

**Minutes of Withersfield Parish Council meeting held at
7:30pm on Tuesday, 10th May 2022 at the village hall, Withersfield.**

Present: Cllrs Terry Rich (Chairman); Frank Eve, Julia Korona, Indunil Wijenayaka;
Clerk: Laura Crump; District Cllr: Peter Stevens; County Cllr: Bobby Bennett.

1. Election of Chairman and Vice Chair

It was proposed by Cllr Wijenayaka, and seconded by Cllr Eve, for Cllr Rich to be the Chairman. All Cllrs were in agreement.

It was proposed by Cllr Korona, and seconded by Cllr Wijenayaka, for Cllr Eve to be the Vice-Chair. All Cllrs were in agreement.

2. Apologies for absence

Received from Cllrs Horton and Kinloch.

3. District Councillor's report

Cllr Stevens informed the PC of his responsibilities which include:

- Waste – there has been a struggle with having enough staff for collections since the pandemic but this is slowly improving.
- Car parks and civil parking enforcement – which doesn't particularly effect small villages such as Withersfield.
- Planning – Cllr Stevens reassured councillors that the Council had submitted a robust defence of the decision to refuse planning permission at Milton House, despite officer's earlier support for the scheme. The matter now rested in the hands of the inspector. The new Local Plan's first consultation is coming up and the PC will have a chance to comment. Cllr Stevens encouraged the Neighbourhood Plan being formed as this will shape planning in Withersfield for the future.

Cllr Stevens raised the issue in the West Suffolk Community Governance review which proposed designated half of the Parish Council places for the Arboretum and half for the village. He highlighted the different characteristics of the two parts of the parish and the potential for there to be different priorities. He encouraged the Parish Council to respond to the consultation.

It was mentioned that there are plans to build a waste collection hub in Haverhill where the recycling centre would also eventually be relocated to. This will save on the waste budget.

The Council is continuing with giving support to Ukrainian and Afgan refugees.

Cllr Stevens said he was happy to be able to support the PC financially in their Jubilee celebrations being planned.

4. County Councillor's report

Cllr Bennett highlighted the main points from her annual report which talks through the work accomplished over the last year. This can be found on the PC website.

Cllr Eve requested that the Villages Working Group had another meeting soon as there were multiple items which he is keen to move forward with for traffic calming solutions in the parish. Cllr Bennett agreed that this would be useful and said she would encourage this to be organised.

There was some discussion over the Arboretum phase 2 development and the traffic implications this would generate. There are concerns that the increased volume of traffic using the one single access, would make an already pressured road junction between Three Counties Way and Cambridge Road, extremely hazardous. Taylor Wimpey has failed to offer any proposals to manage traffic flows and safety.

Cllr Bennett assured that she had challenged the section 106 money, of which £22,000 is being used for real time information screens at the two bus stops, however, Taylor Wimpey is fulfilling what they are required to do.

The Chair suggested that we should request that the highways authority – that is the County Council undertake a study of alternative options that could be considered to manage the increased traffic flows once the development is completed – this might include (e.g.) traffic lights or a mini-roundabout.

This was agreed as a sensible way forward and Cllr Bennett was requested to forward this proposal to the County Council.

5. Public Forum for parishioners

There were no parishioners.

The Chairman closed the public section of the meeting

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

None.

7. To approve the minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on 15th March 2022

These were approved. Proposed by Cllr Eve and seconded by Cllr Korona.

8. Parish Councillor vacancies

The Chair shared the news that Cllr Ian Kinloch had resigned from the Parish Council meaning there are now two Councillor vacancies on the Parish Council.

There had been one expression of interest received by a parishioner about joining the PC, however, he was unable to attend the meeting this evening. The Cllrs decided they would like to meet the parishioner in person in order to be able to converse and discuss his interest in becoming a Councillor prior to deciding on his co-option. It was agreed that the clerk

would thank the parishioner for his interest and request a statement of application outlining what he would like to contribute to the PC and invite him to attend the next PC meeting.

It was agreed for Cllr Wijenayaka to become a signatory on the PC bank account due to Ian Kinloch's resignation.

9. Chair's Report

The Chair's report had been shared in the Annual Parish meeting. The Chair said he would use the report for an article to be placed in the next edition of the Withersfield News.

