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Following a meeting between representatives of Washington Parish Council and Storrington and Sullington Parish Council, in which terms of reference and cost of ‘clustering’ with neighbouring parish councils were discussed, those Councillors in attendance agreed that they would ask the Chairman to call an

**EXTRAORDINARY PARISH COUNCIL MEETING**

To allow members to further consider the proposal to join with

Storrington and Sullington Parish Council

to produce a Neighbourhood Plan

**Monday 22nd July 2013**

**at 7.30pm in the Village Hall**

**Minutes**

**Present:** Cllr L Britt, Cllr P Heeley, Cllr C Beglan, Cllr N Doré, Cllr R Milner-Gulland, Cllr D Horwood,   
Cllr D Whyberd, Cllr R Thomas  
  
**Clerk:** Rebecca Luckin  
  
The Chairman announced that Cllr Frank Wilkinson had very sadly passed away, following a recent illness. Councillors were shocked and sad to receive the news and held a minutes silence as a mark of respect for a much valued, highly regarded, friend and colleague.

**13.68.** **To consider accepting Apologies for Absence**Councillors received and accepted apologies from Cllr M Turley (work commitments), Cllr T Cook, Cllr Vanderklugt HDC (meeting), Cllr Dawe HDC (holiday), Cllr Jennings (family)

**13.69.** **To record Declarations of Interest from members in any item to be discussed and agree Dispensations**There were none.

**13.70. To adjourn the meeting to allow members of the public to speak**There were none present.

**13.71. To consider the information available and decide whether to ‘cluster’ with Storrington and Sullington Parish Council to produce a joint Neighbourhood Plan**At the Full Council meeting of 1st July 2013, Washington PC agreed in principle to the proposal to ‘cluster’ with Storrington PC, who require a decision prior to their meeting of 25th July. Following an informal meeting with representatives of Storrington PC, those present considered calling an Extraordinary meeting, in order to provide Storrington with notice of their decision.

Information circulated prior to meeting included:

1. Minutes of meeting between Washington and Storrington Parish Council to discuss costs and implications of joining to produce a Neighbourhood Plan.
2. A list of questions from Washington PC, with answers provided by AirS and agreed with Storrington Parish Council.
3. An AirS – quote to provide assistance for Washington and Storrington Parish Council to join and draft a Neighbourhood Plan.

1. AirS – quote to provide assistance for Washington Parish Council only Neighbourhood Plan – see below.
2. Date of current Housing Needs Survey and quote for undertaking another – October 2008, therefore out of date, cost of new survey £2000

The Clerk provided Councillors with a summary of potential costs to consider:

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| Full cost to Washington of joining with Storrington\* and asking AirS to produce a Neighbourhood Plan – **no grant or support** | £4,320+VAT |
| **OR** | **OR** |
| Full cost to Washington of joining with Storrington\* asking AirS to produce a Neighbourhood Plan – **allowing for grant of £7000 towards the plan.** | £3,060+VAT |
| **OR** | **OR** |
| **Full cost** of Washington only Neighbourhood Plan – AirS to produce, grant of up to £7,000 may be available. | £15,300+VAT |
| **ADD** | **ADD** |
| Possible expenses (can be capped) | £200+VAT |
| AirS assistance to provide Community Survey £2103.13, £1445.00 or £1271.23 | £1271.23+VAT |
| Housing Need Survey for Washington – AirS to provide £2000\*\* | £2,000 - £0+VAT |
| **TOTAL** | **£** |

\*Clerk at Storrington confirms that cost will be split 82% / 18% between Storrington and Washington

\*\* HDC will be deciding on 25th July how much support to give PC’s for the Housing Need Survey and the full Neighbourhood Plan process in addition to the grant of up to £7,000 available from ‘Locality’- Central Government.

Members discussed the proposal and financial options:

Cllr Milner-Gulland was concerned at the sudden deadline issued by Storrington PC and asked if other Parish Councils had been approached, eg Ashington. Cllr Heeley stated that discussions had been going on for some time and only Storrington has offered the chance to cluster. Cllr Britt advised that Storrington had a deadline by which they would need to designate the area of the Neighbourhood Plan and she was of the opinion that if Washington produced a separate plan, that was at odds with that of Storrington, it would not stand up against their plan.  
Cllr Heeley advised that members had attended a meeting with Storrington PC to discuss how it could work. Washington Councillors had submitted a list of questions, which had been answered by AirS and agreed by Storrington. At the meeting it was clear that the parishes would work as one body, seeking to agree on all issues.

Cllr Beglan was of the opinion that most residents would go to Storrington for their needs, since it is the hub. Cllr Milner-Gulland asked why should that matter?

Cllr Horwood stated that the majority of residents use the facilities and infrastructure available in Storrington, and that Washington could use the opportunity to influence future decisions regarding Storrington. Cllr Milner-Gulland could see the virtues of a cluster.

Cllr Beglan stated that Councillors had received much advice, if they were to cluster and subsequently felt that they were getting a bad deal they could walk away, but the general feeling was that there would be strength in numbers.

Cllr Milner-Gulland asked what Members were trying to achieve. Cllr Beglan was of the opinion that if the PC were to opt out and do nothing, their opinions would not hold weight, single plans will carry some weight and cluster plans would carry most. Cllr Whyberd, was of the opinion that we are ‘damned if we do and damned if we don’t’.

