

# MARCHINGTON PARISH COUNCIL

## MINUTES OF MEETING

Held on: Tuesday 18<sup>th</sup> November 2014 at 7.30 p.m.  
At: Marchington Village Hall

Present: Acting Cllr. B. Darby, R. Parkes, G. Whitehead, A. Mann,  
R. Ford, C. Leedham and P. Nixon  
Parish Clerk Mrs L. Hoptroff  
Cllr. Hardwick  
Mrs W. Scott representing Marchington Village Hall Committee  
Mr. M. Cleaver representing St. John's Church, Marchington Woodlands  
Mr. D. Hayes resident of Marchington Woodlands  
Mr. S. Langston resident of Marchington

### **Vice Chairman Darby read out an opening statement:**

I regret to say that our Chairman Mr Mark Robinson has decided to stand down from the position and as of today has resigned from the Marchington Parish Council. It is a regrettable decision which he has decided on without any pressure from council members. In fact the reverse we would like him to continue as both Chair and as Councillor. May I publicly thank Mark for all his time and efforts he has put into the village. I can relate that those efforts included rounding up lost sheep to decorating the bus shelter near to The Bull public house.

There I (Brian Darby) as vice chairman shall be the acting chairman.

Our meeting last week was adjourned. This was because it was unclear if the filming and recording of small parish councils such as ours was legal or acceptable. While many of the parts of both the Local Government Transparency Code (page 6) and also the Open and Accountable of Local Government (page 27) only apply to Parish Councils who have a precept of £200,000 or more. Those below that figure are exempt. The precept for Marchington Parish is just £29,000. However, filming or recording applies by members of the public to all councils whatever their size. So on behalf of the Parish Council may I offer my apologies for our mis-understanding of the rules. We are now well aware! It may be worth stating that these regulations are very new and that the local Transparency code 2014 was only implemented on the 7<sup>th</sup> of November, whilst the Open and Accountable Regulations (Part 5) were passed into law just some three months ago. Due to the vacancy created by Mr Robinson resigning – we shall be looking for another councillor. Perhaps Mr Langston being experienced in the council information rules might consider to be co-opted (subject to agreement with ESBC). Now let us get on with the business in hand.

**Mrs Scott representing Marchington Village Hall Committee:** Mrs Scott informed the Council that the Village Hall committee would like to build their own web-site, they were grateful for the use of the Marchington.info web-site previously but they wished to enhance their profile and by having their own web site they would have more freedom to do this. The Parish Council agreed to contact the Marchington.info web-site contractor and ask him to co-operate with any information etc. needed by the new village hall web designer. Clerk to action.

**Mr Steve Langston read out the following statement:** I want to make it clear from the outset that I'm not here to make trouble and I don't like the animosity that has developed between us.

I want to film the meetings because, yes, it is my legal and democratic right, there isn't a hidden agenda, I'm not doing it for a particular purpose other than because it is my legal and democratic right to film and also think it is important that villagers that can't attend these meetings and want to hear what the outcome of a certain discussion is, will be able to view the footage.

Also, I strongly believe that any government body be it central government, local government or a parish council like yourselves, how they conduct and how you conduct your business and how the decision making process is conducted should be open and transparent.

It shouldn't be hidden behind closed doors, the public shouldn't be excluded from the decision making process. You, parish councillors are representatives of your parishioners, and therefore we should be involved in that decision making process with you.

When I came last week, there were several points I wanted to raise but I wasn't able to do so because of what happened, so with your permission I would now like to discuss those points.

I wanted to express my concern at Councillor Leedham's comments as published in the September minutes, - "..... I am not happy about the way the shop application for extra funds was handled. Can I propose that if any future societies, villagers or any others come to the council to ask for grants etc., that any vote taken is done when the applicants are not in the vicinity? When the precept monies are allocated, this is done after the submissions and not when the applicants are in the room."

I want to point out that discussions and decisions regarding the spending of parishioner's monies (including decisions about precept allocation), should be discussed in public. I am seeking an assurance from the Parish Council that, in future these discussions will be, as the spending of parishioner's taxes is in the public interest and is not a private or confidential matter.

