

Minutes of Withersfield Parish Council meeting held on Tuesday, 12 March 2018 at 7.30 pm in the Village Hall

Present: Cllrs Terry Rich (Chairman), Ian Kinloch (Vice Chair); Frank Eve; Nissa French-Ramsteyn; Lucy Guest; Rosie Wenham; Clerk: Jill Johnson; County Cllr Mary Evans; Borough Cllr Jane Midwood; prospective borough council candidate Peter Stevens; and Chris Oakes, Parish Speedwatch Co-ordinator.

1 Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Peter Lord.

Chairman opened the public section of the meeting welcoming both the Speed Watch lead and Peter Stevens, who reported that he would be standing at the forthcoming Borough Council election and wished to observe the meeting.

2 Borough Councillor's report

Cllr Midwood commenced by enquiring the current position in respect of purchase and installation of dog waste bins on the Flood Park. The Clerk confirmed that following a recent site meeting involving Environment Agency staff a new licence had been received and this would be signed later in the meeting. Following signing by the Environment Agency, the bins could be purchased and arrangements made for their installation.

Cllr Midwood referred to the current planning application relating to Haverhill Research Park. The Borough Council had recently announced that £7 million would be divided between the Research Park new building and a Suffolk Research Park near Bury St Edmunds. Cllr Midwood's view was that the proposed new building was better placed than the position previously agreed and would thus have less impact on nearby residents.

She reported that the new West Suffolk Council would come into being on 1 April next. She also indicated that she would not be standing for re-election and her term of office comes to an end after the May election. Cllr Midwood would, however, be providing the annual report for the Annual Parish Meeting in May.

The Chairman expressed his thanks for all the support provided by Cllr Midwood throughout her term of office.

3 County Councillor's report

Cllr Evans reported that Suffolk County Council would have a £520 million budget for the forthcoming year. Three quarters of this would be assigned to provision of adult social care and children's services, with the remaining 25% shared amongst all other services including Highways. She indicated that there were currently explorations into ways in which the Fire Service could be made more efficient; for example, 45% of outings were to 'non-incidents', so one proposal was that there would be no automatic response to alarms set off in business premises during the day. The Service would still attend other alarm incidents and would go to business premises where there was a follow-up phone call. There was currently a consultation on this on the Council website.

Highways had recently been awarded a £4.4 million grant to develop smart street lighting which would generate its own power, monitor traffic speeds and volumes, together with road temperatures and grit bins which needed re-filling. There was also

investigation into whether such lighting could be connected to an alarm system for older residents.

Cllr Evans indicated that as the pre-election period was now being entered, she was not able to discuss any further allocations from her budget which in any event was now fully committed for 2018-19.

4 Public Forum for parishioners

As the only item to be raised was in connection with the work of the Traffic Working Group, this would be deferred until discussion of Item 10.

5 Declaration of members' interests for any agenda item at this meeting

There were none.

6 Approval of minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on Tuesday, 22 January

These were agreed as providing an accurate record; it was therefore proposed by Cllr Kinloch, seconded by Cllr Guest, that these should be confirmed, and accordingly signed by the Chairman.

7 Update on actions from previous Parish Council meeting

All actions, save those appearing under Matters Arising, had been completed.

8 Matters arising

- a) Policing session – 4 February
Cllr French-Ramsteyn reported that the meeting had discussed local issues and how these would be communicated through use of social media such as Facebook and Twitter. It also touched upon new arrangements for community policing for rural villages and explained the rationalisation currently underway to improve services. Cllr French-Ramsteyn indicated that she had already shared some of this information on the Arboretum Facebook page; the Chairman requested that she should also prepare an article for the next edition of Withersfield News. Cllr French-Ramsteyn
- b) Parking on Town Green at Queen Street
Cllr Kinloch, who had monitored the situation since the last meeting, reported that this had not improved, and if anything was worse. It was therefore proposed by Cllr Eve, seconded by Cllr Wenham, that the Chairman would write again to the landlord stating that damage to Town Green would be assessed, and that a leaflet would be produced to place on offending vehicle windscreens. Cllr Kinloch would be responsible for using these leaflets. Chairman Cllr Kinloch
- c) Progress towards Neighbourhood Plan
The Chairman reported that he had tried to arrange a meeting with a local resident who could potentially provide consultancy but had been advised that it would be preferable to appoint somebody external to the parish. The next action would be find a date to identify issues and confirm next steps. Chairman
- d) Annual Spring Clean
Councillors were reminded that this would take place on Saturday, 16 March, with volunteers assembling at the war memorial at 10 am. The Clerk reported that West

Suffolk Council had indicated that it would like to publicise the good work undertaken by residents and the effect this had on the village's appearance.

