

**Minutes of Withersfield Parish Council meeting held on Tuesday,  
18 July 2017 at 7.30 pm in the Village Hall**

Present: Cllrs Terry Rich (Chairman), Geoff Hayward (Vice Chair), Frank Eve, Ian Kinloch; Clerk: Jill Johnson; County Cllr Mary Evans; Borough Cllr Jane Midwood; co-opted councillor Hilary Thomas; parishioners

- 1 Apologies for absence** were received from Cllr Rosie Wenham.

*Chairman opened the public section of the meeting.*

**2 Presentation on action in respect of flood prevention**

Tom Mann and Steven Halls attended on behalf of Suffolk County Council (SCC) Highways. Steven explained that following the flooding which had occurred in June 2016, hydraulic modelling had been undertaken in order to assist with making a decision about appropriate future action to take. The modelling used data received from the Met Office Radar Records which confirmed that 100 mm of rain had fallen in half an hour to cause substantial flooding. The modelling provided a computerised replication of land and river and how they interacted involving a survey of 57 cross sections from the top of the catchment above the church and Ashley Grange to the flood reservoir. The model which emerged was verified against observed flood levels, mainly rack marks in houses and videos of the event. The water flowed along a steep, active catchment, 5.4 km in length, and the modelling was based on frequencies from 20 to 200 year occurrences. Overall the channel had good capacity; a rare event would produce large flows of water (75 year event); the road bridge constricted flow at this level and the road would flood but not properties. The substantial rain which fell in June 2016 was akin to a model of a 100 year event plus a climate change allowance of 65%.

Undertaking the hydraulic model had made it possible to identify a series of options and to assess them against various potential events within the model (ie from 20 to 200 year occurrences). Optioneering had confirmed the following:

- Removal of the sluice - this would make no difference to the flood extent.
- 75% blockage and partial collapse at Thurlow Estate bridge downstream of flooding event - no difference as too far downstream.
- Clearing channel vegetation - without clearing the extent of flooding would be the same but there would be a slight increase in the depth of water involved. Clearing would therefore save depth.
- Upstream storage - the equivalent of two reservoirs (40000 m<sup>2</sup>) would be necessary before any noticeable benefit accrued - this option was considered uneconomical. A smaller amount of upstream storage (900 m<sup>2</sup>) may assist but may not prevent flooding of houses.
- Road bridge - such structures did constitute a constriction. Replacement was not economically viable but the build-up of silt would be dealt with to ensure that the aperture was kept as large as possible.
- Keeping the channel clean and free flowing would provide good capacity and conveyance of water.

Next steps

- SCC would be working closely with riparian landowners to remove

blockages from the channel and to ensure it would be kept clear in the future.

- SCC would re-profile the bank in order to provide self-clearing facilities; this would address the future build-up of silt by the bridge and ensure a larger aperture to facilitate greater flow.
- Once clearing up and downstream had taken place, Highways would hose out the current build-up of silt. It would also take remedial action in respect of a pipe feeding into the brook.
- Flooding of road on annual basis - it had been recognised that there was inefficient drainage and an on-going programme of work would be undertaken by Highways Drainage.

Steven and Tom further reported that although the option of upstream storage was not considered a viable economic option on the part of SCC, Natural England and the Environment Agency were considering some form of storage. These organisations had seen the model and indicated that they wanted to improve water quality and environmental benefits, and may approach the Parish Council to discuss future maintenance.

In terms of timescales, the four next steps would be getting underway almost immediately although there would be a necessary sequence of work to be undertaken both by riparian owners and SCC.

Cllr Rich pointed out that a year had passed since the catastrophic flooding event and villagers wanted urgent action. Steven and Tom indicated that work with the riparian owners would start immediately; tree clearing necessary to re-profile the bank would need to wait until the end of September (at the end of the bird nesting season). It was hoped that work would be completed by October/November but this would be dependent upon the co-operation of the riparian owners to undertake their responsibilities.

