

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

Present: Cllrs Terry Rich (Chairman), Frank Eve; Ian Kinloch; Russell Wallington; Clerk: Jill Johnson; 2 parishioners

- 1 Apologies for absence** were received from Cllrs Hilary Thomas and Rosie Chair Wenham, and Borough Cllr Jane Midwood. The Chair reported the resignation of Cllr Geoff Hayward and confirmed that he would place an advertisement in Withersfield News for a replacement co-optee; applications would be considered at the next meeting.

*Chairman opened the public section of the meeting.*

**2 Borough Councillor's report**

Cllr Midwood had provided a written report which was read out at the meeting. She referred to the meeting of the Development Control Committee which had taken place on 12 March, and which had considered planning application DC/17/2429/VAR which sought a variation of a condition to remove use class restrictions for construction of the Haverhill research/business park and hotel. This was attended by herself, Cllr Rich, and a resident of The Arboretum. (See further information in minute for item (18 c)).

Cllr Midwood referred to information supplied by the Arboretum resident about anti-social behaviour issues at the adjacent lake indicating that she would be contacting officers to inform them both of this and issues relating to street lighting.

Cllr Midwood reported that she has some Locality Budget money available for village projects as part of the budget for the new financial year, and urged the Parish Council to notify her of requests for funding. During this year the Locality Budget had been used for projects as diverse as combined litter/dog poo bins, village hall refurbishments and a village celebration for the forthcoming Royal wedding.

Finally, Cllr Midwood informed the Parish Council that at the last St Edmundsbury full council meeting, members finally gave the go ahead for the formation of a single council for West Suffolk following the saction by the Secretary of State. The first election to the new council will be in May 2019. In boundary proposals associated with this formation there was little change to the Withersfield ward apart from the inclusion of Barnardiston, recommended to transfer from Kedington.

**3 County Councillor's report**

There was none.

**4 Public Forum for parishioners**

- a) Management of Meldham Bridge entrance to the reservoir area

The Chair reported that a parishioner had been in touch about the entrance to this site complaining of rubbish and increasing traffic. As a result the Environment Agency had been contacted and it had been agreed that Jo Parkinson, Essex Flood Storage Reservoir Co-Ordinator should attend.

The discussion commenced with the Chair welcoming Jo, and thanking her for her attendance. The resident concerned reported that he had been familiar with the flood park since inception as he lived close by. Problems started some years ago with fishermen parking on the road; this was stopped by provision of double yellow lines. Subsequently a parking area was established behind Bradnams, and later the present car park was created to serve disabled drivers; however, this latter was now being used by any fishermen. This area was the subject of the current complaint in that it became churned up in wet weather, with fishermen bringing hard core to try to alleviate the problem. A request for use of the park by horse riders had been refused because of potential damage to the ground, and yet cars were now causing far more damage and causing further problems with mud and filth on the road outside.

Users of the car park had been provided with keys to the padlocks; some abused this facility by camping overnight, and leaving their rubbish on the site and outside nearby houses. The resident concerned picked up the rubbish frequently; he had tried to talk to the fishermen about this but they continued to display total disregard of the problems they had created. In the resident's view, there was no ownership of or responsibility taken.

Jo Parkinson confirmed that the Environment Agency owns all the land around and including the flood storage reservoir. She indicated that from next autumn the site would be improved by laying of hard sand, erection of different fencing and provision of a new gate with one lock only. The Environment Agency had spoken to their contact at the Fishing Club who had indicated that some members abide by the rules and clear up waste; however, others do not, and some of these people do not have a licence to fish. There had also been reports of swans being killed for food, and both the problems with the fishing club and with the swans were currently being monitored through visits by representatives on an ad hoc basis.

Jo indicated that the Environment Agency do not collect waste and following notification of extensive dog fouling had been in touch with St Edmundsbury Borough Council to install more dog poo bins. In respect of the camping problem an enforcement team had been sent out to move campers on. No overnight fishing or keeping fish was allowed but the Agency was reliant on reports of problems being made to a 24-hour Customer Helpline. The provision of the new gate should stop entry by a large number of cars, and a bollard had already been installed. Additional micro-management of the site should help the situation and the fishing club wanted more checks to be made to identify those currently fishing without licences. The club had already been warned that the licence to fish could be removed if problems continued.

There was currently an open space agreement with Suffolk County Council and it was important that this should be retained for the enjoyment of as many as possible. There was also considerable interest in the site for environmental reasons but the more it is used the greater the need for waste and dog poo collection. It was agreed that the Parish Council should

Clerk  
Chair

make contact with the County Council to have discussions about more bins; the Environment Agency could give money for these if collection arrangements could be agreed with St Edmundsbury Borough Council.