- e) **Actions required by Thurlow Estate**
As no response had been received, the Chairman agreed to make direct contact with the Agent. Chairman
- f) **Graveyard maintenance issues**
Cllr Wenham reported that a local resident had been paid £120 from the £200 budget allocated to the graveyard to deal with sunken graves. She also confirmed that a second resident had agreed to remove the rubbish heap in the corner of the graveyard at a charge of £24, and that she would press for this to be undertaken as soon as possible. Cllr Wenham

9 Election 2019

The Clerk briefed councillors on the pertinent dates, the main ones being the publication of the Election Notice on 22 March, and the end of the nomination period at 4 pm on 4 April. Councillors were asked to observe the guidance provided by SALC on conduct during the pre-election period. The nomination papers were distributed and the Clerk offered to make arrangements for the delivery of these to West Suffolk Council by the deadline of 4 April as long as these were delivered to her address by 12 noon on 2 April. All councillors Clerk

10 Traffic calming

Cllr Eve referred councillors to the minutes of the last meeting of the Traffic Working Group, reporting that it had been determined that the Group should concentrate on the reduction of speeds and volumes with particular emphasis on the impact of the North Haverhill developments. Contact had been made with West Wrating Parish Council which had provided good feedback on the effect of buffer zones on the reduction of speeds of vehicles entering the village, but speeds through the village remained at 10% above an acceptable level.

It was acknowledged that the installation of buffer zones would proceed once the County Council had undertaken the necessary work to design, consult and introduce revised traffic orders. The Working Group was considering the potential impact of the zones as well as other measures that could be taken to reduce volume and speed of traffic. County Cllr Evans, who had remained in attendance for this item, indicated that with evidence of unacceptable speeding from VAS readings, a speed camera van could be deployed. Cllr Eve reported that the group was considering the value of speed tables.

The Group was also investigating the effect of the expansion of the Jelly Cat warehouse and determining whether planning restrictions were put in place when either the original warehouse or the extension had been agreed. Cllrs Kinloch and Eve would be visiting the warehouse shortly to ascertain the management policy in respect of routes to and out of the location of the warehouse and whether account had been taken of the increasing size of lorries delivering to and from the warehouse.

Cllr Kinloch had also been charged with exploring whether funding to introduce measures to mitigate the effect of the North Haverhill developments was still available but found this was not the case.

Cllr Evans pointed out that the County Council had responsibility for Highways issues arising from new developments, and the district council for planning areas. Cllr Kinloch had asked West Suffolk Council why Withersfield Parish Council had been given an opportunity to comment on the North West Haverhill developments but not those currently being undertaken in the North East which would potentially have a far greater impact on Withersfield roads. He pointed out that Withersfield was directly affected by the impact of increased traffic but there had been no assessment of this, and West Suffolk had claimed that there would not be a severe impact as the position was alleviated by the relief road. Great Wrating Parish Council had prepared a 5-page document on the North East Haverhill development but although this was a good submission it had been ignored.

The Speed Watch lead, a member of the Working Group, had tried to speak to a Highways officer at the County Council who had a global view about the efficacy of the various devices available to control volume and speed of traffic, but without success. He compared the lack of advice available with the more substantial advice provided by Cornwall County Council. Cllr Evans pointed out that Suffolk had been one of the first councils in the country to introduce 30 mph limits in villages, with other councils then following. She indicated that she was not keen on speed tables because of the problems that these can cause; on the other hand, the Speed Watch lead pointed out that speed tables do not require monitoring, unlike other devices which could be implemented.

It was requested that the Highways officer who had attended the site visit in Withersfield in the autumn should be asked to return; Cllr Evans had, however, understood that the buffer zones should be implemented first. The Chairman reported that a sizeable budget had been allocated towards the purchase of a range of devices but that further funding would need to be secured or raised. Cllr Evans agreed to make contact with an officer with expertise in speed tables and ask them to make contact with Cllr Eve with a view to attending the next meeting of the Working Group on 9 April at 7 pm; if the latter was not convenient for the officer, the Working Group would be prepared to consider an alternative date and/or time.

Cllr Evans

Cllr Evans referred to the proposed visit to the Jelly Cat Warehouse, encouraging talks with them on the basis that positive outcomes had been achieved elsewhere.

The Working Group had also approached an external consultant (an ex-employee of Suffolk Highways), but it was felt that any further contact should be put on hold pending the meeting to be facilitated by Cllr Evans. Cllr Evans pointed out that it was very hard for Highways to make an objection on the grounds of traffic volume as the presumption was that planning issues would predominate. The Chair indicated that the Working Group should become more vigilant in terms of future developments.

11 Consideration of amended quotations received for Environmental Works 2019

Two amended quotations were discussed. Both quotes had been reduced. It was noted that the Parish Council had asked that references be obtained for the contractor offering the lower price. However, despite repeated attempts no references had been provided.