Following on from the above, I wanted to raise the issue of the public being routinely asked to leave Parish Council meetings, so that councillors could discuss, in private, items that ought to be open to public scrutiny. In February this year, I attended the Parish Council meeting, and I along with some other parishioners had hoped to stay on and listen to proceedings. After a short time, the chairman, Cllr Leedham, asked for the public to leave so that they could discuss the local plan. Not knowing any better we left councillors to it. It is only now, after looking closely into the law and the Parish Council's own standing orders, have I discovered that the Parish Council have been excluding the public without following the proper, legal procedure to do so. In the very few instances where the public can be excluded (i.e. when discussing the clerk's annual appraisal) the proper procedure to follow is that a resolution is passed with a clear reason for the exclusion being stated. The exclusion of the public should be noted in the agenda and also in the minutes, along with a clear explanation of the reasons, to ensure transparency. In the minutes for that meeting, there is no record of the public ever being asked to leave. I seek to have an assurance from the Parish Council, that, in future it will conduct its business in the open and with proper regard to correct legal procedure.

**Note:** During and following the statement by Mr Langston, the various situations/points of exclusion were discussed/explained. The Parish Council did not agree with Mr Langston that members of the public had been asked to leave Parish Council meetings. However, it was stated that if anyone did feel they had been excluded then that was not the intention of the Parish Council. It was pointed out that all precept payments were recorded in the minutes under Payments. Councillor Hardwick explained in detail the process for having a Part A (White Paper) and Part B (Pink Paper) Agenda where items of a private, confidential or sensitive nature could be dealt with within the law. The Councillors stated that this would happen on very rare occasions. Councillors asked if Mr Langston was happy with the result of the discussion.

**Agreement of Precept:** A representative of St. John's Church attended the meeting to present in person their request for financial support from the Parish Council in the year 2015/2016 and five other parish organisations had submitted written requests for support. Having considered both verbal and written requests a draft proposal prepared by Cllr. Whitehead including a comparison with the estimated outcome for the current year was considered, and the draft proposal for the 2015/16 precept was agreed subject to ESBC grant agreement. **Clerk to write to organisations informing them of the grants for 2015/16 subject to ESBC approval.**

Proposed Cllr. Parkes    Seconded Cllr. Ford.

**ACTION**

<p><b><u>APOLOGIES:</u></b> Cllr. C. Leedham and Mrs. J. Crowe  <b><u>MINUTES OF MEETING 14<sup>th</sup> October 2014:</u></b> Minutes accepted. Proposed: Cllr. Parkes    Seconded: Cllr. Nixon  <b><u>MATTERS ARISING FROM LAST MEETING:</u></b>  <b><u>Playgrounds:</u></b>  <u>Silver Lane, Marchington:</u> Cllr. Crowe had submitted her report, she reported difficulty in closing the metal gate, this was discussed and it was agreed to ask</p>	
---	--

