



WOMBOURNE PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the EXTRA ORDINARY FULL PARISH COUNCIL MEETING

held on **Monday 21st November 2022** at 7.15pm

This meeting was held in the Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Gravel Hill, Wombourne, WV5 9HA.

Present -

Councillors: Barry Bond MBE, Mike Davies, Jan Evans, Mark Evans, Dan Kinsey BEM, Vince Merrick, Martin Perry, Mary Roberts, Daisy Tait

Clerk: Rachael Wright

Public: eighteen members of the public (15 Wombourne residents, three from other villages).

145/22 – Apologies

Apologies were received from Councillors Cheryl Davies, Alan Peace, John Pike, Robert Reade, and Elizabeth Keeling.

146/22 – Declarations of Interest

None.

147/22 – Local Plan

- a) Councillor Dan Kinsey BEM explained to members of the public that over the past 6 weeks District Members had held intensive meetings with the Cabinet at South Staffordshire Council to make their feelings clear on the local plan, which was evidenced in the way they voted at the meeting on Tuesday 8th November 2022.

He addressed the comments made by a Cabinet Member who said he was only aware of the issues in Wombourne some six weeks ago, and commented that the Parish Council's own submission and those from local residents were submitted twelve months ago, so concerns were made at that point, which should have been clear to everyone looking at the responses, and all alternative sites were included in a plan shared by South Staffordshire Council in September 2021.

Councillor Dan Kinsey BEM informed members of the public it would have been inappropriate for District Members to discuss their views before the meeting as they would not wish to be pre-determined, however, he assured them a considerable amount of time had been spent talking about the plan, and he was proud that they had stood together for what they felt was right for the village.

Members acknowledged the plan for Wombourne in its current state was completely unacceptable, as the entrance to the village, and its frame would be changed forever. Councillor Mike Davies noted that Members were not against housing in Wombourne, but they should be located where local Members want them, and not where Planners want them. It was important for the entrance to the village to remain rural, and in its current state the entrance from A449 will give an urban feel to the village, as well

as meaning that there would be continuous development from north of Wolverhampton, right down to Himley Cricket Club which caused concerns for any possible boundary review in the future.

The vote on Tuesday 8th November was thirty for the plan, and twelve against (6 of whom were Wombourne District Members), therefore the decision to continue with the plan in its current state was upheld.

Councillors Mary Roberts, Daisy Tait, Martin Perry, and Jan Evans all thanked District Members for standing together in respect of their views and noted concerns with the plan in its current state, and what it would mean for the entrance to the village, particularly if the development off Billy Buns Lane goes ahead.

b) Members of the public posed the following questions:

Q – Could an action group be set up to oppose the plan?

A – There was already an action group set up by a resident, with a Facebook page with over 1.5k members.

Q – Are the Parish Council able to seek legal advice in order to respond to the current consultation on the soundness of the plan?

A – The current consultation is on the soundness of the plan – the Parish Council will take away an action to discuss whether legal advice could be sought.

Q – Could an explanation be given as to why Wombourne was a tier two village, but was receiving more houses than some tier one villages? Most of the District Councillors who voted in favour of the plan were only seeing some 30-40 homes being built in their village, so how was this fair?

A – Wombourne would be receiving approximately 530 homes up to 2039, however, it was common knowledge that the villages in the north of the District would be receiving more homes than the south, so it was not necessary the case that we were receiving more than others.

Gavin Williamson MP had been speaking in the House of Commons in relation to the duty to co-operate and is aware of the unrest in Wombourne with regards to the local plan. Residents should lobby him to make their own views clear. Members felt strongly that the current planning policy of 30% affordable homes was maintained, and make it clear it needed to be the right type of housing for the needs of people in the village, in the right place and with the right services and infrastructure in place.

Q – Can a standard set of wording be produced to both send to Gavin Williamson MP and to object to the plan?

A – Standard blanket wording approach does not work, residents should speak from the heart. Lots of standard blanket worded responses only count as one submission to the consultation, whereas individually worded responses are counted separately.

Q – Four Parish Councils in South Staffordshire have neighbourhood plans in place, would it help if Wombourne also had one?

A - The Parish Council has previously considered working towards putting a neighbourhood plan in place, however, it was an expensive and onerous task, and have not been successful in preventing development in villages that have them in place.

Q – South Staffordshire Council’s consultation has been extremely poor, there was little opposition to the plan because people simply did not know about it, and there are some people who still do not know about it. The last consultation finished mid-December, and this one right before Christmas, which is the worst time to hold a consultation. Has this been deliberate?

A – There is a deadline for the District Council to work towards, and due to the time, it took to go through the responses, if the consultation was pushed back further meaning this current stage is taking place in November/December. They would run the risk of running out of time to have a local plan in place. However, the feedback would be shared with South Staffordshire Council.

Q – We do not have the infrastructure in place to deal with the number of houses proposed. In other countries the infrastructure is built first. The proposed houses will be filled with people from outside the village, and not the children of people who already live here. Why aren’t we insisting brownfield sites are being built on first?

A – The point of brownfield sites being built on first feeds into our response to the last consultation, as we have been able to identify the largest brownfield site in South Staffordshire, however, this has not been pursued further. We have previously recognised issues with infrastructure and were informed back in 2018 when this process started the plan would be infrastructure led, however, it appears what this has meant is the developments would be put where infrastructure already exists, whether it is adequate or not.

Q – Can we set up a community fundraising page to raise funds to put a neighbourhood plan into place?

A – We need to consider this very carefully because it would be a drain on residents’ resources, and unlikely to make an impact to the outcome of the local plan.

Q – Can we request a public meeting with the planners at South Staffordshire Council?

A – South Staffordshire Council are putting on a programme of engagement events, one being an online session this Wednesday 23rd November, and face to face bookable appointments on Wednesday 7th December from 10.30am to 7pm in the Council Chamber. Residents are urged to book all of the available slots for 7th December so that we can request further interaction.

Q – Can people be lobbied at the Christmas Light Switch On?

A – We would prefer not to, and to keep the event as a community celebration.

Q – Why were banners put up during the last consultation taken down, and was this instructed by a Parish Councillor?

A – It was not any of the 15 Members of Wombourne Parish Council who instructed for the banners to be taken down. They can legally only be put up on private property with the landowner’s permission.

Actions for the Parish Council to consider include opening the Council Chamber on available Saturdays to inform residents of the consultation, producing, and distributing a leaflet to every home in the village, and having banners put up on private land with the landowner’s permission.

It was noted that there was an overwhelming sense of urgency in this matter as the consultation closes at midday on 23rd December 2022, therefore some of the suggestions such as producing a flyer to be delivered to every home in the village may not be feasible.

- c) Councillor Dan Kinsey BEM informed members of public the next stage of the consultation is to look at the soundness of the plan, and is not an opportunity to discuss specific sites, unless there had been a material change to one of the sites. The consultation closes at midday on 23rd December 2022 and all written representations needed to be made to South Staffordshire Council by then.

Members agreed for the most experienced District Members to provide some guidance to the Planning and Development Committee in order for them to agree an informed response at their meeting on Monday 28th November, to be signed off by Full Council on Monday 5th December.

The meeting closed at 9.04pm.

Signed:

Dated: