

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE PARISH COUNCIL OF LONGDON HELD IN
THE W. I. HALL, LONGDON, ON TUESDAY, DECEMBER 13TH, 2005

Present: Cllr. S. K. Welch (Chairman); Cllr. The Rev. J. R. Andrews; Cllr. B. J. Butler;
Cllr. R. C. Hemmingsley; Cllr. A. J. Juxon; Cllr. Mrs. M. G. Nichols;
Cllr. H. M. P. Reynolds; and Cllr. N. Stanfield.

Also present were The Clerk; Cllr. N. J. Roberts, of Lichfield District Council;
and County Councillor F. W. Lewis.

1. APOLOGIES

Cllr. N. J. Bird; Cllr. Mrs. H. A. Meere; and Cllr. M. A. W. Parsons.

2. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the previous meeting, held in The Meeting Room, Christ Church, Gentleshaw, were on a motion proposed by Cllr. Mrs. Nichols and seconded by Cllr. Hemmingsley approved and signed.

3. PARISHIONERS' QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS

No parishioners were present.

4. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

(i) Talk by John Smith, Countryside Officer, Lichfield District Council

Cllr. Mrs. Nichols repeated her suggestion, first made at the end of the previous meeting, that, when the Council wished to invite a speaker to address a meeting, the meeting should begin at an earlier time or a special meeting be convened at which the talk should be the only item on the agenda.

It was agreed that this suggestion should be adopted.

(ii) Use of Lanes between Longdon and Gentleshaw by Heavy Commercial Vehicles

Cllr. Lewis confirmed that a survey was currently being conducted in Borough Lane.

(iii) Community Paths Initiative 2005/06

The Clerk reported that the survey of the footpaths which would comprise the "Three Longdons" walk had now been completed, and Cllr. Bird had provided him with a copy of the Ordnance Survey Map showing the intended location of the kissing-gates which would replace the existing stiles.

He would now seek to identify the land-owners who should be contacted for permission to carry out this work on their land.

(iv) Grange Hill

The Clerk reported that he had received from the Land Registry Office two copies of an application form to be completed and submitted in support of the Council's attempt to identify the owners of the banks on either side of Grange Hill.

The Chairman agreed to identify and mark on the accompanying plan the exact boundaries of these banks.

(v) Speed Watch in Upper Longdon

Cllr. Bird reported that the Speed Watch team were operating three times a week for an hour each session, but varying the time of day and the choice of location.

The majority of offenders were older women who lived locally; the maximum speed recorded had been 66 mph, reached by a Land Rover.

5. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL, PREJUDICIAL AND FINANCIAL INTERESTS

None was declared.

6. PLANNING

(i) Report of Working Group

Cllr. Hemmingsley reported that, since the last meeting, the Working Group had considered the following planning applications:

05/01171/OUT: Longdon Stud Ltd.: Erection of studman's dwelling (outline):
Longdon Stud, Bardy Lane, Upper Longdon

It had been decided that an objection should be made to this application on the following grounds: it would not be an appropriate development, being contrary to the District Council's own policies; it would be within the Green Belt and visible from a public footpath; the proposed access would compromise the integrity of the existing Isolation Unit; staff accommodation was already available in Deva House, which had recently been extended; and the proposed siting would constitute a separate enterprise.

05/01172/OUT: Longdon Stud Ltd.: Replacement of existing building with purpose-built stable-block (outline): Longdon Stud, Bardy Lane, Upper Longdon

It had been decided that an objection should be made to this application on the following grounds: it would be an inappropriate development within the Green Belt; it would be visible from a public footpath; and the proposed development, together with the existing adjacent stable-block, would raise access issues.

05/01217/FUL: Mr. C. Turbill: Installation of 2000 litre liquefied petroleum gas tank:
The Thatched Cottage, Hill Top, Longdon Green

No reason was seen to object to this application provided that it conformed to the District Council's conservation policy.

05/01229/COU: The Earl of Shrewsbury: Change of use of agricultural buildings to four-bedroom dwelling: Dark Lane Farm, Dark Lane, Longdon

It had been noted that there would be no increase in the footprint of the existing building and therefore there could be no objection to the application provided that it conformed to the District Council's policy on barn conversion.

