

PARISH OF WROCKWARDINE
Annual Parish Meeting

**Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on Thursday 26th April 2007
at Wrockwardine Parish Hall at 7.45 p.m.**

Present:

Cllr. - K.J.S. Ballantyne – Chairman of the Parish Meeting
Mr. M. Goldstraw – Clerk to the Parish Meeting

Also in attendance: Over twenty members of the public.
PC Judith McPherson
CSO Suzy Coombes

The Chairman welcomed all to the 2007 Annual Parish Meeting.

The Chairman gave a brief outline of the purpose of and requirement (in law) for an Annual Parish meeting and reminded all present that this was not, as was sometimes mistakenly thought, a meeting of the Parish Council but a meeting of the Parish.

The Chairman informed the meeting that he intended to take item 7 (Local Policing Report) after the approval of the minutes to allow the officers to move on to other engagements. He also informed the meeting that, although there was no specific agenda item dealing with questions, he had received notice of one question which would be dealt with at the end of the meeting. He reminded all that, per the agenda, he would allow questions to speakers after each agenda heading.

1. Apologies

Apologies were received from Cllr. Craik, Cllr. Carver and Cllr. Kenny.

2. Minutes of the Previous Annual Parish Meeting

Mr. Orrell stated that he took exception to the item on page two concerning the request he made for production of the Parish Council accounts stating that he did not, as stated in the minutes, wave a draft copy of Standing Orders. He denied that what he had waved was a draft, stating that he had waved a NALC booklet.

Mr. Orrell refuted any suggestion that he did not understand the difference between a Parish Council Meeting and an Annual Parish Meeting and reiterated that he had not waved draft minutes but had waved the NALC guidance booklet entitled Standing Orders and Chairmanship published in 1999 and these provided a guideline to Councils.

The meeting agreed that the minutes of the previous meeting could be altered to reflect the fact that Mr. Orrell had waved the NALC document entitled Standing Orders and Chairmanship.

[For the purposes of clarity, the NALC document entitled Standing Orders and Chairmanship contains incomplete draft Standing Orders which are a guideline to Parish and Town Councils, they do not contain “the” Standing Orders of any Council]

Mr. Orrell stated that he had not heard said what was recorded in the minutes relating to the Clerk’s reply to the request for the accounts. The Clerk stated that it was unfortunate that Mr. Orrell had not heard the reply but confirmed that this had been said.

The Chairman stated that any discussion must be restricted to the accuracy of the minutes and as this matter was not easily going to be resolved he ruled that the matter should be deferred until after the Police Report and that the meeting should now move to item seven on the agenda.

Mr. Orrell challenged the accuracy of the minutes. The Chairman stated that the meeting had not resolved the matter but had moved it further down the agenda to allow the officers to go.

3. Local Police Report

PC McPherson did not give a report but took questions from the floor. After a discussion of local policing matters PC McPherson and CSO Coombes were thanked by the meeting for their attendance and they left the meeting at 8.06 p.m.

4. Minutes of the Previous Annual Parish Meeting

Mr. Orrell continued to object to the accuracy of the minutes and stated that the Clerk had said that the Parish Council had not adopted Standing Orders. The Clerk responded by saying that he would not have stated that the Parish Council had not adopted Standing Orders as that was clearly not the case and it was he, as Clerk to the Parish Council, who produced those Standing Orders for the Parish Council. What he had said was that the Annual Parish Meeting had not adopted any Standing Orders and this was indeed the case.

The Chairman reminded Mr. Orrell that certification of the accuracy of the minutes was up to the meeting as a whole to decide.

Mr. Orrell stated that he had not heard the close of the meeting and maintained that it had not been properly closed. The Chairman reminded all present of the circumstances and events of the previous meeting and stated that although Mr. Orrell may not have heard him formally close the meeting he had done so.

Cllr. Kiernan stated that he had heard enough, that he had been present at the last meeting and was perfectly satisfied that the minutes as presented to the meeting were a true and accurate record. Cllr. Kiernan proposed that the minutes of the previous meeting be altered to reflect the fact that Mr. Orrell had waved the

NALC document entitled Standing Orders and Chairmanship and in all other respects be accepted by the meeting as a true and accurate record of the minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on Thursday 27th April 2006.

The proposition was seconded by Cllr. Cowling.

After being put to a vote, it was RESOLVED that, subject to the change to reflect the fact that Mr. Orrell had waved the NALC document entitled Standing Orders and Chairmanship, the minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on Thursday 27th April 2006 were a true and accurate record.

