Best, F Cody, Mrs. J Goodman, P Reynolds, Mrs B Serrell, C Welch (9)

In Attendance: District Councillor P Tomlinson was also in attendance for part of the meeting

95/15 Apologies for Absence - Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs C McKenzie-Rowan, Mrs J Mitchell and R Reynolds.

96/15 Declarations of Personal and Prejudicial Interest

None

97/15 Resolution of On-going planning issues

Following the discussion at the meeting of the Planning Committee, the Clerk reported that he had received a written request from 3 Councillors asking for an extra-ordinary meeting of the Parish Council to be convened to discuss Cllr Murphy's offer of resignation.

At the same time, notice had been given that there were a number of related procedural planning matters that may require attention, depending on the conclusions reached.

(a) Cllr R Murphy's position on the Parish Council

The Clerk reminded Councillors of the discussion at the Planning Committee held on 21<sup>st</sup> July 2015 and the issues raised. At the end of that meeting Cllr Murphy had offered his resignation from the Parish Council should that be the Parish Council's wish.

There were a number of issues which had concerned the Parish Council. These included:-

- Public Image and Reputation of the Parish Council – the application in question, Plot 4, The Paddocks, Comhampton had been considered by the Parish Council who had agreed to object to the granting of retrospective planning application. Not only was this the view of the Parish Council, but in forwarding its objection it was also reflecting the concerns of a considerable number of local residents who had also taken the time to register their objection.

Following the consideration of this application the Clerk had drafted the basis of the Parish council's representation and these had been shared with Councillors prior to submission. Whilst some minor comments had been received, there was nothing to suggest that this was not the unanimous view of the Parish Council.

The application was subsequently presented to Wychavon District Council's Planning Committee and the Chairman of the Parish Council addressed the Committee setting out the Parish Council's opposition to the application.

Despite the opposition to the application, it was approved by members of Wychavon's Planning Committee. Cllr Murphy in his capacity as a District Councillor serving on that Committee had voted in support of the application.

Members of the Parish Council and local residents had found this action difficult to reconcile and felt that Cllr Murphy's actions had impacted negatively on the reputation of the Parish Council.

- Declaration of Interest – Cllr Murphy had been elected as a District Councillor in May 2015 but was not a District Councillor at the time of the Parish Council's consideration. However, having been party to the Parish Council's deliberations he should have declared an interest to that effect at the District Council's Planning Committee.
- Impact of Multiple Representation of Public Authorities – Cllr Murphy currently served as a Parish Councillor on Ombersley and Doverdale Parish and Droitwich Town Councils. He now also served as a District Councillor on Wychavon District Council representing the Droitwich Central ward (which did not include the Parish of Ombersley and Doverdale). In addition to the time commitment required to effectively discharge the responsibilities placed on each position, the Parish Council believed that there was a lack of clarity from the public's perspective as to what capacity Cllr Murphy was acting in and who he was representing at any given time. Whilst the planning application at Plot 4 had highlighted these concerns, this was likely to be an issue, at times in the future.

Since the meeting of the Planning Committee, Cllr Murphy had written to the Chairman of the Parish Council re-iterating both his apology and his willingness to resign if this was the Parish Council's wish.

Following a detailed discussion, the Parish Council confirmed that its concerns highlighted above still remained. It felt that although the situation had been brought to a head by the approval of the planning application at Plot 4, The Paddocks, Cllr Murphy's multiple membership of public authorities was likely to cause him and the Parish council difficulties in the future.

The Parish Council was extremely appreciative of the dedication and commitment Cllr Murphy had shown during his time as a Parish Councillor and regardless of the outcome, wished to express its appreciation to Cllr Murphy.

The Parish Council accepted that it was not its role to require the resignation of a serving Parish Councillor. This was a decision that only Cllr Murphy could take. However the Parish Council should formally write to Cllr Murphy expressing its concerns and inviting him to seriously consider his position in the light of these.