05/01256/FUL: Messrs. R. & J. Cope: Conversion of existing milking shed to 2 no. dwellings: Horsey Lane Farm, Horsey Lane, Upper Longdon

There had been no objection to this application, for which, it was believed, outline planning permission had already been given.

(ii) For Consideration

The Council then considered the following planning application:

04/01256/FUL: Mr. R. W. Barton: Demolition of existing dwelling and erection of two detached dwellings and replacement vehicular access: South Down, Lower Way, Upper Longdon

Cllr. Hemmingsley explained that this application dated back to before October 2004, when the Parish Council had objected to it.

A later application had shown a slightly smaller footprint and a minor re-adjustment in location, but the Parish Council had felt that it had not addressed the problems of increased pressure on sewage and additional traffic.

Councillors agreed that, notwithstanding the apparent precedent of earlier development in this area, a threshold had been reached and further development should not be permitted.

(iii) Approved by Lichfield District Council

The Clerk reported that Lichfield District Council had, since the last meeting, issued the following Notices of Approval of Planning Permission:

05/01056/FUL: Mr. & Mrs. Freeman: Alterations to existing flat roofs: New House Farm, Batesway, Upper Longdon

05/01060/COU: Ocean View Properties: Change of use, alterations and extensions of coach house to offices: The Coach House, Longdon Hall, Longdon

(iv) Refused by Lichfield District Council

The Clerk reported that Lichfield District Council had, since the last meeting, issued no Notices of Refusal of Planning Permission relating to the parish.

(v) Other Planning Matters

(a) Appearance of Stables on Land east of Olde Croft, Borough Lane, Longdon

Cllr. Stanfield reported that he had referred the appearance of stables at the above site to the District Council for investigation.

(b) Weekly List of Planning Applications

The Clerk reported that he had been advised that, from 1st January 2006, copies of planning applications weekly lists would no longer be sent by post, but could be viewed instead either by being on the Local Planning Authority weekly e-mail circulation list or by accessing the planning website.

He had chosen the second of these two alternatives.

(i) Lichfield District Parish Forum: November 9th

Cllr. Stanfield gave a report on the meeting of the Lichfield District Parish Forum which had taken place in the Council Chamber at District Council House, Frog Lane, Lichfield, on Wednesday, November 9th, 2005.

Both he and Cllr. Mrs. Nichols had attended, and a total of thirteen parish and town councils had been represented.

Ruth Plant, Corporate Director – Operational Services, had outlined the Council's draft Waste Strategy for 2005/2010, whose objectives included reducing waste to landfill, reducing the service cost per household, reclaiming more materials, principally by increasing the levels of composting, and maintaining the Council's status as the top recycler in the country.

Stephen Hill, Development Executive, had presented an overview of the District Council's Planning Service and then led the discussion which followed, during which a range of issues had been raised.

The next meeting of the Forum would take place on 11th January 2006 and would focus on the role which parish councils could play in improving the quality of the local environment.

(ii) Cannock Chase Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty/Staffordshire Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group Farm Visit: December 2nd

The Chairman gave a report on a visit to Beaudesert Park Farm, Horsey Lane, Upper Longdon, made by the above groups on Friday, December 2nd, 2005, at which Cllr. Roberts had also been present.

The tour had been led by Mary Cope, wife of the farmer, who had applied for FWAG's higher stewardship award.

It looked as though this would be achieved: no chemicals were being used, hedges were being cut in rotation every two years in a manner which allowed the sun to reach the lower branches, and there was already some very rare, unimproved grassland on the site which would be encouraged by controlled grazing.

White Park cattle would be bred, although some initial difficulty had been experienced in marketing the beasts.

8. NOTICE OF MEETINGS

The Clerk reported that he had received notice of the following meetings:

(i) Lichfield District Parish Forum: Thursday, 11th January 2006, in The Committee Room, Council Chamber, District Council House, Frog Lane, Lichfield, commencing at 7. 15 p.m.

Neither Cllr. Mrs. Nichols nor Cllr. Stanfield would be able to attend, but Cllr. Andrews and the Clerk would try to be present.