10. Matters arising - updates from previous Parish Council meetings

a) Land adjacent to Barsey Close

The PC had received a summary of costs from West Suffolk being £1,035 PA for the maintenance of the land, plus £375 to fell the dead elm trees. The PC deliberated and it was pointed out by Cllr Eve that it would result in a large percentage of the PC precept, being £9,440, to be spent on this. It was agreed that with this information, and also having previously explored other options for maintaining the land, there would not be sufficient benefit to the Parish for the expenditure. The PC believe the land ought to be maintained for local residents by West Suffolk Council. The PC will relay this to WSC.

b) Permissive footpaths – Cllr Wijenayaka

No further progress had been made and it was therefore agreed for this item to be rolled onto the next meeting.

11. Allocation of councillor roles and responsibilities

The responsibilities were discussed and the Cllrs agreed to the following:

Highways – Cllr Eve
Speed Watch liaison & VAS Coordinator – Cllr Eve
Village Hall – Cllr Horton
Graveyard – Cllr Korona
Safeguarding – Cllr Korona
Planning – Cllrs Korona and Wijenayaka
Environment and Footpaths – Cllr Wijenayaka
Finance – Cllr Rich

12. Defibrillator responsibility

It was explained by the Chair that Elaine McInnes-Rich, who was currently carrying out the defibrillator checks, was unable to continue. It was suggested that Cllr Horton could be asked whether she would take over this responsibility being the Cllr with the village hall link. The PC send their thanks to Elaine for taking on the role over the last 18 months.

13. Update from the Traffic Working Group

Cllr Eve reported that:

- Buffer zones have been fully implemented.
- Quiet Lanes will be completed by the end of May.
- The ANPR Camera has been installed. We are one of the first Parish Councils to have a camera. The Camera will be in position for 7 days and will return on a rota basis being shared with other councils in Suffolk. There are 10 cameras in all to share. The data on speed and number plate recognition will be passed to the Police.

Ongoing items are:

- Implementation of the agreed 20mph zone
- Double yellow lines extension at Melbourne Bridge
- Future traffic problems at 3 Counties Way as a result of further development

Cllr Eve explained that he has been pressing Cllr Bennett to organise the next Villages Working Group meeting as the above ongoing items involve all neighbouring villages and support is needed from them and the SCC in order to move forward.

The Chair thanked Cllr Eve for his continuing successful efforts as the Chair of the Traffic Working Group.

14. Update from the Neighbourhood Plan Working Group

The Chair told the PC that he had received the draft from O'Neill/Homer today which will be circulated to Councillors and the working group. It was suggested to give Parish Councillors 10 days to read and give their comments about the draft, prior to a meeting being arranged with West Suffolk Planning officers to get their response to the draft plan. It was agreed for this to be the course of action and for the PC's planning leads, Cllrs Korona and Wijenayaka, to oversee the next stage.

The Parish Council determined that it was now appropriate to disband the working group which had contributed significantly to working up a comprehensive draft. Thanks was given to the working group for all their hard work in helping form the Neighbourhood Plan, including former Cllr Kinloch's chairmanship of the group.

The Chair reported that he had applied for a further grant to complete the work, based on Neil Homer's proposed budget and project plan. He raised the overspend that had occurred on the Neighbourhood Plan work in 2021-22, which is recorded in the Annual Accounts report. Councillors agreed that this overspend should be the first call on any new grant monies received, and that particular care should be taken to ensure that no overspend was incurred in the current year.

15. Update from the Village Hall Committee – Cllr Horton

Due to her absence, Cllr Horton had prepared the following report in advance of the meeting:

Events

- Jazz Evening, Saturday 21st May – tickets £10 a head. Proceeds to go to Village Hall
- Queens Jubilee shared picnic, Sunday 5th June

Building and repairs

The kitchen has now been refurbished and interior decorated. Exterior painting will be taking place over the next couple of months. A budget to cover repairs and on-going maintenance is to be agreed and will be shared with the PC.

Work on the extension will take place once quotes have been received – planning permission has been sought and neighbours consulted.

Membership

Two new members have been recruited: Mrs Stella Eve and Mr Keith Pinder. The current Treasurer has tendered his resignation. Two other committee members resigned.

The Chair shared the PC's thanks to Cllr Horton for her great work in contributing to the VHMC being energised.

16. Jubilee event – Cllr Horton

Cllr Horton shared the following information in advance of the meeting, due to her absence:

Queens Jubilee shared picnic, Sunday 5th June – this is not a Village Hall event, the purpose being to bring together the community to celebrate the Jubilee.