The resident involved was pleased to hear of the measures being taken and did not want the facility to be removed from the town or the parish. Jo Parkinson indicated that she would send details of the 24-hour hotline, and the Parish Council would come back to the Environment Agency following discussions about waste disposal and responsibilities for clearing it with Suffolk County Council and St Edmundsbury Borough Council. Jo indicated that a colleague would be taking over responsibility for the site as she was leaving the area; her name was Gbemi Akim-Oriola. Thanks were given to Jo for all her assistance.

In addition to the above problems, it was also reported that threats of shooting both people and dogs had been made to those using land on the other side of the flood park (on the opposite side of the A1307 to the Arboretum). It was thought that a resident leasing the land from Thurlow Estate was involved; one set of threats had been reported to the Police. It was pointed out that the Parish Council had no powers or remit in such a matter, but the resident reporting the problem indicated that it was wished to bring it to the attention of the Parish Council.

*The Chairman closed the public section of the meeting. One resident chose to remain to observe the conduct of the rest of the meeting.*

## **5 Declaration of members' interests for any agenda item at the meeting**

The Chair indicated an interest in Item 17 a) in that he had recently had a planning application approved. Apart from this, there were none.

## **6 Approval of minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on Tuesday, 23 January 2018**

It was proposed by Cllr Eve, seconded by Cllr Kinloch, that these formed an accurate record and they were duly signed by the Chair.

## **7 Update on actions from previous Parish Council meeting**

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

### **8.1 Matters arising**

- a) Relief road for new housing development north west of A143
- d) Traffic issues on A1307 alongside The Arboretum
- e) Additional traffic calming measures
- f) Road recovery post harvesting

The Clerk reported that no replies had been received from Suffolk County Council Highways Department to issues raised in respect of all the above. In the circumstances, it was determined that a letter should be sent from the Chair to the Chief Executive.

Clerk  
Chair

- b) Broadband developments

- Faster broadband facilities had at last come to Withersfield, albeit with varying speeds and costs depending on distance from a cabinet and internet provider. The Chair indicated that he would place a report in Withersfield News. Chair
- c) **Blocked drain in Queen Street**  
Cllr Kinloch reported that the drain was no longer blocked, but that water from it was only going into a gully which was blocked. County Cllr Evans had indicated that this issue was still being worked on. However, it was noted that other drainage works were currently underway.
- g) **Footpaths**  
Cllr Kinloch reported that Thurlow Estate had not agreed to the request for the re-routing of the path from the White Horse to the Arboretum. The area where people are already taking a short cut had been pinpointed. The Chair wondered whether a request for a permissive footpath might be possible; it was therefore proposed by Cllr Rich, seconded by Cllr Wallington that Cllr Kinloch should approach Thurlow Estate once again. Cllr Kinloch
- h) **Repair to bench adjacent to war memorial (and Arboretum noticeboard)**  
The Clerk reported that this had been chased, but that no information had been received. The Clerk was asked to make contact once again. Clerk
- i) **Quotes for grass cutting and strimming 2018**  
The Clerk reported that the proposal agreed at the meeting held on 23 January had been agreed, subject to payment on a monthly basis between March and October.
- j) **Defibrillator**  
The Clerk indicated that further action to organise additional training and register with the Community Heartbeat Village Emergency Telephone System was required. Clerk

## **8.2 SpeedWatch**

A request from the Co-ordinator of SpeedWatch for the purchase of new signs. The Chair considered that the first call on funding available for SpeedWatch should go for repairs to the post at the junction of Queen Street/Church Street which had been damaged during the recent snow and ice conditions. It was proposed by Cllr Eve, seconded by Cllr Kinloch, that if the post can be repaired without cost to the Parish Council the money earmarked in the budget for SpeedWatch could be put towards the purchase of the required signs. Clerk

## **9 New regulations relating to Data Protection**

The Chair outlined the previous decision that in principal the Parish Council should follow SALC's recommendation to use the DPO Centre as the external Data Protection Officer, but that the level of service was yet to be agreed. The outstanding area was the level of service that should be used. Following consideration of a data audit prepared by the Clerk, it was proposed by Cllr Kinloch, seconded by Cllr Wallington, and supported by Cllr Eve and Cllr Wenham (written recommendation before the meeting), that Level 3 should be used for 2018/2019. It was further proposed by Cllr Clerk

Eve, seconded by Cllr Kinloch, that the consent form and Data Privacy policy prepared by the Clerk should be adopted.

**10 Update on encouraging extended use of the Sports and Recreation Ground**

Cllr Eve outlined arrangements for a cricket match involving a community team against Great Wratting provisionally to be held on 1 July. A captain had been approached to raise a team and it was intended to serve teas. Information on this event had been prepared for insertion in Withersfield News and a notice would be placed on the Arboretum Facebook page. However, the toilets currently on the site were unusable and alternative provision would need to be made; Cllr Eve agreed to ascertain the cost. In addition, the landlord of The White Horse had agreed to serve nibbles at the pub after the match.

