**East Cottingwith Parish Council**

**Minutes of the meeting held on Thursday, 9th March 2017 in the village hall at 8pm**

**Present:** Peter Rhodes (Chair), Steve Ashton, Clare Cornmell, Neil Hobbs, Duncan Morter; Noel Joy (Clerk); Craig Ralston,Natural England (for Item 5a); one member of the public – John Barlow.

**1. Apologies for absence** were received from Dave Griffith and Julie Harrison

**2***.* There were no declarations of interest

**3. Public participation**. John Barlow asked to contribute on Item 5a.

**4.** The **minutes** of the meeting held on **12th** **January 2017** were signed as a correct record.

**5. Matters arising**

**a) Access and rights of way along the river bank**

Craig Ralston was welcomed to the meeting.

He explained the position. Natural England was not against access, but there were certain circumstances where it was necessary to protect important environments from excessive disturbance as the number of walkers and dogs increased. There was evidence of disruption to wildlife, and also to some agricullture.

It was therefore being suggested that the route along the riverbank from East Cottingwith to Ellerton would be closed, although there was always room for compromise in that permissive access could be given to allow a circular walk close to this village. There was no right of way along the riverbank.

There was some agreement with this position, but others were opposed to any restriction of the route along the riverbank, as it had been used regularly for many years, and residents would be opposed. It was therefore likely that if the restrictions were to go ahead, a claim against them would be lodged.

It was emphasised that there was complete support for restriction of access on to the ings.

It was agreed to consider this further at the next meeting, now that councillors had been fully briefed, to see whether or not an agreed position could be reached.

**b) Back Lane gates**

A paper prepared from Dave Griffith’s notes had been circulated.

The Council confirmed the position they had always held: that the gates should be removed, on the grounds that they had been erected across a right of way, without any permission, obstructing access to Back Lane, which is not owned by the person responsible. These facts had been demonstrated in a letter of 23rd January 2013 from this Council to ERYC, written by John Barlow, then clerk.

However, ERYC was now actively considering the designation of a public right of way from Church Lane to Canal Lane via Back Lane, and had already established that a right of way did exist along Back Lane, although the precise type was still to be identified. ERYC officers felt it reasonable to deal with the removal of the gates at the end of this process.

The Council was pleased that some significant progress was now being made, and agreed that an early resolution to the designation and approval of the right of way should lead quickly to an instruction to remove the gates.

**c) Bus shelter soakaway.** York Construction Services had installed a soakaway on 24th February. The Council expressed its thanks to Sharon and Paul Culkin

**d) Telephone kiosk.** BT had now confirmed their agreement to the handover, although arrangements would take some time. Two possible future uses were on record: a book exchange, and a food bank collection point. Arrangements for its maintenance in the meantime would be discussed at the next meeting.

**e) Highways.** A further letter had been sent to ERYC concerning the rapidly deteriorating state of Langrickgate Lane and the northern part of Ball Hall Lane.

**6. Planning matters**

**a) Storwood Nursery Tearooms** 17/00017/PLF. The Council confirmed the action taken in raising no objection to this application.

**b) Cherry Tree Farm and Willow Glade Farm**. A letter had been received from the Head of Planning explaining the difficulties which had arisen over these applications.

**c) ERYC planning application publicity**. Information on applications would be displayed on line and on notices, but letters would no longer be sent to potentially affected neighbours. This Council would be determined to ensure that applications received full and proper consideration.

**7. Village Taskforce**. A visit would take place on **11th April** at 9.45am. Dave Griffith and Noel Joy would attend.

**8. IT training; website improvements; transparency code; audit arrangements**. Steve Ashton and Noel Joy had attended a useful training session on 16th February. Some improvements had been made to the website, including a working hit counter and presentation of gallery pictures.

The website was key in the implementation of all the requirements of the transparency code, and changes to the code’s implementation involve changes in the audit process from 2017/18 onwards. However, it had been confirmed that, as far as was understood, our existing external auditors would continue, although the process would change.

!t was agreed to approach Brian Cottam, internal auditor, to see if he would be willing to work with Noel Joy to ensure that these changes were implemented correctly.

**9.** A list of other **correspondence received during January and February** 2017 was noted.

**10. Any other business**

**a) Bus service**. Information just received stated that from 1st April 2017 service 196 would operate on **Thursdays.** Timetable information would be circulated on the website and the notice board.

**b)** At Giselle Richardson’s request, it was agreed to look into the possibility of providing a **church/parish council notice board in Storwood.**

**11.** **Date of next (annual) meetings - 11th May 2017**