(ii) Open Afternoon at Colton Village Hall: Sunday, 29th January 2006, from 2. 00 p.m. to 4. 30 p.m.

This event had been arranged to give interested parties the opportunity to inspect the extensions and improvements recently carried out at this Hall.

It was suggested that members of the Longdon Village Hall Management Committee might be interested in attending.

9. HIGHWAYS AND FOOTPATHS

(i) Public Bridleway No. 15

The Clerk reported that he had received from Chris Cheeseman, Rights of Way Technical Assistant, Development Services Directorate, Staffordshire County Council, a letter dated 8th November 2005, enclosing a copy of the Ranger's report requested by the Parish Council.

The Ranger, Paul Pike, had reported that he had spoken to the landowner, who would be writing for retrospective permission to install gates across the bridleway.

Mrs. Cheeseman was currently awaiting this letter.

The Clerk was instructed to emphasise to Mrs. Cheeseman the Parish Council's wish to be consulted when Mr. Cox's application was received.

(ii) Closure of Grange Hill

The Clerk reported that he had received from R. J. Harris, Assistant Divisional Highways Manager, a letter dated 9th November 2005, advising the Council that work would shortly begin on a highway drainage scheme in Grange Hill, Upper Longdon.

The work was planned to begin on 5th December 2005 and to last for approximately three weeks.

The Clerk added that he had posted a copy of the Temporary Road Traffic Regulation Order enclosed with the letter on the notice-board in Upper Way.

(iii) Cast-Iron Roadside Traffic Signs

The Clerk reported that he had received from Ken Owen, Divisional Highway Manager, a letter dated 2nd December 2005, confirming that he had received delivery of the four renovated cast-iron roadside signs from Leander Architectural and would arrange for their erection in the week beginning Monday, December 5th.

He added that these signs had now been erected.

The Chairman said that he would take an early opportunity to photograph all four signs with a view to seeking publicity for the completed project in the local newspapers.

Cllr. Juxon informed the Council that, as Editor of "Longdon Life", he had received a letter from a Gentleshaw resident, Ivan Hunt, of Coldwell, Briertey Hill Lane, commending the Council for its initiative.

(iv) Traffic Signs – Longdon Post Office

The Clerk reported that he had received from Ken Owen, Divisional Highway Engineer, a letter dated 2nd December 2005, in which he had confirmed that he had ordered sign plates to replace those damaged or lost following the road accident earlier in the year and hoped to erect them within the next two weeks.

(v) Application for alleged public footpath between Nos. 31-33 Church Way, Longdon, to be included on the Definitive Footpath Map

The Clerk reported that he had received from Heather Todd a letter written on behalf of the Deputy Corporate Director (Law and Administration), Staffordshire County Council, and dated 29th November 2005, advising him that, as the person named as the applicant on the above application, his name and address would appear on the Register of Definitive Map Modification Order applications, unless he requested that they be removed.

Cllr. Juxon reported that Alan Rowe, of The Cottage, Dark Lane, Longdon, had received a similar letter with regard to an application to upgrade part of Public Footpath No. 73.

(vi) Road Markings on Commonsides, Gentleshaw

The Clerk reported that he had received from Ken Owen, Divisional Highway Manager, a letter dated 2nd December 2005, in which he said that, while it was not possible to provide a central white line along Common Side due to the width of the road, it might be possible to erect a bend sign and an accompanying SLOW road marking.

He would arrange for his Traffic Engineer to visit the site and carry out an assessment.

(i) Gentleshaw Common

The Clerk reported that all the barriers and accompanying furniture which had surrounded the inspection covers on Gentleshaw Common had now been removed.

(ii) Longdon Green – Access to “The Red Lion”, the Cricket Field and Rookery Cottage

The Clerk reported that he had met Ken Owen, the Divisional Highway Manager, on Longdon Green on Wednesday, November 23rd, when they had inspected the pot-holes in the track in front of “The Red Lion”.

Mr. Owen had told him that, to re-lay the surface with tarmac would cost between £500. 00 and £600. 00, whereas to fill the pot-holes with planings would cost between £25. 00 and £30. 00, although the effect would only be temporary.