Cllr Eve

There was considerable support for this event and Cllr Eve was requested to remain as the key contact. It was proposed by Cllr Kinloch, seconded by Cllr Rich, that an initial indicative budget of £250 should be confirmed at the next meeting of the Parish Council, once firm costs had been obtained. It was also suggested that an approach could be made to Borough Cllr Midwood for a contribution from her Locality budget.

Cllr Eve

**11 Request for a donation to Neighbourhood Watch Suffolk and the re-establishment of a scheme for Withersfield**

It was recognised that if Withersfield was to be involved in a new scheme, there would need to be co-ordinator; as such people had proved difficult to find for other similar projects it was agreed that in this instance there should be no action.

**12 Arrangements for celebration of the end of World War I**

The imminent restoration of the war memorial was mentioned. In terms of additional arrangements, it was confirmed that the usual Armistice Day service with wreath laying would be held followed by the church service. It was thought that a possibility would be to do something either in the church or the village hall after the service. Cllr Kinloch agreed to discuss the matter with Cllr Wenham and other members of the Parochial Church Council.

Cllr Kinloch

**13 Report on progress to date in respect of the proposed Children's Play Park**

Cllr Eve indicated that he had first contacted County Cllr Evans and Thurlow Parish Council which had supplied a copy of the business plan prepared for the Thurlow play area. This was potentially a large project, both in terms of effort and cost. To start need within the parish would need to be confirmed, for example, by organising a petition, obtaining feedback from local schools and seeking the support of the local member of parliament. Thurlow had obtained funding from a number of different sources including the National Lottery towards the overall cost of £48,000.

Assuming a play area was to be established, Cllr Eve identified a requirement for significant input from the community (as opposed to Parish

Council driven) in order to obtain a demonstrable commitment for a play area and its future sustainability.

Cllr Eve suggested that a start could be an article placed in Withersfield News requesting feedback from potentially interested users (including, for example, grandparents). There was some discussion about whether a park should be placed on the Arboretum site as County Cllr Evans had suggested that Section 106 funding might be available; however, it was thought that in view of the far larger number of properties on the Arboretum, the project was potentially too ambitious.

Following discussion, it was proposed by Cllr Wallington, seconded by Cllr Kinloch, that Cllr Eve should produce an article for Withersfield News with his name as the contact point for anyone willing to contribute to work towards establishing the facility and to identify interest in future use. It would also be necessary to get an idea of the number of children currently living in the parish.

#### **14 Arrangements for the Annual Village Meeting**

It was firstly considered that the name of the event should be changed to the 'Annual Parish Meeting'. The format of the event should remain largely as for previous years with the Clerk approaching various committees and organisations to provide a report.

Clerk

In addition, it was proposed by Cllr Kinloch, seconded by Cllr Eve, that Suffolk Clinical Commissioning Group should be approached to provide a speaker in view of the present difficulty either in obtaining a doctor's appointment or in changing from one practice to another. Cllr Kinloch had already written to Matt Hancock, MP for West Suffolk, and it was suggested that he too should be invited to the event to give information on the way in which he was attempting to resolve the situation.

Cllr  
Kinloch

#### **15 Finance**

a) Presentation of monthly accounts

It was proposed by Cllr Rich, seconded by Cllr Kinloch, that these formed an accurate record of the financial position of the Parish Council.

Cllr Wallington reported that he had recently attended a very enjoyable and insightful SALC training course on finance for councillors.

#### **16 Correspondence**

a) Brain tumour research  
Noted

b) Planning direct – neighbourhood plan  
Although Cllr Wenham had indicated prior to the meeting that she thought consideration should now be given to the creation of a neighbourhood plan, it was identified by other councillors that there was no capacity to draw up such a plan. In the circumstances, it was proposed by Cllr Rich, seconded by Cllr Eve, that no action should be taken.

c) Dedham Vale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and Stour Valley Project

Noted

**17 Planning**

a) Borough notifications since last meeting  
Noted

b) Applications received since last meeting  
Noted

c) Update on application DC/17/2429/VAR – variation of condition 8 to remove use class restrictions for construction of research/business park and hotel – Haverhill Research Park  
A majority of Committee members had voted in against the application to vary the use of the research park at the Development Control Committee meeting held on 12 March, but staff from the St Edmundsbury Borough Council planning department pointed out that there were not necessarily firm grounds for refusal. In the circumstances, the outcome of the meeting was that a site visit should be arranged so that members of the Committee could better understand the issues associated with the application, and that a risk assessment should be conducted to provide protection for members if the Decision Protocol was invoked.

The Chair had asked Cllr Midwood to let him know when the site visit was taking place so that residents and councillors could participate. On the basis of the identification by the planning department that there may be no grounds for refusal as the local Haverhill plan identified use of this area for industrial purposes, the Parish Council would need to supply additional suggestions of grounds for refusal. Chair

**18 Agenda items for meeting to be held on Tuesday, 15 May 2018**

None were identified at this point in time in recognition that new matters may well be raised by parishioners at the Annual Parish Meeting to be held immediately before the Parish Council meeting.

*The meeting closed at 9.10 pm.*