<p>Henry to look at it and if he could not deal with it ask a contractor. She also reported a new Rubber handle rock spinner was needed.</p> <p><u>David Share Memorial Playground, Forestside:</u> As former Cllr. Robinson was not in attendance this was carried over to next month when another inspection would be carried out.</p> <p><u>Forestside Football Pitch:</u> As above</p> <p><u>Green Lane:</u> The clerk reported the straw bales had still not been collected and they were now rotting down due to the rain. This was discussed. It was agreed to inspect the situation in the spring and perhaps put on some grass or spring flower seeds to cover the rotting straw/hay to make it more aesthetically pleasing.</p> <p><b><u>SCC, Highway Matters:</u></b></p> <p><u>Highways:</u> The Clerk reported that the Best Kept Village Sign 2012 sign at the top of Bag Lane/B5017 had now been replaced following damage by a car.</p>	Clerk
<p><u>Neighbourhood Highway Teams:</u> The clerk reported that she had received an email from the Team asking if their where any jobs needed when the team visited the village in week commencing, November 25<sup>th</sup>. Cllr. Nixon requested the traffic signs in the woodlands need hedge/trees cutting from around them. Clerk to reply with request.</p> <p><b><u>P.C. Boulter/Police Surgery:</u></b> The clerk reported that P.C. Josie Shepherd had left with her new posters for the noticeboards, following a re-shuffle of P.C./PCSO's. She had agreed to let the Clerk know when the next Police Surgery would be held.</p>	Clerk
<p><b><u>Prison Liaison Meeting:</u></b> The clerk was asked to contact the Prison for a date for the next meeting.</p>	Clerk
<p><b><u>Land at Marchington Woodlands:</u></b> As nothing has been heard on this subject recently the clerk was asked to contact SCC. Mr. Hayes said he thought it had improved of late. Cllr. Parkes requested any enquiry of SCC be copied to Councillor Atkins.</p>	Clerk
<p><b><u>BMX/Skateboard Track Committee:</u></b> Cllr. Ford requested the email address of the Parish Council Insurance Company so he can contact them.</p>	
<p><b><u>Best Kept Village:</u></b> The acting Chairman stated that the Judges' comments had now been put on web-site. It was agreed there had not been a lot of negative comments from the judges. Cllr Mann agreed that the Village Hall would have hanging baskets and a weed free garden next year.</p>	
<p><b><u>Marchington Village Hall Committee:</u></b> Cllr. Mann outlined a programme of maintenance, painting barge boards etc. He said they had applied for grant from SCC for doors and windows. They have been applying for several grants.</p>	
<p><b><u>Neighbourhood Plan/ESBC Local Plan:</u></b> The clerk updated the Cllrs on the work that has been and would continue to be undertaken by Clive Keble to represent Marchington Parish Council at the Examination of the Local Plan. The clerk reported she had applied for a further grant from the Community Development Fund for £4,480.00 and this had been agreed. This meant that the Steering Group together with Clive Keble, Planning Consultant and Bob Keith, Direct Support would be able to undertake a site analysis/selection. She reported that the Steering Group Newsletter would be printed and distributed to deliverers before the weekend; they could then deliver either over the weekend or next week. She presented an updated Neighbourhood Support Contract for Clive Keble this was agreed. Proposed Whitehead Secoded Nixon. Clerk to sign and return to Mr Keble.</p>	Clerk
<p><b><u>Emergency Plan 2012:</u></b> This item is on hold until after the Neighbourhood Plan has been completed.</p>	
<p><b><u>Flooding Issues:</u></b> Cllr. Mann reported that Marchington is part of a number of sites in Staffordshire that SCC had obtained funding for alleviation schemes. He outlined a report from David Hughes, SCC "Modelling of Flood Risk Problems".</p>	
<p><b><u>Defibrillator in Village:</u></b> Cllr. Ford updated that Cllrs. on the costs of purchasing or renting a Defibrillator. This was discussed and Cllr Ford agreed to continue with his enquiries for the best solution for Marchington.</p>	
<p><b><u>PLANNING:</u></b></p>	



<p>ST14 8NU. <b>Permitted</b>  <u>P/2014/01207</u> – Erection of a detached triple garage at The Old Vicarage, Stubby Lane, Marchington ST14 8NZ. <b>Permitted</b>  <u>P/2014/00805</u> – Erection of a farmworker’s dwelling at Dove View Farm, Moisty Lane, Marchington ST14 8JY <b>Permitted</b>  <b>Planning Committee Meeting Notices:</b> None  <b>Other Correspondence/Matters:</b> None  <b>Appeal Applications Received:</b> None  <b>Appeal Decision Notices Received:</b> None  <b>CORRESPONDENCE:</b>  <b>SPCA – Gazette and various leaflets – Distributed to Cllrs.</b>  <b>PAYMENT OF ACCOUNTS:</b> <i><b>November 2014</b></i>  <b>Monies received:</b>  Interest £9.27  <b>TOTAL RECEIPTS</b> £9.27    <b>Invoices/Money Paid Out:</b>  P.B. Enterprises – Mowing of Forestside – 21/10/2014 £156.00  Clive Keble Consulting – Local Plan Work undertaken £570.80  Clive Keble Consulting Ltd (Neighbourhood Plan) £490.00  Bloomin’ Gardens &amp; Landscapes – Grounds Maintenance Sept/Oct £457.77  Mr H. Hall £220.29  Clerk Salary and Expenses (including work undertaken on the Local Plan examination and Neighbourhood Plan). £861.10  H.M. Revenue and Customs £93.20  <b>TOTAL EXPENDITURE</b> £2,849.16  Proposed: Cllr. Parkes Seconded: Cllr. Ford  <b>NEW BUSINESS:</b>  <b>Stones outside Porters Court:</b> Cllr. Ford requested that the granite edging/stones/cobbles outside Porters Court be reported to Staffordshire County Council Highways as they are coming away and are dangerous. Clerk to action.  <b>Silver Lane “Bollard”:</b> It was agreed to postpone that discussion on the “Bollard” at Silver Lane, until the next meeting as Mr Langston did not have his notes on the subject.</p>	Clerk
--	-------

There being no further business the meeting was closed at 9.10p.m.  
Marchington Parish Council’s next meeting is planned for Tuesday 9<sup>th</sup> December 2014 at Marchington Village Hall at 7.00 p.m. (Please check the agenda in case there are any alterations to these details.)

SIGNED.....

DATED.....