

**Minutes of Withersfield Parish Council meeting held at
7:30pm on Tuesday, 14th March 2023 at the Epicentre, Withersfield.**

Present: Cllrs Terry Rich (Chairman), Frank Eve (Vice-Chair), Sheila Horton, Gill Jarvis,
Julia Korona, Indunil Wijenayaka; Clerk: Laura Crump; District Cllr: Peter Stevens.

1. Apologies for absence

Received from Cllr Stiles.

2. District Councillor's report

Cllr Stevens began by talking about the council tax, which residents have now received in the post. West Suffolk managed to keep the increase down and is the lowest of all councils in Suffolk. It amounts to a 10p a week increase.

Waste services have been maintained and they are looking forward to a better year though will face challenges with the new laws. This will include product reform and hopefully glass.

Cllr Stevens reiterated that photo ID will be required by voters in the May elections.

Cllr Horton asked Cllr Stevens whether there would be any possibility of funding available to contribute to the parish celebrations for the King's coronation. Cllr Stevens apologised and explained that as this is happening during the pre-election period (purdah), they would be unable to give any financial support during this time.

3. County Councillor's report

Cllr Bennett did not attend the meeting but had sent her February report through which was shared with the PC prior to the meeting. This can be found on the PC website.

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

Cllr Horton declared that as she was on the VHMC, she would not be involved with voting on item 12 regarding the car boot sale.

6. To approve the minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on 17th January 2023

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

7. Matters arising - updates from previous Parish Council meetings

None.

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

The planning application has still not been submitted for the anaerobic digestion plant. The Chair confirmed that the statement which outlines the view of the PC about the proposed AD plant, had been shared with local press, Vestey, and the local MP – which was the agreed action from the previous PC meeting. Articles including the PC's statement, have been published in the Suffolk News and Haverhill Echo.

Cllr Wijenayaka said the campaign are maintaining the momentum and understanding about the proposed AD plant and keeping publicity up. There has been positive progression with the use of the change.org petition also.

It was reported that representatives of Acorn had knocked on doors of residents within the parish doing market research about the AD plant which caused anxiety among many parishioners.

There has been recent flooding around the area and photos taken.

Cllr Stevens stated that from reading the screening report, he believes West Suffolk should object to the proposal. He has asked to be informed immediately of any progress received and has also contacted Matt Hancock about it. Cllr Stevens feels the proposal would be against the Local Plan and a traffic plan of how to manage the crops with conditions on transportation would be needed. He also expressed his view that the Environment Agency would have comments about the flood risk, odours, and proximity to residents.

Cllr Wijenayaka explained how he feels an anaerobic digestion plant is not sustainable as it uses an non reliable crop source.

The Chair thanked Cllr Stevens for his comments objecting towards the proposal.

The Chair suggested an article be written about the recent flooding in the area. Cllr Horton told the PC that they are currently looking at a mail shot to go out locally. She also said that a parishioner is going to carry out an analysis of Stour Brook.

The tree TPO from South Cambridgeshire which Cllr Korona had enquired into, was still pending a response.

It was agreed to write again to Vestey to explain: the recent market research carried out by Acorn caused distress to elderly residents in particular, and compounded local worries. The delayed submission of a proposal is causing much anxiety and leaving a degree of uncertainty. And to ask whether the proposal still being pursued.

Cllr Stevens agreed to contact the Thurlow Estate about the above concerns.

9. Update on the Neighbourhood Plan – Cllr Korona

Cllr Korona shared the Design Code and Basic Conditions statement received from O'Neill Homer, the NP consultant. There are a few amendments needed which Cllr Korona will

correct. The Plan will need to go to an examiner to check it is fit to go to referendum and once an examiner has been organised, the timetable can be set with West Suffolk Council. The referendum will be later than originally hoped due to the May elections and therefore will possibly happen around June/July.

The final invoice from O'Neill Homer had been received and it was agreed to pay this before the end of the financial year. Cllr Korona will find out whether there will be any additional costs for the referendum or anything else.

At the last PC meeting, the Chair requested Cllr Stevens to ask planning officers if they had received any communications from Pigeon. Cllr Stevens confirmed they had. He went on to say that every year sites for possible future developments are requested and that it was unlikely for this to go through as it does not coincide with the Local Plan.

10. Update from the Traffic Working Group – Cllr Eve

Cllr Eve told the PC that he had chaired the latest Villages Working Group meeting and the minutes were shared with the PC. Actions from the meeting included chasing Matt Hancock and Cllr Bennett around the issues in villages along the B1061. Terry Holloway, Chair of Great Wratting PC, had pursued this action and received a disappointing response from Paul West, portfolio holder SCC. He stated there are no intentions to change the lorry routes. However, Cllr Bennett has offered to fund a set of speed and traffic surveys at 4 locations in villages along the B1061. The surveys will give an accurate representation of the speed and types of vehicles using the route. This will then either confirm that the current speed limits are appropriate or support the request from within the parishes for a change in the speed limits.

Cllr Stevens was shocked by the letter and felt it was unhelpful.

Cllr Eve went on to say that Cllr Bennett is looking into how the approved 20mph zone in Withersfield village can be funded.

At the VWG meeting, Cllr Eve was asked to arrange a meeting with Suffolk Highways to find out what their strategy is for coping with the impending increase in traffic from the new bypass being build in Haverhill. At said meeting, Cllr Eve would also ask about what measures are needed for implementing the 20mph zone in Withersfield, the pricing for this, and discuss the traffic effects which would be caused from the proposed anaerobic digestion plant in Withersfield.

Cllr Eve explained that working together as a group of villages to tackle traffic issues gives them more power. He also said that the other villages are generally supportive of the Withersfield PC view on the proposed AD plant.

