

**ELDON PARISH COUNCIL**  
**EXTRAORDINARY MEETING**

**Eldon Community Centre**  
**Eldon**

**Monday**  
**23<sup>rd</sup> March 2020**

**Time 7.00 p.m.**

**Present:**

Councillor John Gibson **in the Chair**

Councillors Diane Pennington, and Graham Scott.

Tom Bolton – Parish Clerk.

**D130/19 APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Paul Henry and Toni Wallace (work commitments) and County Councillors Huntington, Quinn and Stephens and Mr Egerton, a local resident.

**RESOLVED:**

That Councillors Henry's and Wallace's apologies be approved.

**D131/19 DISCLOSURES OF INTERESTS**

Councillors Gibson and Pennington declared an interest in the item relating to the lease of the former allotment site for which previous dispensations to speak and vote had been granted.

**D132/19 ANY APPLICATIONS FOR DISPENSATIONS**

There were no applications for dispensations other than those previously approved referred to in the preceding minute.

**D133/19 MINUTES**

The minutes of the meetings held on 14<sup>th</sup> January and 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2020 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

**D134/19 PARISH COUNCIL BUSINESS DURING THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC**

The Council considered a report of the Clerk (**for copy see file**) about arrangements to ensure that Parish Council business could continue to be conducted during the Coronavirus Pandemic.

**RESOLVED:**

1. That the Council empowers the Clerk/Responsible Financial Officer with immediate effect under the provisions of Section 101 of the Local Government Act 1972 to do anything expedient and necessary (in consultation with the Chairman or Vice-Chairman) to ensure the continuous business of the Council and to deal with mandatory undertakings in order to prevent the authority from incurring liability during the period that the delegation is applicable and that this delegation continue until such time as the Council rescinds the same.
2. The VE75 commemoration event on 8<sup>th</sup> May be postponed and depending upon the course of the pandemic, alternative dates of Saturday 15<sup>th</sup> August (VJ 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary) or Saturday 7<sup>th</sup> November (day before Remembrance Sunday) be considered for an event and the views of National Lottery be sought upon the £1000 grant for the VE75 Event.
3. The next meeting of the Council on 31<sup>st</sup> March be cancelled.

4. The Annual Village Fete in July be postponed with a view to it being re-arranged in August or September, depending upon Government advice.
5. A decision on whether the annual garden competition should take place be considered at the end of July.
6. The Council awaits advice from NALC on the Annual Electors Meeting and the Annual Parish Council meeting and the completion of the accounts and AGAR (Annual Return).
7. The Parish Council endeavours to complete the 2019 to 2020 accounts and AGAR as soon as possible after the conclusion of the financial year.

## **D135/19 OTHER ISSUES**

### **(a) Insurance**

The Clerk reported that, in accordance with the delegation previously given he had consulted with the Chairman on the renewal of the Parish Council's insurance for 2020 onwards. Came and Co. the Council's brokers had recommended that the Council enter into a further three year agreement with Hiscox, the Council's existing insurers, and this had now been done with an initial cost of £506.45 for the first year.

#### **RESOLVED:**

That the actions of the Clerk in consultation with the Chairman be approved and confirmed.

### **(b) Application for Pocket Park Funding**

The Clerk advised that the Parish Council's application for Pocket Park Funding had unfortunately been unsuccessful, the funding being massively oversubscribed. In discussion with the County Council it had been agreed that, if the Parish Council was able to increase its previous offer of funding towards improvement of the Children's Playground from £3000 to £6000, with a County Council contribution of £26000, the scheme as originally proposed could go ahead, but without the relocation element.

#### **RESOLVED:**

That the Parish Council offer of funding be increased to £6000.

### **(c) Unmade Road at Office Row**

The Clerk advised that, following recent discussions with Mr Buckley at Durham County Council, it had been intimated that DCC may have provision within its budget for filling in the potholes on the unmade road at Office Row.