It was pointed out that the hydraulic model had not taken account of water flows feeding into the brook down roads. It was also not known where water from Turnpike Hill flowed and it was confirmed it would be the responsibility of the Drainage Team to do a survey. Tom would provide a map on which drains that need clearing could be identified.

A further update would be provided at the September meeting of the Parish Council and a formal report of the modelling would be circulated.

### **3 Borough Councillor's report**

Cllr Midwood indicated that she would be happy to contribute some money from her locality budget towards the noticeboard to be erected at the Arboretum.

She reported that the processing of all waste would be centralised at a West Suffolk operational hub although the exact location of this was still to be finally determined. Householders would be able to visit the hub.

Cllr Midwood referred to the recent decision that West Suffolk councils would consult on proposals to join together. Bringing this merger about would involve further boundary reviews; this could involve proposals in respect of Hanchett End and the Arboretum.

#### **4 County Councillor's report**

Cllr Evans referred to the work which had been undertaken to prevent future flooding in Thurlow Road. This had had to be re-scheduled as it had been found that tree roots had become so invasive that it was necessary to install and re-route a new pipe.

She reported that a funding session for village halls was due to take place at Stansfield village hall on 31 August. The Clerk would notify this date to the Chair of Withersfield Village Hall Management Committee. Clerk

Cllr Evans further reported that the Fire and Rescue Service had now visited all high-rise premises in Suffolk (98 in number of which 15 were residential). Ipswich and Lowestoft councils were checking the materials used in their buildings and had instituted a policy that if there was any smell of smoke, five appliances plus aerial cover would automatically attend. Priority was being given to the checking of residential premises over commercial premises.

SCC Highways Area Offices were currently being re-organised and would be based at the depot at Rougham. This would ensure greater collaboration between officers and teams.

In respect of the provision of superfast broadband for Withersfield, completion of cabinet P45 (near the pub) was now scheduled for August and would be in service in September. P46 (at the junction of Church Street and Turnpike Hill) had been delayed as UK Power Network had not yet fulfilled its obligations.

Finally, Cllr Evans reported that at a recent meeting in London commitment had been given to the provision of a light railway along the A1307; the proposed station locality for Haverhill would be the Arboretum Estate.

#### **5 Public Forum for parishioners**

A good number of parishioners had contributed to the discussion which followed the presentation on flood alleviation measures by Tom Mann and Steven Halls. No further matters were raised.

*Chairman closed the public section of the meeting.*

#### **6 Members' interests for any agenda item**

None were declared.

#### **7 Approval of minutes of the Parish Council and the Annual Village meetings held on Tuesday, 16 May 2017**

It was proposed by Cllr Hayward, seconded by Cllr Kinloch, with all in agreement, that the Parish Council minutes reflected a correct record and they were accordingly signed by the Chairman. It was similarly proposed by Cllr Kinloch, seconded by Cllr Eve, that the minutes for the Annual Village meeting should be signed.

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

It was confirmed that all actions, save those appearing under Matters Arising, had been dealt with.

## **9 Matters arising**

- a) Completion of register of pecuniary interests  
It was confirmed that Cllr Hayward had duly completed his form; Cllr Eve explained that he would complete his following imminent changes to his personal position. The Clerk would forward these to St Edmundsbury Borough Council as soon as possible. Clerk
- b) Installation of defibrillator  
It was confirmed that this had now been installed on the wall of the village hall to the immediate right of the main door. It was thought that although training would be positive, it was not necessary in order to operate the defibrillator.
- c) Noticeboard for Hanchett End/The Arboretum  
It had been confirmed that a licence could be provided by SCC. The Clerk would make further contact in this respect. Cllr Midwood's offer to provide funding for the noticeboard was much appreciated. Clerk
- d) Additional traffic calming measures  
The Clerk would report on a recent response received from SCC at the September meeting. Clerk
- e) Restoration work on war memorial  
The Clerk reported that following a successful pre-application, a full application had now been submitted. It was understood that a response would be received within six weeks.
- f) Broadband issues  
It was recognised that Cllr Evans was pressurising in this respect but disappointing that anticipated timeframes had not been met.
- g) Update on Cllr Kinloch taking over from Perry Morley as Footpaths Officer  
Cllr Kinloch confirmed that he had received a footpath map and paperwork from Perry. The map had been out of date and a new one had been obtained from SCC. Cllr Kinloch had started to explore local footpaths beginning with that at Meldham Bridge; this had not been a good experience: it was overgrown, and not signposted. It was agreed that Cllr Kinloch should contact Thurlow Estate and SCC on a case by case basis as and when problems were identified with any lack of resolution to be reported to the Parish Council. It was also agreed that Cllr Kinloch should make contact with Suffolk Ramblers Association Footpaths Officer. Cllr Kinloch