**It was therefore moved by Cllr Best and seconded by Cllr Barningham that the Clerk should write to Cllr Murphy setting out the Parish Council views and its specific concerns about:-**

- **The Public Image and Reputation of the Parish Council;**
- **Declarations of Interest; and**
- **The Impact of Multiple Representation of Public Authorities**

**Cllr Murphy should be asked to seriously consider his position in the light of these issues. Finally to ensure that the matter was concluded promptly, Cllr Murphy should be asked to formally respond setting out what action, if any, he proposed to take within 10 days of receipt of the letter.**

**On being put to the meeting, this was unanimously agreed by those Councillors present.**

The Clerk would draft a suitable letter and forward a draft to Councillors prior to this being sent.

(b) Future role and operation of the Planning Committee.

Cllr Best felt that it was now appropriate for the Parish Council to consider the way in which the Parish Council considered Planning Applications in the future. Not only did he believe that the Committee's reputation had been damaged by recent events, but he also felt that there was a need to consider the most efficient way of commenting on applications in the future.

Currently the consideration of applications was given by a Planning Committee comprising all members of the Parish Council. The Clerk had previously researched the approach other Council's adopted and it was evident the vast majority of Councillors put planning applications to the full Parish council meeting for comment.

Whilst the reasons for this approach were well known, Cllr Best was concerned that on occasions (and particularly when a Planning Committee meeting preceded a meeting of the Parish Council), the time taken to consider applications was having a negative impact on the time available to the Parish Council to consider other matters of significance. He believed that incorporating the responsibility for considering planning applications into the role of the Parish Council would help with the management of business requiring consideration.

This approach, coupled with a greater use of delegated authority provisions, would represent a more efficient use of Councillors' time.

**It was therefore moved by Cllr Best and seconded by Cllr Serrell that, in future, responsibility for determining the Council's response to planning applications should be undertaken by the full Parish Council. On being put to this meeting this motion was agreed with 7 Councillors voting in favour and 0 against.**

In order to facilitate this change, the Clerk would review the Council's Standing Orders and bring forward any necessary changes for consideration by the Parish Council.

(c) Comments on Planning Application – W/15/01732/CU

The Clerk reported receipt of a planning application which required consideration by the Parish Council. The application related to a proposal to site three additional caravans at Mutton Hall Park, Boreley Lane, Ombersley, WR9 0HT.

It was suggested that the detail of this application should be forwarded to Councillors who would be asked to inform the Clerk of any observations they may wish to make. Based on the responses received, the Clerk would formulate the Council's response after consultation with the Chairman.

**This proposal was unanimously approved by the Parish Council.**

*(At this point – 8.20pm Cllr Best and District Councillor, Peter Tomlinson left the meeting)*

98/15 Ombersley Play Area – Determination of Action to Be Taken

Since consideration of this matter at the last meeting on 21<sup>st</sup> July 2015, Cllr Welch had been approached by a resident in the village, again expressing concern at the condition of the equipment on the Play Area.

To assist Councillors, the Clerk had circulated a copy of the latest RoSPA Play Area Inspection which had been carried out in March 2015.

Councillors confirmed that they did not consider the condition of any of the pieces of equipment to be dangerous, but accepted that it was now showing signs of wear and tear and required updating and modernisation.

The Clerk had already expressed a wish to Wychavon District Council that an upgrade to the Play Area be considered for funding via the Community Infrastructure Levy arising out of The Racks Development. Further, as reported to the last Parish Council meeting, Sarah Pennington (Ombersley Conservation Trust) had confirmed that it was the applicant's desire to see Community Infrastructure Levy funds spent on local projects.

The Parish Council had also asked the Clerk to contact Jem Teale at Wychavon District Council to see if he was able to provide any further advice on potential sources of external grant aid.

The conclusions would then be discussed at the next Finance Committee meeting.

The Parish Council considered this to be an appropriate way forward, adding that the Clerk should also discuss with the Lengthsman the feasibility and cost of undertaking any short term remedial work.

The Finance Committee should also be asked to consider putting a sum of money aside annually to provide for any future improvements or repairs.

There being no other business, the meeting closed at 8.30pm.