#### **RESOLVED:**

That the information be noted.

### **(d) Community Centre Ceiling**

The Clerk advised that following recent discussions with the Skill Mill, the ceiling works in the Community Centre were to be re-done and the VAT element of the invoice would be removed. Once the works were completed, this should enable the Community Partnership to process the invoice.

#### **RESOLVED:**

That the information be noted.

### **(e) Grazing Licence for former Allotment Site**

The Clerk advised that he had written to the existing tenant of the former allotment site, asking if he wished to continue the existing tenancy for a further year from 1<sup>st</sup> April on the existing terms and conditions at a rent of £270 per annum. The tenant, Mr Pennington, had indicated that he wished to continue the tenancy for a further year.

#### **RESOLVED:**

That authority be given for the Council to renew the current tenancy agreement with Mr Pennington for a further year.

### **136/19 PROPOSED VARIATION OF PLANNING CONDITIONS AT ELDON QUARRY APPLICATION NO. DM/20/00604/VOC**

The Clerk referred to a consultation by the County Council on a planning application for a variation of planning conditions at Eldon Quarry to enable brickshale to be exported from site. Under the existing conditions, the brickshale had to be used within the Eldon Brickworks, but with the previous closure of the brickworks, the applicants were now seeking to export the brickshale from the site to other brickmaking facilities in the region. A link to the online application had been sent to members and the Council had also received a representation from a local resident.

#### **RESOLVED:**

1. Eldon Parish Council requests that the application be called in for determination by the Planning Committee, instead of being dealt with under officer delegated powers as is currently proposed.
2. The Parish Council considers that the application will result in the generation of additional traffic, with consequent highway safety and road access issues, which it considers to be material planning grounds so as to require the application to be determined by the Planning Committee, and it wishes to be given the opportunity to address the Committee on the following issues:
  - Although the permission which is sought to be amended dates back to 2008, it relates to a time when Eldon Brickworks was operational. The Brickworks, on the site to which the current application relates, was a well-tolerated local business which provided employment for residents in the locality and had relatively low movements of vehicles into and out of the site in relation to coal, which was an associated mineral to the brick making materials extracted for use in the Brickworks.
  - The movements of brick making materials took place entirely within the site, being transported from the adjacent quarry to the brickworks for the production process. The export of coal from the site, being incidental to the extraction of brickmaking materials, was much lower than that for brickmaking materials and although the permission eventually granted provided for 25 HGV movements (50 in total in and out), it is clear from the original 2007 application and reports of officers, prior to the grant of permission, that the removal of coal from the site would only be undertaken in short bursts, two or three times per year.
  - The current application seeks to vary the conditions in the 2008 permission to now allow the brick making materials as well as coal to be exported from the site, part of the justification being that it will avoid sterilisation of the brick making minerals in the quarry, now that the Eldon Brickworks is no longer operational, and that there is a need for these materials at other regional brick making facilities to which they will be sent. The likely impact will be that HGV movements will rise to their maximum daily rates of 50 (25 in and out) on weekdays on each and every weekday apart from Bank

Holidays. When this is added to the 120 total daily HGV vehicle movements linked to the current MRF application (if that is approved), this could result in 170 HGV movements daily on our local road network.

