

WINGERWORTH PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on 17 October 2007

Present:

	Cllr Ann Sainty (Chairperson)	
Cllr Tom Snowdon (Vice Chairperson)		Cllr Bill Pickford
Cllr Stuart Ellis		Cllr Michael Prout
Cllr Peter O'Neill		with Mike Taylor (Clerk)

202/2007 Apologies for Absence

There were apologies for absence from Cllr Chris Hutchings, Cllr Anne Knyhynyckyj, Cllr Ron Lewin, Cllr Kevin Moore, Cllr John Ollis, Cllr Margaret Parker and Cllr Jan Robinson.

203/2007 Planning for Parishes

The Chairperson introduced Joe Dugdale from DRCC who had agreed to lead a discussion on parish plans. The background to parish plans was summarised and it was pointed out that 35 out of the 208 parishes in Derbyshire had a parish plan at the present time. It was felt essential that a parish plan was a plan produced by a community containing issues that affected the community and relevant solutions that could be expected to be implemented within a four to five year period. It was not a Parish Council plan but the Parish Council was a key player and very often the body to deliver the solutions.

In essence a parish plan was an examination of issues that were considered important in the community which was followed by an examination of proposals for addressing the issues, some of which were worked into an agreed action plan. There should be no pre-judging of the issues and the process of determining the issues should be manifestly open so as to find what was wanted, liked and valued as well as what should be kept or changed. The best way of doing this was to have open questions and discussions to produce qualitative data so as to ensure community consultation and engagement which should be extended to businesses and all those working in the parish as well as residents.

The production of an effective plan by this process would normally take some 12 to 18 months and could well cost as much as £7,000 with costs being higher in larger parishes. There was the possibility of some limited funding from DRCC to support the planning process by covering certain approved expenditure such as the hiring of rooms and refreshments and the production and printing of the eventual plan. However applications for this funding had to be made by the end of March 2008.

Joe Dugdale then outlined ways of commencing the process that had been successful in other parishes. One useful way forward was for the Parish Council to organise a public event (although not a public meeting) when everyone would have an opportunity to identify issues. The issues would invariably fall into a number of themes and the identification of a representative for each theme could provide the basis for a steering group. The steering group would need to maintain strong links with the Parish Council and the other councils covering the parish in developing the plan. In this endeavour there would be some support from DRCC and could be further support from a District Council keen to improve planning processes at the parish level.

A number of points arising out of previous experience of producing parish plans included the need for the Parish Council to step back from the process, the fact the questionnaires were not normally a good tool, especially in the early stages of developing the plan, and the need to concentrate on making sure that the planning was done with people rather than for people. The plan needed to focus on the achievable and it needed to be actionable. Typically, a plan would include actions, priorities, resources required (if known), responsibilities and time frames. It was increasingly important that a parish plan paid full attention to the context of the Local Development Framework and various published community strategies.

Joe Dugdale stressed how working together in a community worked well provided that that the planning process was demystified, that everyone was able to participate and that there was an avoidance of a select and insular planning group. Wherever possible the process should be made to be

as interesting as possible and in that respect surveys and questionnaires were not helpful. It was important to avoid having two sides to events and dominating speeches which meant avoiding traditional public meetings as they provided platforms for individuals to make lengthy speeches which so often reduced interest levels and limited the opportunities for others to contribute to the process.

The first step for the Parish Council was to determine a planning process which was needed for any grant application to LRCC as the Council would be expected to act as banker and would normally provide such agreed funds as were felt necessary. The process could commence with an event open to the public to generate issues and develop themes as a lead in to establishing a steering group. DRCC were able to offer comments on an outline of a process.

Resolved: that the Council sets out a planning process with the intention of holding the first major event for the public in January 2008; that the Council seeks advice and support from LRCC and other councils in the production of a plan for the parish.

The Chairperson thanked Joe Dugdale for his presentation and willingness to respond to the questions raised during a very informative session. The meeting closed at 8.40pm.