

Walton Parish Council

Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held at the St. Johns Community Church Hall, Old Chester Road, Walton on Thursday the 5th April 2012

Present

Cllr. R. Hardie Chairman
Cllr. V.C. Lacey
Cllr. D. A. Meacock
Cllr. P. Morgan
Cllr. H. A. S. Hardie
Cllr. R. Hewitt
Cllr. Y.R. Shaikh
Cllr. J. A. Ashcroft

In Attendance

Borough Councillor Paul Kennedy
Ray Hallam – Parish Clerk
Guest, John Rowson, Operations Manager (Transportation, Engineering and Operations) Warrington Borough Council
2 Residents

Cllr. R. Hardie, the Chairman opened the meeting at 7.15pm and welcomed the guest, John Rowson, Councillors and residents to the meeting.

The Chairman confirmed that at the Annual Parish meeting everybody present was able to raise any relevant matter for discussion. The Agenda and Minutes of the previous meeting were available for everyone.

- 1 **Apologies** - The Chairman stated that apologies for absence had been received from Cllr. Bennett, Chadwick and Cllr. Ward.
- 2 **Guest, John Rowson** – The Chairman introduced the guest, who had been asked to give an update on developments at Walton Hall Estate (WHE).
Mr. Rowson (JR) said that great strides forward had been made up to the latest Walton Liaison Group (WLG) meeting. An external architect had been appointed, who had previously worked at Windsor Castle and he had made recommendations which had been accepted. He said that WHE needs some TLC and that we shouldn't touch what isn't already broken. Notices are being put up around WHE outlining what is planned to be done. There are to be 3 main projects:-
 - 1) Toilets – There will be a new block near to the zoo area.
 - 2) There will be an extension to the Hall at the rear – it will be 2 storey with a lift and with further ground floor toilets. This would be part of the need to maximize all income generating opportunities.
 - 3) Repair of Riding School Roof – This building was another important option for income generation for the future. It was not as bad inside as first thought and it needed to be made watertight. It can then be hired out for all sorts of purposes.

In the short term planning permission had been sought to change the Heritage Yard from shop and museum to cafeteria and it was hoped to have this ready by June.

In the longer term, toilets were planned to service the café, with access from the gardens and golf course and a new kitchen in the golf club yard. The new golf professional is doing a lot of good work and bringing in golf societies to raise income.

He is hoping to get prices on these projects in the next 3 weeks and promised to come back and talk to us, once plans for the extension are in.

He reported increasing activity with weddings now being held on Fridays and Sundays. Businesses had been invited to make more use of the Hall for conferences and funeral receptions could now be held on Monday to Friday. They were really beginning to promote the Hall as it was important to him that it thrives in the future. Any income generated will be reinvested back into the Estate and there was all party agreement on this. He issued copies of the current WHE events brochure and his business card. Onion Ring will be promoting a Jubilee food event with music in the park for 2 days.

JR then invited questions and comments.

The Chairman stated that it was good to see the money earning capacity being developed and it was refreshing the way that the architect had looked things.

Cllr. Lacey (VCL) asked what he felt the major risks were. In the short term he didn't think there were any, providing the pricing was right for things like weddings, but the market research had been done.

In the longer term the glass houses were a concern. The architect had advised that permission would not be obtained to knock them down. The main glass house will remain and be made safe. The green fence round the glass house remained a blight on the landscape and there was a need to get into a position where this could be removed. The glass would be removed from the existing framework and the wooden beaming replaced and the glass replaced with Perspex. It was planned to let the public in, with it being used as a cold house in the winter and warm house in the summer as heating the glass house was not an option at present. They were seeking opportunities for grant monies for this project.

He was happy that the golf course was going from strength to strength.

Mr. Eldridge (ME) asked could he be clear on how much money had been promised.

JR stated that all the money allocated was capital. WBC were committed to spending 4-5 million on 4 parks, Walton, Bank, Victoria and Sankey Valley. But the priority is Walton. £500K has been mentioned but it could get more.

Bor. Cllr. Kennedy said it was £1.4m over 3 years.

The Chairman asked whether there was going to be a problem spending the money.

JR said there was a need to address the projects mentioned earlier and the former laundry building and make everything watertight and secure in order to be in a position to be able to generate income.

Cllr. Shaikh (YRS) referred to the WLG's report being accepted. The report had stated that there was a need for a good management structure for sustainability, but is the report gathering dust?

JR said that the report was still on his desk. There are plans to amend the management structure. There will be a permanent presence and a lot of what is in the report is starting to be acted upon.

VCL referred to the palm houses in Sefton Park and that there had been public contribution in helping to renovate these. JR said that they were going to take a look at these, but he was unsure about sponsorship being the way ahead for the glass houses.