On a motion proposed by Cllr. Butler and seconded by Cllr. Mrs. Nichols, it was agreed that, as a temporary improvement, Mr. Owen should be asked to fill these holes with planings, while the legal status of the track was being established.

11. CHURCHYARDS(i) St. James, Longdon

Cllr. Juxon presented a report on a meeting which had taken place in the churchyard at St. James Church attended by the Rev. Michael Jefferson (Priest-in-Charge), the Rev. Cliff Latimer, Mrs. Susan Rout (Church Warden), Cllr. Butler (a member of the Parochial Church Council), and himself

Mr. Jefferson had explained the difficulty faced by an ageing and dwindling congregation in carrying out the physical labour necessary to maintain a churchyard of varying levels, and he thought that the stage had been reached when the only way in which it could be kept in an acceptable condition would be to employ a contractor.

He had calculated that a minimum of eight hours a week from April through to October would be needed at a likely cost of £400. 00 a month, a sum to which the Parochial Church Council could contribute only a fraction.

What had to be decided was whether the community was prepared to meet the bulk of this expenditure through its local taxes, bearing in mind that every resident of Longdon was entitled to interment in the churchyard, whether he or she had supported the church in his or her lifetime or not.

The P. C. C. had applied to the Diocesan Authorities for a faculty to level gravestones and tombs in the old part of the churchyard, which would give a flatter surface for mowing and allow footpaths to be laid down.

After further discussion, it was decided that the P. C. C. should present the Parish Council with a plan of its proposals, together with likely costing.

Mr. Jefferson then raised the subject of the footpath from Church Way across the glebe field to the churchyard and suggested that, if the Parish Council were to offer to upgrade this footpath and provide lighting alongside it, the Diocesan Authorities might in return allow the field to be used as a playing field.

It was agreed that this was an idea that should be explored.

The Chairman thanked Cllr. Juxon for his report and invited the views of Councillors. After discussion, it was agreed that the Council should wait for the P. C. C to formulate and present its proposals and that, in the meantime, the Clerk should write to the Glebe Committee asking for its response to the suggestion that part of the glebe field might be made available to the local community as a playing field in return for upgrading and lighting the footpath through it.

12. EDUCATION(i) St. James C. E. (V. C.) Primary School, Longdon – Application for Foundation Unit

The Clerk reported that he had received from Mrs. Annette Davies, School Organisation Officer, School Organisation and Information Team, Children and Lifelong Learning Directorate, Staffordshire County Council, a letter dated 5th December 2005, notifying the Council that the School had withdrawn its proposal to create a foundation class.

(ii) Lichfield District Review of School Places

Reporting on the above review, Cllr. Andrews said that it had been occasioned by the need to take into account falling rolls throughout the County.

However, while, in other parts of the Lichfield District, there would be proposals to close or merge schools, such changes would not affect either Longdon or Gentleshaw.

13. CHAIRMAN'S BADGE OF OFFICE

The Clerk reported that he had received from Thomas Fattorini, of Regent Street Works, Birmingham, a design proposal and quotation for £410. 75, plus VAT, for a Chairman's Badge of Office, and from Vaughtons Limited, of Well Street, Birmingham, two design proposals and a number of quotations reflecting the styles and materials on offer, but ranging between £290. 00 and £665. 00, ribbon and case being extra.

On a motion proposed by Cllr. Juxon and seconded by both Cllr. Mrs. Nichols and Cllr. Hemmingsley, it was agreed that the Clerk should place the order with Thomas Fattorini.

