

**Minutes of Withersfield Parish Council meeting held at
7:30pm on Tuesday, 11th July 2023 at the village hall, Withersfield.**

Present: Cllrs Terry Rich (Chairman), Frank Eve (Vice-Chair), Sheila Horton,
Julia Korona, Philip Stiles, Indunil Wijenayaka; Clerk: Laura Crump;
District Cllr: Indunil Wijenayaka; County Councillor: Bobby Bennett.

1. Apologies for absence

Received from Cllr Jarvis – approved by the PC.

2. District Councillor's report

Cllr Wijenayaka shared with the PC the list of the cabinet which consists of members from the West Suffolk Working Partnership who form the new administration, which was voted on at the Annual Council meeting on the 23rd May 2023:

Councillor Cliff Waterman - Leader
Councillor Victor Lukaniuk - Deputy Leader
Councillor Donna Higgins - Portfolio Holder for Families and Communities
Councillor Diane Hind - Portfolio Holder for Resources
Councillor Gerald Kelly - Portfolio Holder for Governance and Regulatory
Councillor Richard O'Driscoll - Portfolio Holder for Housing
Councillor Ian Shipp - Portfolio Holder for Leisure
Councillor David Taylor - Portfolio Holder for Operations
Councillor Jim Thorndyke - Portfolio Holder for Planning
Councillor Indy Wijenayaka - Portfolio Holder for Growth

The cabinet will be holding its second formal meeting on the 18th July, and the new administration held its second full council meeting on the 20th June. Due to the summer recess, the next full meeting will be on the 26th September 2023. Members of the public are welcomed to attend both the cabinet and full council meetings.

The anaerobic digester plant application had been submitted to Suffolk County Council; but we are awaiting publication of it. Cllr Wijenayaka stated that as his position of Portfolio Holder for Growth, based on what is currently in the public domain, the application will be detrimental to the future growth potential of Haverhill and cause an unwarranted impact on the locality.

3. County Councillor's report

Cllr Bennett's County Councillor report for June 2023 can be found on the PC website. She highlighted the following points to the PC:

- SSC have launched a project for those using pre-payment meters for electricity which offers residents support with bills.

- The fire service is moving back to the county, where it was previously joined with Cambridgeshire, meaning the control room will be in Suffolk. SCC have launched an awareness campaign for fire risks which includes battery disposal guidance.
- The domestic abuse commissioner has been welcomed to Suffolk. There is an extensive training network for this area.
- SCC have committed to procuring the library service. Procurement regulations mean a consultation will take place but the Council have approved plans to increase its funding to Suffolk Libraries.

Cllr Bennett told the PC that they had received a full application for the anaerobic digester at Spring Grove Farm, however the planning team had gone back to the applicant requesting additional information that is required prior to validation. Cllr Bennett assured she would keep the PC up to date about the application. She confirmed that she has received more emails about this proposed application than on any other issue and understands the predominant view is that it is the wrong location. Cllr Bennett reiterated she will support Withersfield parishioners on this matter.

Cllr Bennett declared how unhappy she was to hear that officers had changed their minds for the 20mph zone in Withersfield, which had previously been signed off. Cllr Bennett said she will fight for the 20mph zone to be implemented. After some internal conversations, it was agreed for an officer to meet with Cllr Bennett and the PC, on site in Withersfield to further discuss the scheme. The costs and timescale need to be determined.

There has been some intensive work carried out for potholes in the county and they are now moving onto resurfacing. Residents are encouraged to continue to report potholes via the Suffolk Highways reporting system online.

4. Public Forum for parishioners

None. The Chairman closed the public section of the meeting.

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

None.

6. To approve the minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on 16th May 2023

The minutes were approved – proposed by Cllr Wijenayaka and seconded by Cllr Eve.

7. Matters arising - updates from previous Parish Council meetings

- a) Investigation into whether the funeral directors should be ensuring the gravedigger return a few weeks after an interment – Cllr Korona

Cllr Korona explained that as the graveyard is owned by the PC, it is the responsibility of the PC to ensure any sunken graves are filled and maintained. She reported that she had emailed funeral directors to reiterate that the PC will accept any external requests for the use of the graveyard and to state that it is expected that the gravedigger would

return to site after an interment to top up the grave after sinkage. It was agreed by the PC to pre-authorise, if and when necessary, the hiring of a contractor to level current graves which sink – proposed by the Chair and seconded by Cllr Wijenayaka.

b) Light over defibrillator – Cllr Horton

Cllr Horton said the light had not yet been replaced and she would be raising this at the VHMC AGM meeting next week.

c) Church St Footbridge – Clerk

The County Council accepted that it is their responsibility to maintain both the footway and bridge, and repair work has been undertaken. No further action required.

d) Councillor responsibilities

The Chair proposed for Cllr Stiles to take over the Planning responsibility role from Cllr Korona due to Cllr Korona being the lead for the Neighbourhood Plan and PC graveyard. All Cllrs were in agreement.

8. Update from the Muck-Off campaign - Cllr Wijenayaka

Cllr Wijenayaka said that SCC had received the application for the anaerobic digester at Spring Grove Farm, but that further information had been requested from the applicant before the application could be validated. Therefore, the application is still pending.

It was decided for the community meeting to be delayed while the application is still yet to be submitted and validated. The location for the public meeting is being considered due the large number expected to attend once the application has gone through. It was also reported that the campaign plan to hold drop-in sessions in order to offer help to anyone who wishes to submit comments towards the application.