She also asked about the scope for raising income by letting premises to small businesses.

JR said there may be opportunities in the Heritage Yard. There was a possibility that the existing toilet block could be used for that purpose. There was also a possibility of covering the court yard by the Heritage Yard.

The Chairman thanked JR for giving his time to the Parish.

3 Minutes of the previous Annual Parish meeting - The minutes of the Annual Parish meeting held on the 7th April 2011, distributed to all present, were reviewed. The following amendment to the minutes was noted.

Chairman's report, page 2, 6th para., line 7, 'minimizing' should read 'minimising'.

It was moved that subject to the amendments, the minutes be accepted as a true record of the meeting. This was proposed by Councillor H.A.S. Hardie and seconded by Councillor Lacey. The minutes were signed by the Chairman.

4 Chairman's Report - Councillor R. Hardie read from his prepared report, on his year in office as Chairman of the Parish Council.

CHAIRMANS REPORT 2011/12

Annual Parish Meeting 5th April 2012
Chairman's Report

There have been no changes to the Parish Council this year. Three former Councillors died (Barbara Langdale, Carolyn Brocklehurst and Michael McMahon). The PC was represented at their funerals.

The appearance of the Parish has changed a little for the better following the concentrated work by "The Look of the Borough" team. They did sterling work filling all the small potholes and clearing much of the wild vegetation that blighted the roadsides. They also did our verge tree planting, replacing those vandalised and planting 32 others in 4 locations. That gave us 43 new trees at a cost of £1600. Residents and Councillors have carried out further improvements with the planting a mass of snowdrops at the triangle, 5 sacks of daffodil bulbs, a bag of crocus and 7 small flowerbeds. So that residents can enjoy the improved outlook, we have provided 2 additional benches (at the Playground and Lychgate). I thank the residents on behalf of the PC for their help.

To maintain appearance and function, we have painted the benches and refurbished the large notice board.

Throughout the year I have been hearing appreciation for the trees, the Christmas trees, flowers and bulbs.

We had the new Police Inspector (Sarah Heath) introduce herself to the Parish in October. This is a fortunate Parish in that it is relatively crime free. Other than the break-in at Walton Lea, I am not aware of any serious crimes.

Creamfields has grown such that the visitors may be here for up to 4 days. The crimes perpetrated by visitors seem to be contained on the site of the festival and the main disruption to the locality is from the noise. Other than noise, few of our Parishioners voice complaints to us. The success of the event is due to the good organisation and a well-planned police operation.

Of the 18 planning applications we have dealt with, none have been significant to the Parish. There is the Peel Ports future proposals which may lead to havoc if the swing bridges open as on their present pattern but up to 8 times a day. Following the change to "on-line" planning application, the Parish was given an instruction course and a laptop to allow them to view in the absence of paper drawings.

The Parish has run smoothly through the year and the account keeping raised no questions at audit. I applaud the conscientiousness of our Clerk.

The triangle of land in the centre of the village was earlier said to be the responsibility of "The Daresbury Pension Fund". The Trustees of that fund are now not admitting to responsibility for it. Residents from Lychgate have been tidying and improving the area. The PC has supported their work by paying for items they have needed.

In preparation for a hard winter, the PC accepted an offer from WBC of 5 grit bins. They have been placed strategically around the Parish and (only) 2 residents have offered to spread salt/grit on icy junctions.

The Parish once had a website hosted by "The Local Channel", but this folded a few years ago. Following an appeal for help, one of our residents has designed a very attractive website – www.waltonpc.org.uk - which we invite all residents to use.

The PC issues 2 newsletters each year and from the residents I have spoken to they appear to be well received.

We are fortunate to have Walton Park in the Parish. Two years ago the Borough Council took steps to hive off a major part to a private company. Fortunately this was thwarted, and now it is intended that WBC invest in the Estate facilities to bring in more income, such that it should not be a financial burden on the ratepayer. We hope that this will ensure that it remains available for all residents to enjoy. The PC together with "Friends of Walton Hall" intend to keep a close watch on developments.

The Parish held it's Civic Service in February and I was pleased that beside the Deputy Mayor & Mayoress, it was attended by the Chairmen from 8 other Parishes and our MP and Councillors. I have been pleased to represent the Parish at 4 other around the Borough Civic Services.

I have tried to bring information to the Parish and represent the Parish by attending about 27 meetings or events through the year, which have varied between the opening of the new bandstand at Walton Hall to the Peel Ports presentations and discussions.

I'll conclude by saying thank you Cllr Kennedy for the help and advice you have given us and thank you Parish Councillors for your help.

5 Parish Matters – There were no Parish matters.

The Chairman thanked everybody for attending. The meeting closed at 8.04pm.