14. FINANCIAL MATTERS(i) Accounts for Payment

On a motion proposed by Cllr. Stanfield and seconded by Cllr. Butler, payment of the following accounts was approved:

*≠Instaprint (Rugeley) Ltd.	Printing 660 copies of "Longdon Life"	£ 235. 91
*≠Hazel Crosbie	Delivering "Longdon Life"	£ 35. 00
*≠A. J. Juxon	Editor's Expenses	£ 15. 00
Longdon W. I.	Hire of Hall	£ 12. 00
W. B. Sullivan	Clerk's Salary: £187. 50 Photocopying: £ 95. 85 Postage: £ 16. 19	£ 299. 54
Leander Architectural	Repair and renovation of four Cast-iron roadside signs	£4414. 49
Audit Commission	Audit Fee	£ 141. 00
Aqua Jet Services	To clean up bench at Brook End and coat with clear wood preservative	£ 92. 00
Cornhill Insurance	Increase in premium to cover renovated roadside signs (approval only)	£ 37. 98
Land Registry	2 applications re. Grange Hill	£ 8. 00

(* for confirmation ≠payment made under Section 137)

(ii) Payments received

The Clerk reported that, since the last meeting, the following payments had been received:

N. J. Coles	Advertisement: "Longdon Life"	£10. 00
The Wishing Well Garage	Advertisement: "Longdon Life"	£ 8. 00

(iii) Current Balances

The Clerk reported that, currently, the Council's balances stood as follows:

NatWest c/a: £639. 84; The Halifax d/a: £15357. 91
(less uncleared cheques: £285. 91)

(iv) Appeals for Grant Aid(a) The Open Spaces Society

The Clerk reported that he had received from Roger de Freitas, Vice-President of The Open Spaces Society a letter dated 25th November 2005 appealing for a donation towards the cost to the Society of scrutinising the Commons Bill, currently before the House of Lords.

The Council decided that it would not be justified in making such a donation.

(v) Precept 2006/2007

The Clerk reported that he had received from Graham Keatley, Chief Accountant (Services), Lichfield District Council, a letter dated 1st December 2005, enclosing the Parish Precept forms for the financial year 2006/2007 and asking for them to be returned completed by 27th January 2006.

It was decided that a meeting of the Finance and General Purposes Sub-Committee should be held in the W. I. Hall, Longdon, on Thursday, January 5th, 2006, commencing at 7. 30 p.m., at which a recommendation on the level of the 2006/2007 precept should be agreed.

15. CORRESPONDENCE SINCE LAST MEETING

(i) The Clerk reported that he had received from Matthew Griffin, Principal Planning Officer, Development Services Directorate, Staffordshire County Council, a letter dated 10th November 2005, regarding the Staffordshire Minerals and Waste Development Framework in which he invited the Council to comment on any issues that it believed needed to be considered in planning for future mineral supply in Staffordshire.

Comments should be received before 23rd December 2005.

(ii) The Clerk reported that he had received from Linda Renshaw, Principal Development Plans Officer, Democratic, Development and Legal Services, Lichfield District Council, a letter dated 10th November 2005, advising the Council that the Sustainability Appraisals relating to the West Burntwood and Lichfield City Centre Area Action Plans could be viewed on the Council's website and inviting written responses by 8th December 2005.

(iii) The Clerk reported that he had received from Cllr. Tim Jones, Chairman of the Brereton and Ravenhill Parish Plan Steering Committee, a copy of the draft of the Plan, on which he invited Longdon Parish Council to comment.

Councillors decided that a non-committal but supportive reply would be the most appropriate response.

(iv) The Clerk reported that he had received from Mary Cooke, Play Development Manager, Leisure and Culture, Lichfield District Council, a letter dated 14th November 2005, in which she asked whether the Council were prepared to support the Lichfield District Summer Playscheme Programme in 2006.

On a motion proposed by Cllr. Mrs. Nichols and seconded by Cllr. Hemmingsley, the Clerk was instructed to inform Mrs. Cooke that the Council would continue its support at a level to be decided when the 2006/2007 precept had been agreed.

(v) The Clerk reported that he had received from Lorraine Reddington, Customer Liaison Officer, Central Networks, Northampton, a letter dated 18th November 2005, reminding the Council that the Company had changed its name from Aquila on 5th April 2005 and giving contact details.

(vi) The Clerk reported that he had received from John Morgan, Principal Planning Officer, Development Plans and Policy, Cannock Chase District Council, a letter dated 5th December 2005, informing the Council that his Council had just published the 2004/2005 Annual Monitoring Report relating to the Cannock Chase Local Development Framework and Volume 1 of the State of Cannock Chase District Council Report, April 2005.

