

WYCHWOOD COMMUNITY GROUP

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING – 24th April, 2016

Approximately 25 residents attended the meeting which was called to order at 4pm by Chairman Trevor Sandry.

Committee: Andy Bailey (AB), Ian Dews, Trevor Sandry (TS), Jenny Moran, Paul Burt, Tom Applegarth (TA) Also present: John Cornell (JC) (Parish council)
Apologies: Dave Deacon (committee member), Janet Clowes (Cheshire East Councillor)

TS: Stated that not much had changed during the past 12 months. It is now three years since Haddon's plans were put forward and the course closed and a resolution is still awaited. The Local Plan has moved forward and Wychwood Village (WV)/Gorstyhill Golf Club site is currently not included. This is an advantage for WV as and when we reach Strategic Planning stage. Although we do not wish WV to be further developed we also have to ensure that the surrounding areas are not over-developed as a result.

The Chairman thanked the committee for all their hard work much of which is done in the background and therefore not necessarily obvious or known.

He thanked AB for his work which is recognised and respected by Cheshire East.

TS said that nobody knows what will happen over the next 12 months but that the committee would continue to work hard on everyone's behalf and to ensure that the world outside WV does not forget about the issue.

He said that at present WV still has first option on the right to buy the site should this become a possibility in the event of Haddon's plans being finally rejected. Haddon tried to prevent this option being granted but failed, and this is currently awaiting assessment at an Independent Tribunal

Funding will be an issue going forward as finance will be needed to fight our case, even more so if the option to buy materialises. Haddon paid circa £1 million for the course and will probably want more than that to sell; WV's argument will be that as a derelict golf course it is worth less.

Apathy is a serious issue; Haddon is probably banking on residents becoming apathetic and not responding to initiatives, particularly as time progresses and the process is slow and tedious. Apathy cannot be allowed to let Haddon in by the back door.

TS undertook to issue updates to residents every two months, at a minimum.

Tom Applegarth presented the financial report. Firstly he thanked Ian Dews for his input. At the start of the year there was £4,000 in the account. Web site renewal fees mean that there is now just under £4,000.

He reiterated that funds will have to be raised to cover legal and other expenses – planning consultants currently charge approx. £1,000 per day.

ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN AND COMMITTEE

The meeting voted to elect TS to continue in post as chairman.

The meeting also voted to re-elect all existing members of the committee.

TS closed the formal AGM proceedings at this point and opened up the floor for questions.

Open Forum

Club House and Country Park

There was discussion about the decaying state of the clubhouse and whether it should be removed. The advantage of keeping it is that WV can say “This is a golf course and that is the Club House.” Without the club house there is technically no way to carry on business. Asking Haddon to remove it would not only mean entering into negotiations with him which we do not wish to do at the moment but could be said by lawyers or planners to be admittance on WV’s part that the course cannot be reinstated. That admittance is not there and any suggestion that it is must be avoided.

AB said that he has been working with Cheshire East council regarding the lack of maintenance on the country park, which Haddon is supposed to maintain to the standard it was at when he took it on. AB has submitted “Before and After” photos to the Council to illustrate the lack of maintenance. As a result an Enforcement Officer has been appointed to the case who could force Haddon to do more maintenance. Work on this is ongoing.

In the same vein the hedges were not properly cut earlier this year and were only done on the road side, not inside the park. Cuttings were not removed. The enforcement officer may be able to do something about this as well.

It is hoped that the Enforcement Officer may be able to require Haddon to improve the state of the club house but it is too early in the proceedings yet to say this with any confidence.

Fly-tipping, parking and theft

All the above are current issues on WV. Large items such as sofas have been fly-tipped in a parking space in St Andrews Mews. Other items (food waste) are also being left. Garden furniture had been stolen from gated gardens. All thefts and incidents must be reported to the police. Residents are asked to be vigilant and to report any suspicious activity to the police.

The possibility of instituting a formal Neighbourhood Watch scheme was discussed. This could be taken further but requires police involvement in setting it up. No decision was made on this at the meeting.

The option of setting up a camera at the entrance/exit to record all vehicles entering and leaving was also mentioned. No decision was reached. This would be taken up with Janet Clowes.

There was discussion regarding the boulders in the car park. Again these could only be removed following discussion with Haddon and the Committee and Parish Council's advice was to leave things as they are for the time being until we see how the situation progresses.

TS informed the meeting that Cheshire East still has to adopt WV. AB mentioned that work has been done recently to repair damaged or failed areas and that this is on-going. Work is anticipated to be completed around September and then there is a compulsory 12-month waiting period before adoption is formalised in case any further works are required.

Cheshire East's position relating to WV development

One resident reported that there is a general feeling that the Haddon development will get the green light and that it is a "done deal" with the Council.

This was discussed and both JC and AB stated that whilst WV is not currently included in the plan and, if possible, Cheshire East wishes to continue to exclude it, the Council does have to meet the housing target set for it. So whilst far from being a "done deal" there is still the possibility that the Council, or the central government planning inspector, may yet include the site.

JC explained that South Cheshire is 'heavy' on new housing in the plan compared to North Cheshire which is under-represented in comparison, and that this is why the Parish Council is pushing hard for Green Belt or Green Gap protection for areas around Crewe.

Vandalism

A question was asked about whether any vandalism had occurred. Other than someone setting a couple of fires on the Country Park last year nothing has been reported.

Neighbourhood Plan

JC informed the meeting that the Neighbourhood Plan is being put together. This is a statutory document which will be added on to the Local Plan. It will contain policies to protect the area as a whole. The Parish Council has looked at the area's housing needs over the next 15 years and needs residents' input (from all the villages) as to what they want and what they see as the problems and issues.

There will be a series of drop-in sessions where local people can look at the proposals. It is important that everyone tries to contribute as the battle we are fighting against Haddon also has to be fought against Gladman who are proposing to build 80 houses behind the primary school in Weston. The Parish Council wants to be able to quote the Neighbourhood Plan in both cases as showing that there is no case for building by either developer.

JC stressed that the Neighbourhood Plan is actually the community's own plan so input and comments really are needed.

Further information on drop in sessions relating to the Neighbourhood Plan would be circulated to residents shortly.

The meeting was formally closed at 4.50pm.

Date of next AGM: To be advised