# Grindon and Thorpe Thewles Parish Council

## Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on Tuesday 14th February 2023 at 6.30pm in Grindon Parish Hall, Thorpe Thewles.

**Present:** Cllrs. Davies (in the Chair), Gillson, Lowson, McGee, Moffatt and Rees
**In Attendance:** M. Ireland, Clerk; Simon Grundy, SBC, 23 residents

*The Chairman welcomed everyone and asked if there were any issues other than Astral Park that residents wished to raise. There being none, she moved on to:*

1. **Public Forum:** Simon Grundy was invited to give an update on the Astral Park development. He informed the developer (Mandale Homes) was challenging the Section 106 agreement, that the land to the rear of the development should be left flat (the agreement states it is to be an amenity grass land) – SBC continue to go through the negotiation process and the legal issues this entailed. The pumping station is working, but this is a Northumbrian Water issue, and SBC has been trying to engage with Northumbrian Water in order to understand what is going on. Surface water is to be via an off-site connection down the A177 – awaiting Mandale for final decision. The Chair then opened with some questions from the PC and then took others from the floor (Mr. Grundy's responses in brackets).
   Questions raised included:
   - Amenity grassland? The issue is, it is so full of rubble it cannot be used as an amenity. (Still debating this with the legal team).
   - The site is like a bombsite, where once it was a meadow; now full of plastic, polystyrene, rubble, metal – it needs industrial cleaning. Is the developer allowed to remove rubble from his site and dump it on the land next door? (SG will take this information for investigation. If it were just soil it would be less of an issue, but if other contaminants, then it is a matter for Environmental Health).
   - What is the time frame? (Planning processes take time, Mandale has the right to appeal).
   - Are you aware that Mandale has sold a piece of this land to a sister company and plans to build more houses on it? (No, but that is not a planning issue).
   - The Management Company cannot get insurance on the 'SUDS' (hole in the ground), which is very deep and not fenced, is Mandale still responsible? (Yes).
   - Mandale stated that residents had taken a vote and residents said they wanted a car park rather than grass – residents do not believe this to be true.
   - I tried to understand what you said about drainage – Northumbrian Water has not adopted anything on the site. (Northumbrian Water (NW) agree how waste water is to be managed, e.g. the pumping station. This is covered by a Section 102 agreement. NW say they have not received the S102 from Mandale; it has been approved by SBC. NW has to take possession of the sewers. SBC has agreed the solution, it is therefore up to NW and Mandale to sort out the detail. If any property owner has an issue they should contact NW directly, also the national Housebuilders Federation).
   - How long do the self-build owners have to remove the caravan and container from the site? (Once the property is complete, they should be removed, but SG will look into it).
   - Hedging on the right side of Durham Road near Astral Park is growing across the highway and is very dangerous; residents have written to SBC Highways department but have received no response. (This is a matter for the Care for Your Area Team).

- There is provision for a footpath at the entrance to the entrance to Astral Park from Durham Road – a pin kerb up to where the self-build starts; Mandale filled in the gap between the pin kerb and actual kerb with soil – should this not have been tarmac?

The Chair noted that residents were in the same situation as they were a year ago, when Mr. Grundy first came to speak at the PC meeting, and stated it would take 10 weeks. It was clear that Mandale were not acting in the spirit of the agreement – and seemed to act only to benefit themselves. No-one seems to be holding them to account – which is why villagers get so upset. There is no penalty so they will go on doing this. A child could have a serious accident before Mandale sorts out the field.
Residents were concerned at the lack of communication from SBC – several letters and many emails sent since April 2022 had not even been acknowledged let alone received a response. As the matter was now in a Planning Enforcement process, Mr. Grundy informed those present, they should have received a response. He understood their frustration and explained that SBC has beens trying to engage with Mandale, "we have been negotiating and thought we were making progress, but Mandale are now challenging the agreement. Legal advice will dictate what we (SBC) can do, what we have the right to do".

Mr Grundy agreed to investigate whether Astral Park residents and/or the Parish Council could participate in negotiation meetings with Mandale. He agreed to come back to the May PC meeting to update on the situation, and to forward to the Clerk the Enforcement Case reference.
**Actions:** Mr. Grundy to investigate the caravan & container at the self-build site; the footpath provision which has been filled with soil; whether Astral Park residents and/or Parish Council could attend negotiation meetings with Mandale Homes and to forward the Enforcement Case reference number to the Clerk; Clerk to contact Care4Your Area regarding the overgrown hedge.

*All but eight residents left the meeting at 7.30 pm*

Mr. Grundy then went on to update Council on other matters raised previously.