Cllr Heeley was of the opinion that going it alone would involve greater costs and number of hours, there would be security in being part of a larger group

The Clerk referred to the agreed budget for 2013/14 and advised Members of the funds that were held in reserve - £5000 for a Millennium Footpath, £2000 contingency for the Heath Common Ward and contingency of £4750 for the Washington Ward. There would be a possible grant of £7000 from Central Government and on 25th July HDC would be deciding how much of the £30,000 grant received for each completed plan, would be handed onto Parish Councils.

Members discussed the cost options and implications.

Cllr Whyberd was suspicious of Storrington’s generosity, but Cllr Heeley did not suspect any ulterior motive.

Cllr Beglan was of the opinion that Washington needed to input into the Storringtons plan and not to find out afterwards that it would be to our disadvantage.

Cllr Horwood reminded Members that a Neighbourhood Plan was not just about housing.

Cllr Thomas was concerned that Washington should engage with Storrington PC to ensure that the interests of Heath Common were represented.

Councillor Milner-Gulland was of the opinion that ‘we are boxing in the dark’ and reminded Members that at an HDC meeting on 20th June the Clerk and Cllr Beglan had formed the opinion that Washington could undertake their own Neighbourhood Plan without help. Following subsequent meetings, they have both changed their opinions. Cllr Milner-Gulland suggested that Ashington, Wiston and Findon Parish Councils could be clustered with.  
The Clerk referred Cllr Beglan to the meeting of 20th June and was of the opinion that representatives of HDC were ill-informed and had not spoken convincingly at the time. The most persuasive speaker, from Planning Aid England, had been of the opinion that smaller parishes may not need a Neighbourhood Plan. Further meetings and information had led both the Clerk and Cllr Beglan to change their opinion.

Cllr Horwood reminded him that none of the above Councils have come forward, there needs to be a desire to cluster.

Cllr Britt asked what are the advantages of clustering with Ashington?

Cllr Thomas asked what are the advantages of going alone?

Cllr Britt stated that Washington is a small parish and may be overwhelmed, if we linked with Storrington, we could unite out needs.

Cllr Britt asked if members had debated the matter sufficiently and reminded Members that a decision was required.

Cllr Whyberd was still unhappy regarding the situation, he was of the opinion that Washington were being asked to produce something, about which they knew nothing. He was concerned that Members were gaining enthusiasm to develop Washington into something different.

Cllr Horwood advised that consultants will tease out what was required, along with members of the community. The Neighbourhood Plan covers areas other than housing, it is creating jobs and supporting the economy. The danger is that if we do not have a plan, we could be run rough shod over. We need to decide whether to go with Storrington or go on our own.

Cllr Britt – it is to do with investment in community facilities, maybe another doctor’s surgery. We need to open our eyes to the fact that we are growing.

Cllr Beglan reminded Members that we are not offering up growth, we have been arguing for years that a local community should have more input in how their community develops and this is our chance.

Cllr Milner-Gulland asked if the Parish Council should be distributing a questionnaire first to find out if residents are keen to go ahead.

Cllr Horwood was of the opinion that the Parish Council would not know what questions to ask without the help of a consultant, and that the help of a third party was required.

Cllr Britt – AirS will do that on our behalf and provide us with a response.

Cllr Milner-Gulland – asked if it was necessary to accept the high-seeming AirS price, or whether we could put the consultancy out to tender.

Cllr Heeley answered that it would be possible in theory, whether or not practicable.

Cllr Thomas was of the opinion that the Parish Council were not offering up the parish for development, the parish will have development forced upon it if we do not commence a plan. We are trying to have some influence on the development that will inevitably be forced upon us. If Storrington acted alone, they may make decisions that were contrary to our wishes.

Cllr Britt would have preferred it if other Parish Councils had joined in.

Cllr Beglan advised that Slaugham PC have clustered with 5 parishes and their plan will carry a lot of weight.

Cllr Thomas was of the opinion that clustering would make us stronger against the outside forces.

Cllr Milner-Gulland – perhaps we should sit back and wait for others to decide what they will do.

Cllr Thomas reminded Members that following recently publicity, six district councils, including HDC, may lose their powers, we may then be facing Central Government. We need to defend ourselves.

Cllr Britt – we would have control with a Neighbourhood Plan.

The Clerk read the draft minutes for the meeting of 1st July 2013.

Councillors agreed that it was a correct record of the meeting.

Cllr Britt - we need to go forward with a proposal.

Cllr Milner-Gulland proposed that ‘while in favour of a Neighbourhood Plan for Washington Parish Council, he would like to make further enquires as to what is involved’.

Cllr Britt asked what further information would he like and whether any Member would second the proposal.

Cllr Milner-Gulland would have liked a survey of the parish.

Cllr Britt advised that would be conducted by AirS as part of the Neighbourhood Plan process.

Cllr Milner-Gulland – that will cost a lot of money.

Cllr Beglan - we could go it alone and not ask the right questions, get rejected and lose a lot of time and money.

Councillors discussed worst case scenarios.

Cllr Whyberd seconded the proposal, a vote was held 2 for and 6 against.

Cllr Heeley put forward a proposal – ‘having attended the meeting with Storrington Parish Council and looked at the financial case, that we go forward and cluster as originally proposed’.

Seconded by Cllr Beglan, a vote was held, 6 for and 2 against, motion carried.

The meeting closed 20.34pm

Signed: . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . Date: . . . . . . . . . . . . . .

Chairman

*Subsequent to the meeting, the Clerk contacted Storrington Parish Council to advise them of the decision to go ahead with a joint Neighbourhood Plan. Storrington Parish Council will discuss the item at their meeting of 25th July. A formal agreement will be drawn up and a Memorandum of Understanding drafted.*