

MINUTES OF A MEETING ABOUT THE WILLASTON, WISTASTON AND WESTON NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANS: “REFERENDUM RULES AND REGULATIONS” HELD ON TUESDAY 19TH SEPTEMBER 2017 AT 7.00PM AT WISTASTON MEMORIAL HALL, CHURCH LANE, WISTASTON.

Present: Mr.A.Thomson (Chair of Meeting), Mrs.A.Cross (Clerk Wistaston PC), Mrs.A.Cutts (Willaston), Mr.D.Clews (Wistaston), Mr.J.Cornell (Weston & Basford), Mr.W.Heath (Wistaston), Mrs.A.Jones (Willaston), Mr.M.Jones (Willaston), Mr.D.Lucas (Wistaston), Mr.M.Langhorn (Clerk Willaston PC), Mr.D.Millington (Wistaston), Mr.J.Moore (Wistaston), Mr.R.McIntosh (Wistaston), Mr.G.Roberts (Wistaston) & Mr.C.Todd (Willaston).

1 Introductions

The above people introduced themselves.

2 Minutes

Mr.Roberts agreed to take the minutes.

3 Apologies

An apology was received from Mr.K.Ward (Willaston).

4 Key Issues leading up to the Neighbourhood Plan (NP) Referendum

Mr.Thomson said that the NPs for the three parishes were at the same stage. It was hoped that Cheshire East Council (CEC) would receive the Examiner’s reports by the end of September, following which there would be a period of six weeks leading to the Referendum; therefore it was likely the Referendum would take place in December. Twenty eight days were required before the Referendum, to notify the public; these days were included in the six week period.

After discussion, Mr.Thomson confirmed the following:-

- a) There are restrictions on publicity and limits on expenses, as set out in CEC’s “Guide to Campaigners and Local Ward Councillors”; (copies handed to those present).
- b) Councillors and members of the NP Steering Groups may vote in the Referendum.
- c) The Referendums for all three parishes will be on the same day.
- d) Wistaston PC can extend the date of their finances; (currently £774 outstanding, with a deadline of 31st October 2017).

5 Publicity

Mr.Thomson advised the following:-

- a) Councillors can create their own publicity, but cannot use parish council money for publicising the Referendum.
- b) Parish Councils must check with CEC before holding events.
- c) Councillors must not speak to or write to the press.
- d) Posters or leaflets must not be placed on PC notice boards.
- e) Any views either for or against the Referendum can be published by CEC.
- f) Councillors must follow the rules given in CEC’s “Guide to Campaigners and Local Ward Councillors”.

6 Expenses

Mr.Thomson said that the maximum sum for expenses spent on advertising the Referendum was £2362 plus £0.059 for each elector. This money was provided by CEC, and covered leaflets, transport, rallies and the hire of buildings.

7 Establish a “Campaign Group”

Mr.Thomson advised that the best way to inform the general public about the NP Referendum was to establish a Campaign Group.

8 Top tips for securing a “Yes” vote

Mr.Thomson said there would be a period of six weeks to carry out a campaign, once CEC had given notice of the Referendum. A campaign group must be registered through CEC, and the group can include councillors and members of the steering group. Wistaston could use the Hands Off Wistaston (HOW) group to lead their campaign.

After discussion, Mr.Thomson advised the following:-

- a) Publicity should emphasise what the NP is about, summarise its main points, and create headlines.
- b) A positive approach was important to encourage voters.
- c) The leaflet from the Campaign Group should stress vote “YES”.
- d) Campaign groups must not use council premises or notice boards.
- e) It is worth considering public meetings to help publicity.
- f) The day of the Referendum is critical, normally they are held on a Thursday.

It was noted that Wistaston had four polling stations, and 6303 electors.

Mr.Moore said there was a need for fresh faces to form a campaign group.

Mr.McIntosh said Wistaston’s Christmas edition of “Roundabout” magazine would probably be too late to assist with publicity.

Mr.Thomson said Bunbury had a 42% turnout for their Referendum; there are 1400 electors; seventeen people voted “No”. If Willaston, Wistaston and Weston wished, they could use Bunbury’s campaign leaflet.

Mr.Thomson said CEC will be issuing a Voting card, similar to the Brexit referendum.

Mr.Thomson advised the next steps:-

- i) Residents to establish a Campaign Group.
- ii) Register the group with CEC.
- iii) Once CEC have published the date for the Referendum, distribute campaign leaflets.

9 Future of Dedicated Neighbourhood Plan Website

Mr.McIntosh said both Wistaston and Willaston have dedicated NP websites; after the Referendum, the NP website could be transferred to the parish website, as a sub-website.

Mr.Moore said he would like to keep Wistaston’s parish and NP websites separate.

Mr.McIntosh said the cost of maintaining a separate website would be £8 or £9 per annum.

Mrs.Cross said the renewal date for the websites was January 2018; she would retain both.

10 Discussion

After discussion, Mr.Thomson advised the following:-

- a) He would be happy to be contacted to answer any queries between now and the Referendum.
- b) He will email copies of the Bunbury campaign leaflets to the Chairs and Clerks of the three parishes.
- c) Currently, there are five parishes coming up for Referendum - the three present, plus Somerford (Regulation 16) and Hulme Walfield. Several others are also coming through.
- d) To date, about thirty NPs have been completed, with no rejections.
- e) He is preparing responses to the Examiner’s comments about the open spaces for Wistaston (14 comments) and Willaston (8 comments), which will be complete by the end of this week.

- f) Once the Examiner's report has come back, he will check to see if CEC are satisfied.
- g) No hearings are anticipated for the three parishes present; so far, there has only been one hearing in the CEC area - Sandbach.
- h) Hopefully, the NP should be finalised, ready for the Referendum, by end October/early November 2017. Then, there may be a need for a short meeting with the three councils.

11 Any Other Business

It was decided to wait until the NP was finalised, and submitted for the Referendum, before deciding whether to print twenty hard copies of the NP for the general public to read, instead of having to look online.

The meeting closed at 8.00pm.