[For the record, there were eight votes in favour of the proposition, two votes against the proposition (Messrs Orrell and Meredith) and one noted abstention (the person asking it to be noted that he had not attended the previous meeting)]

5. Conduct of the Parish Meeting

The Chairman informed the meeting that he and the Clerk had been notified of a complaint that had been made over the conduct of the previous Annual Parish Meeting and the meeting was briefed over correspondence that had taken place with the Borough Council. The complaint concerned the alleged failure to present the accounts of the Parish Council to the Annual Parish Meeting, allegations regarding non adoption of Standing Orders by the Parish Council and an allegation that the Chairman failed to close the meeting and failed to take questions.

The Chairman informed the meeting that although there were strict regulations as to when and to whom the Parish Council must present its accounts, there was no obligation on the Parish Council to present its accounts to the Annual Parish Meeting and it had never in fact done so. It was a recorded fact that the Parish council had adopted and did comply with Standing Orders and it was now a matter of record that the minutes of the previous meeting, now accepted as accurate and being a true record, show that the meeting was closed properly. The minutes also reflect the fact that the Chairman gave ample opportunity for questions to be asked and that questions were in fact asked.

The meeting was informed by the Chairman that the Solicitor for the Borough Council had taken the view that the Borough had no jurisdiction over the conduct of Annual Parish Meetings but if it did and she had to adjudicate she had stated that she would have found no impropriety. In addition, the meeting was informed that the complaint had been reported to the Parish Council and it had passed the following resolution:

This Parish Council is wholly satisfied that its Clerk and Chairman, acting in their respective delegated courtesy roles at the 2006 Annual Parish Meeting, acted with complete propriety and integrity and that this Council considers there to be no substance to the complaints made to the Borough Council arising from that meeting.

The Chairman called for questions.

Mr. Meredith referred to replies made to Borough Officer Mathew Cumberbatch in relation to the complaints and made a remark relating to the production of the minutes for the previous Annual Parish Meeting. The Clerk considered the remark to be outrageous and utterly without foundation.

The Chairman warned Mr. Meredith that he was in a public meeting and that his comments were not immune from possible legal proceedings for defamation of character. He asked Mr. Meredith to think very carefully before making any further comments.

Mr. Meredith raised the issue of the Chairman asking for questions and the Chairman replied that he had always stated that it is more helpful if those present asked questions at the appropriate time to each of the speakers. The Chairman stated that the previous meeting had given both its implied and explicit consent to such a course.

Cllr. Cowling stated that he was amazed at the tone of the conversation at the meeting and was disappointed that two people could come along with such a disruptive attitude.

The Chairman asked Mr. Meredith if he had a specific proposal to put to the meeting. There being no proposition put by Mr. Meredith, or any other person present, the Chairman moved to the next item on the agenda.

6. Presentation of the Annual Report of the Parish Council

Cllr. Ballantyne presented his written report as Chairman of the Parish Council and answered questions.

Despite being previously warned by the Chairman about the nature of his comments, Mr. Meredith asked a question relating to the employment of the Clerk which was considered, by the Clerk and Chairman, to be offensive and hurtful. The Chairman reiterated his previous warning.

The Chairman answered further questions from the floor relating to Parish Council matters.

7. Borough Councillor's Report

Cllr. Blackwell explained that because the meeting had been held immediately prior to a Borough election there would be no report lest it be misinterpreted as electioneering however he and Cllr. Miss Seymour would be pleased to answer questions relating to Borough Council matters.

Cllrs. Blackwell and Seymour took questions from the floor.

8. Report from Local Organisations

Wrockwardine Parish Hall

The Chairman gave a report on behalf of Wrockwardine Parish Hall. There were no questions.

Admaston House Trust

Cllr. Powell gave a report on, and answered questions about, Admaston House Trust.

9. Report from the Parish Council’s representative on the Board of Governors of St Peter’s Primary School

Cllr. Dawes gave a report and answered questions.

Cllr. Miss Seymour congratulated the Head Teacher on the standards achieved at the school.

10. Resolutions

There were no resolutions.

The Chairman took a question from Mr. Platt, a resident, who voiced concerns over the extended workings of Leaton Quarry.

Details of the Quarry Liaison Group were given.

The meeting discussed the workings of the quarry and its effects on the community. No proposition was put and therefore there was no resolution.

There being no further business, the Chairman brought the meeting to a formal close at 9.15 p.m.

Signed.....
Chairman of the Meeting

Date.....