When the application has been submitted for consultation, it was agreed that the PC would invite the applicant and objectors to the meeting. It was therefore agreed that the Muck-Off campaign would meet prior to the PC meeting to choose a representative of the objectors to state the collective view of the campaign members which would be presented to the Cllrs at the PC meeting.

9. Update on the Neighbourhood Plan – Cllr Korona

Cllr Korona explained that the senior planning policy officer at West Suffolk had expected for the draft plan to be of a higher level and sent a list of required amendments. Cllr Korona took this list to the consultant who created the draft plan, though his response was that the expectations were excessive due to the size of Withersfield parish and that there were no legal requirements for them to be met.

Consequently, Cllr Korona spent a lot of time formatting the document herself and amending what she was able. Cllr Horton has offered to help Cllr Korona where she can.

As District Cllr, Cllr Wijenayaka agreed to question West Suffolk regarding the timescale of finalising the plan to give assurance to the PC. It was originally due to be completed by April 2023 but has been delayed.

10. Update from the Traffic Working Group – Cllr Eve

Cllr Eve began by saying that he was pleased to hear Cllr Bennett state where we stand with the 20mph zone, that she is pushing back with Highways retracting the scheme, and her assurance that she will get the zone implemented.

As the Chair of the Villages Working Group, Cllr Eve had shared the recent meeting minutes with the PC, and the minutes taken from his meeting with Suffolk Highways. It was mentioned in the minutes that Haverhill is the worse connected town in the country yet the fastest growing town in Suffolk.

Cllr Eve said that the Traffic Working Group has now merged with the Village Working Group and that he was attempting for all the villages to get behind the '20 is plenty' campaign.

11. 20s Plenty in Suffolk – Cllr Eve

The campaign information was circulated to the PC prior to the meeting.

Cllr Eve proposed that the PC support the '20 is plenty' campaign which was seconded by Cllr Wijenayaka. The PC would next need to write to Cllr Paul West, Cabinet member for Operational Highways, to let him know that the PC have passed the motion. All Cllrs were in agreement.

12. Update from the Village Hall Committee including response to PC's request for an annual donation towards upkeep of the green – Cllr Horton

Cllr Horton explained that they had received a disappointingly high quote of £95,000 for the extension works for the village hall. It was explained that because the specifications of the works were complicated that other contractors did not want to tender for the work. Cllr Horton said that the committee will be looking at changing the plans in order to reduce the costs.

The AGM is being held on Wednesday 20th July where the election of a Chair for the VHMC will be on the agenda. The current Chair has moved away from the village.

The village fete was held in June which was a success and raised money for the village church.

Cllr Horton said the history group were meeting at the village hall and she is working with them to create information stands about Withersfield which can be displayed in the village.

The VHMC have mixed views on the PC's request for an annual donation toward the upkeep of the green but Cllr Horton will be asking the question formally at the AGM next week and will report back to the PC after a decision has been made.

13. 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 Stiles.

- c) Quarterly report of expenditure and comparison to budget

Noted and approved.

- d) Discuss the £9612.17 received to the PC as a beneficiary to the late Mrs Enid Rodgers

The Cllrs discussed possible ways in which the bequest could be used. In Mrs Rodgers Will, it is requested for the funds to be used for the upkeep of Withersfield village facilities for the benefit of all the inhabitants of Withersfield. Possible suggestions included; a contribution towards the implementation of the 20mph zone, a memorial bench, a contribution towards a new disabled access at the village hall. It was agreed that the Chair would write about the bequest in the next Withersfield News with examples of what the money could be spent on and asking for any other ideas from parishioners. This will then be considered at the next PC meeting in September. In the meantime, the money is a designated reserve.

- e) Consideration of Internal Audit Report from SALC

The internal audit report was discussed and accepted.

- f) To note the Annual Internal Audit Report received for AGAR, which has been submitted

Noted.

- g) Consideration of the 'Action Plan' in response to the Internal Audit Report from SALC

The action plan was approved.

- h) To note the effectiveness of the internal audit

Agreed and noted.

- i) To note that the Clerk has completed a re-declaration of compliance under the Pensions Act 2008, and that the PC complete their re-enrolment duties every 3 years.

Noted.

14. Correspondence

None.

15. Planning

- a) Borough notifications since last meeting

Noted.

- b) Applications received since last meeting for consideration:

APPLICATION PENDING - Anaerobic digester at Spring Grove Farm

DC/23/1041/TCA | Trees in a conservation area notification - one Eucalyptus (indicated on plan) and one Silver Birch (indicated on plan) fell | Ashbrook House 3 Homestall Crescent Withersfield Suffolk CB9 7SP

DC/23/0960/FUL | Planning application - one dwelling with attached double garage (following demolition of existing pair of dwellings) | 8B Horseheath Road Withersfield Haverhill Suffolk CB9 7SL

All applications were considered and noted.

The PC agreed to respond in support of application DC/23/0960/FUL due to the following reasons:

1. It doesn't increase development outside of the settlement area
2. It appears to be sympathetic to the locality
3. It wouldn't conflict with the draft Neighbourhood Plan
4. There have been no objections raised from parishioners

16. Agenda items for 12 September 2023

- Anaerobic digester at Spring Grove Farm planning application
- Village Hall Management Committee update
- Neighbourhood Plan update
- Consider possible projects for the bequest from Mrs Rodgers
- If received before next meeting - consideration of Local Plan

The meeting closed at 20:50.