

# **COLESHILL PARISH COUNCIL**

## **MINUTES of the EXTRAORDINARY MEETING of COLESHILL PARISH COUNCIL 31st October 2011 at 8:00pm in the VILLAGE HALL COLESHILL**

Present were Chairman Cllr Colin Lambert, Cllr Lynn Woodgate, Cllr David Smith, Cllr David McGhee, Cllr Terence Prideaux and the Clerk Susan Smith.

8 members of the public were also present.

### **1. Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence had been received by the Clerk from Cllr Dick Ware.

### **2. Agenda**

Signage by the Village Pond.

### **3. Democratic ½ Hour**

There being only one item on the agenda of the Extraordinary Meeting of Coleshill Parish Council the meeting was opened by the Chairman and he asked the members of the public for their comments on the item on the agenda.

Mr E Miles expressed his view that he was against the prohibition of fishing on the village pond as he and his family had always fished there for generations.

Mrs P Dawson asked on whose authority were the new "No Fishing " signs placed.

Mrs M Pollock asked what harm is caused by children fishing at the pond.

Mr T Barber expressed his view that no-one can or should stop fishing on the village pond and the new signs should not have been placed there.

Mrs P Dawson, expressed the sentiment, that in her view the new signs made it look like the area around the pond was an "estate".

Mr T Barber also wanted to express his dislike to the re-instatement of the grass triangle and have a discussion about that. The Chairman stepped in and explained that this meeting was for discussion about the signage by the pond only, as stated in the agenda.

Mrs C Ullman, expressed her dislike of the new signs and the prohibition of fishing on the village pond.

Mrs P Dawson also expressed the view that the next thing we would see are "Keep Off the Grass" notices.

Mr G Pollock, expressed his dislike of the new signs and their meaning. The Chairman thanked Mr Pollock for handing in a petition.

#### **4. Meeting Re-opens**

The meeting re-opened at 8.09pm.

The Chairman thanked all attendees for coming to the meeting and asked that they listen to a statement he had prepared;

*What is an Extraordinary Meeting?*

*An Extraordinary Meeting can be called by the Chairman of a Parish Council or 2 Councillors if it is thought that an issue deserves immediate attention. No Extraordinary Meetings have been called within the membership of the present Chairman.*

*The normal response from most Parish Council activities is that we get one or two complaints and by complaints, I mean from NAMED residents not "People", for example:*

- *2 for the re-instatement of the grass triangle.*
- *1 for paying for the litter pick-up in the village.*
- *a number for the spoil spreading on the cricket meadow.*

*So until last week I had received one complaint from a resident regarding the No Fishing signs and I responded as normal in my capacity as Chairman of the Parish Council.*

*I then received from the Clerk a letter she had received from an ex-councillor Mr F Auton and separately a petition of 80+ residents handed to me by Mr G Pollock. I then made the decision to call an Extraordinary Meeting.*

## *HISTORY*

*In May/June this year, there were a number of complaints regarding fishermen on the pond and when they had been approached, had been abusive and threatening to the resident. I took the decision to look to replacing the sign at the pond by replacing the wording to NO FISHING to deter visiting fishermen. The signs were legally unenforceable anyway.*

*I asked the Clerk to obtain some quotes and the best quote received was for approx £ 300 which is within my signoff.*

*I then decided to order the signs in July.*

*It was briefly mentioned at the July meeting but not minuted, my oversight.*

*It was mentioned in my report in the September meeting.*

*Signs were shortly installed afterwards and we have had no fishermen on the pond since.*

*That brings us up to-date*

*I accept and acknowledge that I made a mistake and that this can be rectified.*

*We know that this can be a difficult role at times, done in our spare time and we can all make mistakes. However, what I do not understand are letters, particularly from ex-councillors, where the issues are personalised, this is completely unnecessary and unacceptable.*

*In view of this I am standing down as Chairman and Councillor of Coleshill Parish Council.*

*End of Statement*

The Clerk had received a comment from Cllr D Ware by email. He had asked that she read it out in its entirety.

*"I regret that I am unable to be present in person. Had it been possible for the meeting to start earlier I trust I should have made a more substantial contribution to the debate. Failing that, however, I wanted at a minimum to make my opening position clear.*

*I was not at September's Parish Council meeting at which the subject of signage for the pond arose but the draft minutes record that the Chairman informed others present that signs had been ordered from a local company and also read out the wording which was to appear on them. I do not know if any questions were raised by others but none are recorded.*

*A decision had therefore clearly been taken to order signs prior to the September meeting but it was not one taken by the Council as a whole at its July meeting- or at least there is no record in the minutes that such decision was taken. It is my own recollection that there was a mention at that meeting of an incident involving a villager and some people fishing (though even that is not in the minutes) but not that any decisions were taken as a result.*

*However, we have to start from where we are today. It has always been my view that fishing is part of what happens on a village pond - it has certainly been happening in Coleshill for generations. It is also the case that, in the absence of a change to the Commons by-laws, we have no legal powers to ban it. I therefore never liked the previous single sign, though it was at least relatively low key. Had I been formally asked for my views in the context of a full Parish Council meeting discussion and prior to taking a decision I should have voted against new signs and certainly against the assertive wording used. I am quite prepared to accept that, after proper discussion, the majority might have taken a different view and in that case I should have course, albeit reluctantly, have accepted a majority decision.*

*It goes without saying that my views on signage do not mean that I in any way condone any abuse of the right to fish on the pond. I have not, however, been aware of many examples of such abuse over the 23 years I have lived here and in any case there are existing legal means of dealing with them if necessary. Signs are not an effective way to prevent genuine abuse of the ponds facilities.*

*My position, therefore, had I been able to give it in person tonight, is that I can see no overriding reasons which might lead us to ignore the views set out by many villagers in their petition. The signs should in my view, be removed."*

END

The Chairman then asked that the members of the Parish Council are in agreement that the signs be taken down at the earliest.

Proposed by Cllr C Lambert  
Seconded by Cllr D Smith

The Chairman added that in hindsight there maybe should have been more discussion.

The Meeting closed at 8.35pm.

Mr G Pollock thanked the Chairman for calling the meeting.