- Holiday chalets in Wynyard Woodland Park – no further information received from the agents; in relation to the 'dark skies' issue – as the Observatory is already in place, this will be taken into account when seeking advice on the impact of the proposed chalets.
- Vane Arms garden – the owner intends to submit a retrospective planning application in spring; the decking may be approved subject to conditions.
- High Middlefield - this is now an Enforcement case; the owner has been given 28 days from today to comply.
- The footpath on Durham Road, beside Thorpe Paddock, does not connect to the footpath further up the road and so people are having to walk in the road; there is no hedge here, only tree trunks. SG will look into this.
- Trees blocking the streetlight on Durham Road – contact SBC Highways about this, not a planning issue.
- Leaves blocking the drain opposite the Vicarage, causing a 40' pool of water on the road – a Care for Your Area issue.
  **Actions:** Clerk to contact Care4YourArea regarding the blocked drain and the Highways Department regarding the streetlight.

Mr. Grundy was warmly thanked for attending and left the meeting at 7.42, along with 4 residents.

2. **Apologies:** None

3. **Declarations of Interest**: None declared.

4. **Minutes of 10th January 2023**: Cllr Davies proposed, with Cllr Gillson seconding, the approval of the draft minutes of 1oth January. All concurring, it was **resolved** to accept the minutes as a true record.

5. **Matters Arising**: ***(i) Dropped kerbs*** – the Clerk to confirm the 14 required as per the map submitted earlier. **Action**: Clerk to confirm the 14 required and to request cost.
***(ii) Grit Bins*** – Cllr Moffatt reported the grit bin in North Close had now been moved to the bottom of the road, by the first bungalow; Cllr Lowson agreed to help move the other grit bin from beside the Hamilton Russell to the righthand side of the entrance to Astral Park. **Actions:** Cllr Lowson to move grit bin, Clerk to inform SBC and request salt for both.

6. **Thorpe Paddock Footpath**: Covered earlier in the meeting.

7. **Policies Review:** The following revised and new policies were presented for approval: ***Health & Safety, Safeguarding, Risk Management and Use of Village Green policies and Councillor Co-option Procedure.*** All present having agreed that they had read and understood the drafts and had no questions or concerns, the Chairman proposed that all be approved, this was **unanimously agreed**. **Action:** Clerk to date all agreed policies and procedures.

8. **Maintenance Committee Report:** Cllr Rees reported that he had spoken with the Patch Officer from Thirteen Group, who had taken photographs of the wall and sent them to his office. As yet no work had actually been undertaken to repair the wall. Cllr Moffatt informed that the tree surgeon was still awaiting planning permission for the pruning of trees on the village green. He was concerned as this needed to be done before birds started nesting. Cllr Gillson reported that he and a resident would be replacing the noticeboards the next day.

9. **Personnel Committee Report:** Cllr Gillson reported that he and Cllr Rees had attended a meeting of Personnel groups from Dalton Piercy, Elwick and Hart PCs, who were all seeking new Clerks. They had agreed a joint advertisement would be issued, to invite applicants for one or more of the available positions.

10. **Social Activities Committee report:** Cllr Gillson reported a very successful, and enjoyable, 'Fizz Night', attended by 42 people, which made a profit. The next event would be the annual Easter Egg Hunt and the Committee were now planning for the Coronation.

11. **Newsletter:** The Clerk apologised for not sending out a Newsletter in October, but had written one for January and this had already been circulated. Councillors approved the content, though a resident noted that 'Sweaty Mamas' was no longer meeting at the Parish Hall.

12. **Financial Reports –** the Clerk presented the statement of Financial Transactions and the Actual against Budget Report, which were **approved**.

| **Receipts** | **£** | **Payments** | **£** |
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| History Group | 157.00 | J. Gillson (SAC expenses) | 266.55 |
| SAC (Fizz Night) | 431.00 | Earth Anchors (2 x Notice Boards) | 1,381.20 |
| | | D.M. Ireland (contribution to tel/broadband) | 240.00 |
| | | D.M. Ireland (mileage & 3 x Newsletters) | 213.00 |
| | | Grindon Parish hall (room hire) | 40.00 |
| | | Stockton Country Parish PCC (advertising) | 70.00 |
| **TOTAL** | **588.00** | **TOTAL** | **2,210.75** |

13. **Ward Councillor's Report:** None received.

14. **Correspondence:** (a) SLCC re: Government's Planning Policy Framework consultation – noted.

15. **Planning:** No applications received.

16. **Items of Concern to Councillors:**

- Cllr Rees noted that SBC had removed the swings from their frames but had yet to replace them and the climbing frame was now dangerous following fire damage.
- Cllr Moffatt Moffatt expressed concern that 4 street lights were still not working, although these had been reported. Another, at the Vane Arms car park, had been repaired but then only worked for one day. The 4 on Durham Road lay between the Hamilton Russell and Thorpe Paddock. He noted the public footpath from the church to Astral Park needed attention.
  **Actions:** Clerk to contact SBC Recreation and Parks Department regarding the play equipment, and Highways regarding the streetlights.

17. **Date of Next Meeting:** 6.30pm Tuesday 14th March 2023 at Grindon Parish Hall

*Meeting closed at 8.20pm*

**Minutes Authorised By:**
**Minutes Seconded By:**
**Date:**