- In addition, there is already an existing planning permission in place (which is not the subject of any of the above two applications - reference DM/15/03747/WAS) which relates to the Materials Storage Area and permits an additional 24 vehicle movements (12 in and 12 out) linked to the delivering and exporting soil, soil substitutes and aggregate materials to and from the Materials Storage Area on the Brickworks site. When this existing provision is added to the above proposed 170 vehicle movements, the total vehicle movements on Road C34 and the surrounding road networks could be 194 each weekday. This is totally unacceptable in relation to the impact upon the small settlements of Eldon and Old Eldon and is likely to result in congestion and possible tailbacks onto Road C34 at the site entrance.
- In the Parish Council's previous objection to the current MRF application, the Council explained that, in the last few years, we have seen the completion of an important development nearby at Old Eldon; a high value conversion of a number of Georgian farm buildings which were previously in disrepair. This is the first major development in Eldon for nearly seventy years, since the village was designated as a Category D village by Durham County Council in the late 1950's/early 1960's, and is considered to be an important first step in re-development of the village and Parish. Eldon is already one of the most deprived settlements in the County and the cumulative impact of the proposals will do nothing to help reinvigorate our area, or attract new development.
- The Parish Council is entirely supportive of residents of Old Eldon who are rightly concerned about the traffic and other implications of this and the MRF applications and we understand that a number of objections have already been submitted by local residents in relation to this application, covering issues such as:
  - Traffic on C34 Road and lesser local roads
  - Noise
  - Traffic movements outside permitted hours
  - Mud and soil on adjacent roads
  - Lack of sheeting on loaded HGVs
  - Failure to follow agreed routings
  - Speeding on restricted as well as derestricted roads
  - Validity of the original permission due to lack of implementation of working within the specified timescale
  - The lack of need for the export of brick making materials for regional brickworks, some of which already have protected supplies nearer to those sites
  - The need for proper assessment of the dust implications where vehicle movements exceed 100 per day.
  - The impact on the health and amenity of local communities.
- The Parish Council totally endorse these concerns and wish to include these as part of our objections to the development. In addition, the purported local employment benefits advanced by the applicants in relation to this and the MRF application, are not to our knowledge having any impact upon residents of Eldon. We have heard anecdotally from local residents that past approaches for employment to the site operators have not met with any success.
- The lengths of roads in the vicinity of the development may not show any history of accidents involving HGVs, but this is likely simply to be a reflection of the fact that HGV levels in the recent past along these roads have been relatively low. However, the roads in the vicinity of both this and the MRF application sites, most of which are currently de-restricted outside the main settlement of Eldon, lend themselves to

speeding by traffic and have blind bends and restricted sight lines. Members of the Parish Council, as well as local residents in recent weeks have advised that HGV vehicles, including some from local operators, appear to have been exceeding speed limits on restricted roads in the area. We would certainly be aiming to introduce Community Speedwatch schemes and seeking police speed patrols to deal with these issues if permission for this (and the MRF application) was granted.

- Eldon crossroads within the main settlement has an accident record which the County Council has acknowledged in the past with traffic schemes, including road markings, signage and a flashing sign. The crossroads at Old Eldon are also known to have traffic issues which local residents are currently exploring with the County Council, local members and the police. There is particular concern about use by HGVs of the side roads from this junction towards Shildon which passes The Barns development (there have already been two incidents with vehicles colliding with the perimeter wall around the settlement) and the side road towards Eldon Hope from the opposite junction at the crossroads. If the County Council, despite our objections, is minded to approve this latest application, which will add cumulatively to overall HGV vehicle numbers on local roads, we would hope, at the very least, that use of these roads by HGVs using the site might be prevented by means of a Legal Agreement with the applicant. Local residents made the point to us that most of the roads in the vicinity have little or no footpath provision. In the longer term, regardless of the outcome of the current application, the County Council needs to review speed limits and weight restrictions on these roads.
- In a comment from the Parish Council on the previous application, the subject of the current approval, we raised the issue of water run-off from the site access and mud on the road. It is uncertain whether there are wheel washing facilities within the site, or from the applications, whether any are being proposed, but this has been a continuing issue. If the County Council was minded to approve the current application we would hope that conditions would be imposed either for a wheel wash within the site, or for regular cleaning of the adjoining highway in the vicinity of the entrance.
- The Parish Council looks forward to addressing the Planning Committee on the above issues. We would also respectfully suggest that, in relation to any call-in, the Committee carries out a site inspection (including the highways in the vicinity and The Barns development) prior to hearing our views and determining the application.