Clerk

The Parish Council considered that the risk of contracting with the new contractor without the benefit of references outweighed the saving from the lower price. It was therefore agreed, proposed by Cllr Eve, seconded by Cllr Wenham, that the contract should be awarded to the existing contractor who had been providing the service satisfactorily for some years. The Clerk was asked to notify those involved.

12 Meldham Washlands

- a) Further to the report from Cllr Wenham and the Clerk on the agreement for siting of the dog waste bins discussed under Item 2 above, the amended licence received from the Environment Agency was duly signed by the Chairman.
- b) The concerns of the parishioner who lived opposite the Queen Street entrance to the flood park in respect of hedge work and behaviour by members of the Angling Club were noted.

13 Village Hall Management Committee (VHMC) report and update with progress with hall extension

Cllr Wenham reported that there had been no action to date in respect of the extension, and no recent meeting of the VHMC. The village hall was not in a good condition and if the VHMC was not prepared to take responsibility this should revert to the Parish Council as owners of the building. The VHMC was effectively defunct and the Parish Council did not have the capacity to take on the responsibility.

It was proposed by Cllr Wenham, seconded by Cllr Eve, that the Chairman should write formally to the Chair of the VHMC with a view to seeking a meeting with representatives of the Committee to explore what support they might need in connection with the current difficulties. Chairman

14 Hosting of Haverhill Area Forum

The Clerk reported that it was proving difficult to find a date when the village hall was free, and one which was convenient for the Haverhill Town Clerk and his deputy. The Clerk was asked to continue to pursue finding a suitable date with the village hall wardens and in particular to seek a Friday evening in late May as it appeared from the schedule of bookings in Withersfield News there were no regular bookings. Clerk

15 Access to Sports and Recreation Ground

Following receipt of communications from parishioners about the barrier which has been placed across the entrance to the sports and recreation ground, the Chairman agreed to make contact with Thurlow Estate to raise the concerns about pedestrians having difficulties in legitimate access the sports ground. Chairman

With regard to the siting of litter bins, the lock was a combination type lock and should not pose a difficulty for refuse collection vehicles and should not inhibit the siting of the proposed fixed-wheelie bin.

16 Finance

The accounts were perused and agreed as accurate. Payments made since the last meeting were noted from the Payments and Receipts section, and it was observed that the internal audit, to be conducted by SALC, had been arranged for the week commencing 20 May. Acceptance of the accounts was proposed by Cllr Kinloch, seconded by Cllr Guest, and, in respect of the annual internal audit, by Cllr Rich and Cllr Wenham respectively.

17 Correspondence

- a) Email – A Christmas Carol Theatre Show on Tour
Noted

- b) Letter – Suffolk Legal
The extensive documentation relating to changes in car parking arrangements was briefly discussed insofar as confirmation that Withersfield parish was not affected, and noted.

18 Planning

- a) Consideration of DC/19/0315/RM – Innovation/Business Centre on Plot 100 of Haverhill Research Park
Following confirmation from Cllr Midwood, that the owners of the Research Park had applied for and received capital monies, it was considered more likely that action would now be taken. Cllrs Guest and French-Ramsteyn, who live at The Arboretum, reported that residents were more positive about this proposal than the previous one where the building would have been closer to housing. It was therefore accepted that the Parish Council could have no objections from a planning perspective.

It was proposed by Cllr French-Ramsteyn, seconded by Cllr Guest, that the Parish Council should respond as follows:

‘The Parish Council supports the proposal to develop this flagship building and welcomes its position close to the Spirit of Free Enterprise roundabout but would seek assurances that sufficient parking would be available for workers and visitors without overspill on to the streets of The Arboretum.’

- b) Borough notifications since last meeting
Noted
- c) Applications received since last meeting
Noted

19 Agenda items for meeting to be held on 14 May 2019 and to determine focus for Annual Parish Meeting

The Chairman opened this item by giving thanks to councillors who had been co-opted and gave particular thanks to Cllr Wenham who had given many years of service to the Parish Council but who would not be standing at the next election.

It was suggested that the substantive item for the Annual Parish Meeting should be the focus on traffic and development of a local plan. This would be led by Cllr Eve and the Chairman respectively.

Cllr Eve
Chairman

20 Recruitment of new Parish Clerk

The vacancy would be placed in Withersfield News, and advertised on the Parish noticeboards, through SALC and put on the Facebook pages for Withersfield and The Arboretum. The Clerk agreed to draft an advertisement and Job Description.

Clerk

The Parish Council recorded their sincere thanks for the excellent service that the Clerk has given to the Parish Council over the last four and a half years.

The meeting closed at 9.14 pm