Cllr Bennett shared with the PC the response she had received from Suffolk Highways regarding the request to extend the double yellow lines on Queen Street. The Safety and Speed Team advised that unless there is clear evidence that it is a long-term or persistent issue, they would not be supportive of the extension of the lines. The comment is that the existing lines terminate far enough away from the bridge and bend. The Highways Assessment Officer for the area has been asked to monitor this location – Queen Street is

inspected every 3 months, with the Assessment Officer travelling either to or from Withersfield at least once a week for other reported issues in the area. Suffolk Highways encourage the PC and any concerned residents to report any issues here via the reporting tool each and every time – with pictures of the offending vehicles if possible.

There has been no further information received regarding the option appraisal for Three Counties Way.

The PC agreed that Cllr Eve writes to Paul West and Cllr Bennett about the above issues discussed.

11. Update from the Village Hall Committee – Cllr Horton

It was confirmed by Cllr Horton that WIFI had now been installed in the village hall. Cllr Horton told the PC she is working on a bid towards the VH extension which will consist of a storage room and disabled access entrance. As the current VHMC Chair has moved away from the village, village hall items which he was storing, are now being stored in the committee room, meaning it is currently not available for use. The Chair of the VHMC has agreed to stay on until August where the VHMC will have their annual meeting and he will formally leave.

Cllr Horton said they were organising a Coronation community picnic on the 7th May and asked whether the PC would give a donation towards refreshments for the event. The VHMC are looking for new members to join and will be advertising this in the Withersfield News.

It was proposed by Cllr Wijenayaka to donate £100 towards the coronation picnic celebrations. There was no seconder to this proposal. Cllr Eve proposed a donation of £75 which was seconded by Cllr Korona and all were in favour.

12. Agree to the use of the village green for a car boot sale

This was discussed and the PC approved the request to use the green for the car boot sale under the reprisals that firstly; if closer to the time the weather has been too wet causing the ground to be soft, that the organisers would cancel the event, and secondly; that any damages would be repaired by the organisers. It was clarified that their risk assessment would need to include repairs to any damage caused to the green.

The Cllrs discussed whether there should be a charge for the use of the village green, which the PC maintain. It was proposed by the Chair and seconded by Cllr Wijenayaka to charge £50 for the use of the green for the car boot sale. All were in agreement.

13. Funding the deficit for the change to budget due to environmental works contract; options include charging for use of village green

Continuing from the last item, the PC agreed charging for the use of the village green would be a good way of helping to make up the deficit for the increased cost for grounds maintenance in the parish. It was discussed further and agreed that for community events the charge would be exempt. The PC decided to consider the charge on each event

individually as the cost would vary on the size of the event, but that the amount would be a minimum of £50.

There was discussion around the use of parking on the green when hirers of the village hall require additional parking and perhaps the VHMC could build into their budget a proportion of the hire fee to be paid to the PC for the use of the green. Cllr Horton will raise this at the next VHMC meeting.

Cllr Korona suggested raising the graveyard charges by 10% to also help with the deficit. The Chair said that the PC could let local undertakers know that the PC will consider non-residents to use the graveyard which could drum up some more interest.

It was proposed by Cllr Wijenayaka and seconded by Cllr Eve to increase all graveyard charges by 10% and to inform local funeral directors that the PC will consider non-residents with a local connection to use the graveyard. Cllr Korona will contact local funeral directors.

It was noted that the PC would need to review the council tax in next year's budget.

14. Environment working group – Cllr Wijenayaka

Cllr Wijenayaka explained that he would like to set up an environment working group to work towards a greener environment while looking at initiatives such as 'no mow May' and highlighting the benefits. An article will be written for the Withersfield News advertising the working group and asking for people to join. It was agreed that this would need to be published after the May elections due to being in the pre-election period where the PC mustn't issue any publicity which might be seen as intended to influence voters. Appointment of Cllrs to the working party will occur at the next PC meeting.

15. Parish Council elections in May 2023

The Clerk had attended the election briefing held by West Suffolk Council and put together a document of relevant information for the Parish Councillors to peruse. It was made clear that the Councillors need to complete a nomination pack which would need to be hand delivered to West Suffolk House by appointment by 4pm Tuesday 4th April. The Clerk will support the process by providing prospective candidates with the proposer's and seconder's electoral roll numbers. The Chair offered to hand deliver all the current Cllrs nomination papers. There are 8 seats available for Parish Councillors.

Further information can be found at: www.westsuffolk.gov.uk/elections and <https://www.electoralcommission.org.uk>.

16. Finance

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

The accounts were noted and agreed. Proposed by Cllr Horton and seconded by Cllr Wijenayaka.

- c) To consider appointing SALC to carry out the annual internal audit

All were in agreement to appoint SALC for the PC's internal audit. Proposed by the Chair and seconded by Cllr Eve. The Clerk will book the audit with SALC.

17. Correspondence

a) Email – SARS

It was proposed by Cllr Korona for the PC to donate £50 to the charity which was seconded by Cllr Eve. It was noted that this will be an S137 payment of £50.

b) Email – Webnos defib site check

Noted.

The Chair put forward the suggestion of sending details to The White Horse for them to look into the possibility of having a defibrillator installed.

c) Letter – AONB

Noted.

18. Planning

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

All applications were considered and noted.

19. Agenda items for 9th May 2023

- Allocation of Cllr responsibilities

The annual meeting will require reports from:

- Sports and Recreation
- VHMC
- Speed watch

The Cllrs discussed pushing the meeting back by a week and it was agreed for the next meeting date to be moved to 16th May 2023. The Clerk will rearrange the village hall booking.

The meeting closed at 21:35.