These documents could be inspected at the Civic Centre, Cannock, and the libraries at Rugeley and Hednesford and viewed on or downloaded from the Council's website www.cannockchasedc.gov.uk.

(vii) The Clerk reported that he had received from Clive Thomson, Area Highway Manager (East), Development Services Directorate, Staffordshire County Council, a letter dated 6th December 2005, advising the Council of the decision to consolidate the area office accommodation provision.

As a result, the staff from the Burton and Tamworth offices would be re-located to the Lichfield Highway Depot.

(viii) The Clerk reported that he had received from Michael Fabricant. M. P., a letter dated 6th December 2005, acknowledging the Council's letter of November 23rd regarding the merging of Staffordshire, Shropshire and West Midlands Ambulance Services and enclosing press releases in which he had expressed his own deep misgivings.

While continuing to pursue the matter with Ministers, he feared that they were determined to regionalise all the emergency services.

16. OTHER COMMUNICATIONS

The Clerk reported that, in addition to the above correspondence, he had received the following communications:

(i) From The Corporate Director – Democratic and Legal Services, Lichfield District Council:

Executive Arrangements – Forward Plan 2005/2006 – September – Version 1
(to take effect on 1st December 2005).

(ii) From The Transport and Policy Planning Unit, Staffordshire County Council:

Public Transport News – December 2005 (2 copies).

(iii) From The Senior Assistant (Electoral Services), Democratic, Development and Legal Services, Lichfield District Council:

Full Register of Electors 2006.

(iv) From The Head of Highways Policy, Development Services Directorate, Staffordshire County Council:

Winter Driving Leaflet (4 copies).

(v) From The Deputy Corporate Director (Children and Lifelong Learning), Children and Lifelong Learning Directorate, Staffordshire County Council:

Lichfield District Review of School Places.

(vi) From David Hoffney, Countryside Consultants, Hexham, Northumberland:

Statutory duties of relevant authorities to have regard for the purposes of National Parks, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and Norfolk and Suffolk Broads.

(vii) From The Staffordshire Wildlife Trust:

“Staffordshire Wildlife”: No. 95, December 2005;
“Natural World”: Issue 75, Winter 2005;
Wildlife What’s On: January to April 2006;
Nature Reserve Volunteer Workparties: January to April 2006;
Cannock Wildlife Group: 2006 Programme of Events;
Empty Printer Cartridge Appeal.

(viii) From The Development Services Directorate, Staffordshire County Council:

Timetable (Bus/Rail Services): Lichfield and Rugeley Area, December 2005.

17. ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS

(i) The Clerk reported that the death had occurred of Basil Walker, a former Vice-Chairman of the Parish Council.

Both he and Cllr. Nichols had attended the funeral, which had taken place at St. James Church on December 8th.

(ii) It was reported that an enforcement notice had been served on the owner of the caravan in the field next to “The Windmill Inn”, Gentleshaw.

(iii) Cllr. Hemmingsley reported that Inspector Kozam had informed the Head Teacher of Gentleshaw Primary School that he did not support the proposal to paint double yellow lines in Buds Road and Chapel Lane, since they would need enforcement, for which he did not have the resources. Instead, he recommended single yellow lines.

It was pointed out that this would do nothing to relieve the current parking problem, since a single yellow line would still allow parents to continue to park for short periods outside the school.

The Clerk was instructed to write to Inspector Kozam, urging him to withdraw his objection to the original proposal to lay down double yellow lines.

18. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Tuesday, 10th January 2006, in the W. I. Hall, Longdon, commencing at 7. 30 p.m.

19. DATES OF MEETINGS IN 2006

The following dates were agreed:

Tuesday, February 14th (Longdon); Tuesday, March 14th (Gentleshaw);
Tuesday, April 4th (Longdon); Tuesday, May 9th (Longdon);
Tuesday, June 13th (Longdon) Tuesday, July 11th (Gentleshaw);
Tuesday, September 12th (Longdon); Tuesday, October 10th (Longdon);
Tuesday, November 14th (Gentleshaw); Tuesday, December 12th (Longdon)