

RUFFORD PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on Tuesday 16 January 2024 at 6.00 pm at the Markham Suite, Rufford Mill, Rufford

Present: Councillors:

D. Fernley (Chair)
 B.Bates
 J.Ball
 J. Pearce
 D. Johnson
 M. Jones (arrived 6.20 pm)

In attendance:

C. Wilson (Clerk)
 Scott Carlton (County Councillor)
 C Hanrahan (Parkwood Leisure)
 18 members of the public

| | DISCUSSION AND DECISIONS | ACTION |
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| RPC/01/24 | Apologies for absence: The chair welcomed the members of the public to the meeting. Councillors and the clerk introduced themselves to the meeting. Mr Drane had been delayed in traffic. Mr Jones was not present. Councillors consented to the absences. | |
| RPC/02/24 | Declarations of interest: Interests were declared by Mr Ball and Mrs Bates as residents of Rufford Lane. Mr Ball reported that he had contacted the NSDC Monitoring Officer who had advised that, although Mr Ball and Mrs Bates had disclosable pecuniary interests, they were not direct and both were permitted to vote. There were no other declarations of interest, direct or indirect, in any items of business on the agenda. | |
| RPC/03/24 | Dispensations: No dispensations required. | |
| RPC/04/24 | Parkwood Leisure Report: Ms Hanrahan reported that: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The fairy trail would be open in half term 2. Events at the Park were publicised and available to view on the website 3. The Coach House and Abbey are accepting dogs 4. Should residents wish to benefit from the 10% reduction for large scale events such as the spectacle of light, they should use the Rufford Abbey email 5. She had fed back to Glendale and Parkwood Leisure regarding councillors' reports of maintenance vehicles continuing to drive on soft ground who had responded that this was not happening. Ms Hanrahan will pass on reports that, on the contrary, the practice is continuing at 8 am between Boad Ride and the icehouse track and the enquiry as to why the car park was not used instead. Councillors will report any further issues in future. <p>Mr Pearce noted that the Abbey had been fenced off to make it safe pending repairs on behalf of English Heritage with the long term aim of re-opening the building to the public in the long term.</p> | CH |
| RPC/05/24 | 10 minutes public speaking time: The chair was pleased so many members of the public were in attendance. Mr Carlton was invited to summarise the circumstances leading to the consultation on the permanent closure of Rufford Ford (item 10 a on the agenda). Mr | |

Carlton reported as follows:

1. In December 2022 the police had recommended the road closure
2. One of Via's chief tasks was to produce a feasibility study of the options for safely re-opening the ford
3. The feasibility study conclusions had been shared with councillors over Christmas 2023
4. NCC officers had concluded that cabinet members should consider permanent closure
5. The issue had received extensive social media coverage
6. His preferred option was a bridge but there were cost implications and the conservation team had advised that it would not be approved by planning and also created a potential food risk elsewhere.
7. A chicane and speed cushions were economically viable but risked adding to the driving challenge of the ford
8. No final decision to close the ford has been made.
9. The parish council is a statutory consultee as are the emergency services.
10. The police view is likely to be persuasive
11. As the consultation is online, anyone is able to respond. His understanding is that views expressed from individuals from further afield will be noted but will not be taken into account.
12. The driving attraction of the ford had brought anti-social behaviour, residents and potential for criminal damage.

For the benefit of the meeting, the clerk read NCC's consultation letter dated 20 December 2023.

The chair invited members of the public to speak individually and, referring to the potential for discussion to be emotive, reminded everyone present of the standards of conduct expected. Each member of the public wishing to speak addressed the meeting. The various and conflicting views expressed and comments made included:

- a. The parish council's resolution should expressly refer to safety considerations
- b. The closure of a public road was serious matter which should be preceded by a paper with a precise and substantiated summary of the issues and options
- c. NCC's process lacked transparency and clarity with the consultation only available to local residents to find on the parish council's webpage and the only people consulted individually were those living on Rufford Lane
- d. NCC is hiding behind Via
- e. NCC is governed by national legislation which it must observe
- f. There were adverse implications for journey times for emergency vehicles
- g. The implications of Ollerton roundabout must also be taken into consideration
- h. Rufford lane residents were the ones most affected by the ford
- i. The safety of those viewing the driving spectacles was endangered. They often included young children. Cars had been careering uncontrolled off the road.
- j. The inconsiderate parking which the ford had brought forced prams and the disabled onto the road
- k. Rufford Lane had become an unpleasant place to live
- l. The ford had brought anti-social behaviour
- m. No one wanted the ford to close but it had become a sensation and, if it re-opened, that would never stop.
- n. A chicane will not work as the road is too narrow. It would potentially add to the driving attraction.