A small working party from the village has been formed to oversee arrangements and the following has been agreed:

- The event will run from 1-3pm
- The marquee will be erected on the green with tables and chairs provided by Tom MM.
- Parishioners are being asked to bring a dish for sharing, there will be music and decorations to mark the occasion.
- It has been agreed that commemorative 50p coins will be offered to all children in the Parish. From preliminary research this will be in the region of 100, and coins have been purchased from the Royal Mint – at a cost of £7 each.
- To cover the cost of £700 + £9 pp, a local businessman, Paul Kirk has generously agreed to pay £500, and a grant of £250 has been awarded by Cllr Peter Stevens. The Parish Council having received these sums agreed to reimburse Cllr Horton who had paid for the coins out of her personal account.
- An advert will be placed in the Withersfield News and on the Withersfield and Arboretum FB pages to advertise the availability of coins to children. They will be distributed at the event on the 5th June.

17. Graveyard control

It was agreed for this item to roll onto the next meeting. Cllr Korona has just taken on the responsibility so will look further into putting rules together for graveyard control.

18. Community Governance Review

The Council has now agreed the draft recommendations for the Community Governance Review and launched a consultation.

The draft recommendation for the parish of Withersfield is:

That Withersfield Parish Council be divided into two parish wards, for the Withersfield (Arboretum) parish ward and Withersfield (Village) parish ward. The overall number of parish councillors for Withersfield be increased from seven to eight with 4 councillors allocated to Withersfield (Arboretum) and 4 councillors allocated to Withersfield (Village).

The PC discussed this and it was agreed that they are in support of the overall increase of parish councillors be increased from 7 to 8 – this was a request from the PC. However, it was believed that splitting the PC into two wards would not be beneficial and would likely lead to an unfilled Parish Council. At present, there is one Arboretum parishioner on the PC and no others have indicated a desire to join in a number of years, meaning the majority of the PC is made up of residents from the village. Having restrictions to become a Councillor based on residential criteria would inhibit being able to attract parishioners to join and result in continual vacant posts. It was also pointed out that there are other areas such as Hanchett End and Barsey Close which do not fit into either ‘side’ of the parish which could result in further problems. It was agreed that the Parish Clerk should submit a response to the CGR on this basis.

19. Website – Cllr Korona

Cllr Eve suggested for Cllr Korona to have a conversation with Stella Eve who had recently joined the Village Hall Management Committee and had taken on the website responsibility role to discuss any matters or share any advice.

20. Finance

- a) Presentation of monthly accounts – Income and Expenditure and Bank Reconciliation
- b) To note payments made since last meeting

These were approved – proposed by Cllr Eve and seconded by Cllr Korona.

- c) Confirmation that the Parish Council meets the criteria for exemption for 2021/22 and wishes to be an exempt authority

Confirmed - proposed by Cllr Korona and seconded by Cllr Wijenayaka.

- d) Consider and approve the Annual Governance Statement
- e) Consider and approve the Accounting Statements

The AGAR was considered and approved – proposed by Cllr Korona and seconded by Cllr Wijenayaka.

- f) Approval of the end of year accounts 2021/22 and Chairman’s Annual Accounts Report

The end of year accounts was approved. The Chair explained that there had been an overspend towards the Neighbourhood plan with the PC paying £2,068.00 on top of the £9,340.00 grant received. With this noted, the Chairman’s annual accounts report was approved. The Chair requested for the clerk to look into whether online banking could be used rather than continuing with using cheques.

- g) Approval of Internal Controls 2022
- h) Approval of Standing Orders, Financial Regulations and Code of Conduct

These were all approved. Proposed by Cllr Eve and seconded by Cllr Wijenayaka.

- i) Confirmation of receipt of 2022/23 precept

Noted.

- j) To note the Clerk continues as the PC’s Responsible Financial Officer

Noted.

21. Correspondence

- a) Email - WEBNOS Site Check Notification

Noted.

- b) West Suffolk Local Plan

It was agreed that when the Local Plan is out for consultation, the PC would make comments - led by the PC’s planning lead Cllrs Korona and Wijenayaka.

22. Planning

- a) Borough notifications since last meeting
- b) Applications received since last meeting

All were noted.

The PC made additional comments as requested towards application DC/21/0367/FUL - Milton House CB9 7SA.

The PC submitted comments towards application DC/22/0469/RM - Land West Of Three Counties Way Withersfield, stating the items of concern which were highlighted at the previous PC meetings where representatives of Taylor Wimpey and parishioners had attended.

23. Agenda items for meeting to be held 12th July 2022

- Local Plan
- Neighbourhood Plan
- Graveyard control

The meeting closed at 20:55.