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o. Residents had been threatened by those filming and publishing the material on line. p. Mr Carlton confirmed that the cost would be covered by the contingency fund q. The ford had been a crossing for hundreds of years. Once closed, it will never re-open r. YouTube should be asked to demonetise the footage. Mr Carlton confirmed that this request had been made and could be repeated. s. There is a risk that, as stump road, the road between A614 and then ford will become a car park. t. There were risks that, if re-opened, those wishing to enhance then driving attraction would damn the ford u. The ford had only been open for five weeks during the past four months. v. The road is not fit for purpose because it floods. <p>Mr Carlton reiterated that no formal decision had been taken. The decision would be made by cabinet members, not NCC officers.</p> <p>Other members of the public in attendance addressed the council in relation to flooding in the Bilsthorpe part of Rufford parish and raised the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Gardens had flooded three times in recent months ii. Houses themselves had flooded in October 2023 iii. A multi-agency approach was required iv. The River Maun would potentially be dredged but works at the Bilsthorpe end would have implications for Rufford further down v. They had attended the Bilsthorpe Parish Council meeting vi. They would like to meet with county councillor Laughton vii. The Environment Agency and Severn Trent had not provided any support to help manage the flood risk viii. NSDC had passed the matter on to NCC. Although they had contacted the flood officer they had received no response. <p>Mr Carlton offered his support, He and the residents would exchange contact details at the end of the meeting.</p> | |
| RPC/6/24 | Minutes of the Parish Council meetings held on 21 November 2023: The minutes of the meetings on 21 November 2023 were approved. | |
| RPC/7/24 | Matters arising – for information only: No matters arising. | |
| RPC/8/24 | <p>Reports from district and county councillors: Mr Carlton reported that that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. There would be anew road surface on A616 at Wellow 2. Following a cabinet reshuffle the Park was now under his remit. There are grounds management issues about which he has concerns. 3. NCC’s budget is under significant strain with social care costs very high 4. NCC is leaving County Hall as part of its measures to address economic constraints. | |
| RPC/9/24 | Reports from Councillors: No reports | |
| RPC/10/24 | <p>Parish environment and appearance including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. TRO3368 - Rufford Ford, Rufford - Initial Consultation – Prohibition of driving: The chair summarised the views expressed by the public, both in attendance and to councillors | |

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| | <p>outside the meeting. It was noted that there was some polarisation of views reflecting where people live. Councillors agreed that the main concerns raised were safety, convenience and transparency of process. There was discussion of comparative journey times using the ford and different routes with councillors noting that the emergency services were statutory consultees. It was recognised that safety was the paramount consideration with Rufford Lane residents being the most affected.</p> <p>Councillors reassured residents that they had attended a meeting with NCC at which the feasibility study and options report had been shared with them.</p> <p>Mr Ball proposed that the parish council should resolve to support the recommendation that the ford be permanently closed. This was seconded by Mr Pearce.</p> <p>Councillors voted on the resolution by secret ballot. The clerk checked the votes and confirmed that, by a majority of 5:1, the resolution that the council support the recommendation that the road be closed at the ford permanently had been passed.</p> <p>However, the councillors also noted the expressions of concern from residents regarding a lack of transparency and openness in relation to consultation to date. They agreed that their response to NCC should also request assurances from NCC as to the measures to be taken going forward to ensure that the public:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Is fully informed of: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. All the options considered and ii. Reasons for the recommendation of a closure over other options 2. Has ample access to the information justifying the recommendation and time and opportunity to respond. <p>b. Flooding matters: Discussed at RPC/05/24 (10 minutes public speaking. Mr Carlton will support the residents together with Mr Bruce Laughton.</p> | |
| <p>RPC/11/24</p> | <p>a. Financial position as at 31 December 2023: Councillors considered and noted the clerk’s report showing the precise financial position at 31 December 2023 (incorporating the 2023-24 budget figures).</p> <p>b. Accounts for payment: Councillors unanimously approved five payments totalling £573.41.</p> <p>c. To consider the financial information provided by the Clerk and NSDC’s letter regarding 2024/25 precept estimates and to agree the precept for the year ending 31 March 2025: Councillors considered the financial information provided by the clerk. They noted the level of reserves, recognising that these were at a level which provided scope for investment on the parish environment. Councillors unanimously decided to retain the precept at £4000.</p> <p>d. Insurance matters: Discussion confidential. Minuted separately.</p> | |
| <p>RPC/12/24</p> | <p>Planning:</p> <p>a. Applications:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. 23/02245/FUL- Change of use of residential swimming pool to part time commercial use- Woodlands Old Rufford Road Rufford NG22 9DD: Councillors noted the letter of objection which had ben received. They discussed the application and unanimously decided to object on the following grounds: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Over intensification of the site | |

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| | <p>2. Impact on traffic levels visiting the site 3. Adverse impact on neighbouring properties.</p> <p>ii. 23/02276/CPRIOR - Application to determine if prior approval is required for change of use of existing (former) agricultural building to create 5no. dwellinghouses (resubmission of 23/00383/CPRIOR) - Kennels Farm May Lodge Drive Rufford: Councillors considered the application and agreed that they had no comments.</p> <p>iii. 23/02238/FULM - Single storey extension to annex - Broad Oak Old Rufford Road Rufford NG22 9DD: Councillors considered the application and agreed that they had no objections.</p> <p>b.To note planning decisions by NSDC23/01838/FUL - Internal and external alterations, new external canopy and entrance porch, buggy park, dining pods, children’s play area and associated works- Foresters Inn Sherwood Forest Holiday Village Old Rufford Road Rufford - Approval noted.</p> <p>c. Enforcement matters: 22/00205/ENFB - Alleged change of use from B1 industrial to B8 storage & distribution - Rufford Hills Farm, Rufford Lane, Rufford, NG22 9DQ: Councillors noted that the clerk had yet to receive an update. Councillors discussed reports of works taking place on the paddock adjoining Cremorne Cottage which appeared to be inconsistent with a restriction on use to agricultural purposes. The clerk will contact NSDC enforcement.</p> <p>d.Incinerator in Bilsthorpe – Developments and action: Councillors noted that the matter continued to remain on the agenda in case of any developments.</p> | |
| RPC/13/24 | Service faults: None. Noted that the salt bin contents are solid. | |
| RPC/14/24 | Correspondence: NSDC - Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 - Public Spaces Protection Orders - Noted | |
| RPC/15/24 | Agenda items for next meeting: As above | |
| RPC/16/24 | Date of next meeting: Next meeting: To be decided dependent on room availability. | |

The meeting closed at 7.50 pm