## **10 Nominations for two new councillors**

Cllr Rich reported that he had two nominations to put forward. The first was for Hilary Thomas, living in Hanchett End. She had been a further education college lecturer in Hertfordshire before moving to Withersfield 10 years ago, and in her time in the parish had been a keen participant in village events. It was proposed by Cllr Rich, seconded by Cllr Hayward, that Hilary should be co-opted on to the Parish Council with immediate effect.

The second nomination was for Russell Waddington who works for Cambridge International Examinations as a Group Manager for Science. Russell had recently moved to the Arboretum and was keen to get involved in the local community and to raise issues of particular concern to residents of the Arboretum Estate. It was proposed by Cllr Hayward, seconded by Cllr Eve, that Russell should be co-opted with immediate effect.

The Clerk confirmed that she would make contact with new Cllrs Thomas and Waddington in order to take them through the necessary induction process. Clerk

#### **11 Consideration of quotes received for repairs to the Sports Pavilion roof**

Cllr Rich commented that this work had not been included in the current budget and that the Parish Council had not seen the accounts of the Sports and Social Committee for some years. It was therefore proposed by Cllr Rich, seconded by Cllr Eve, that the Parish Council should request sight of the accounts, and ask for a representative to attend the next meeting to provide an explanation of why the repairs were needed, the urgency of the repairs, and what contribution could be made from funds held by the Sports and Social Committee. It was accepted that the pavilion was an asset held by the Parish Council and as such it would need to contribute to its repair and upkeep. Clerk

#### **12 Request for memorial bench for the parish graveyard**

It was confirmed that the family would be responsible for payment for the bench and maintenance during family members' lifetimes, but that the bench would be donated to the Parish Council and held as one of its assets. The Parish Council would therefore be responsible for insuring the bench. Cllr Wenham and the Clerk would meet with the family and agree its dedication and location. Cllr Wenham Clerk

In terms of a policy for future such requests, it was agreed that the above should form the basis of this, providing space would be available, but that in practice requests would need to be considered on a case by case basis.

#### **13 Plans for village hall extension**

It was proposed by Cllr Eve, seconded by Cllr Hayward, that the Parish Council should be happy to endorse the plans and that these should now go forward for consideration by the planning authority.

#### **14 Reports from A1307 meetings attended by Cllr Wenham**

These were noted.

#### **15 Finance**

##### **a) Monthly accounts**

It was proposed by Cllr Kinloch, seconded by Cllr Eve, that these presented an accurate position of the Parish Council finances.

##### **b) Chairman's amended report on financial position 2016/17, end of year accounts and annual return following comments received from Internal**

Auditor

Cllr Rich reported that the Internal Auditor had picked up a few errors and it had been necessary to bring amended final accounts, annual return and Chairman's report for consideration of the Parish Council. It was proposed by Cllr Hayward, seconded by Cllr Eve, that these should be accepted and that the Clerk should forward the Annual Return to the External Auditors immediately. Clerk

## **16 Correspondence**

- a) New single council for West Suffolk  
Councillors considered that this was a good idea but they had no formal view to report to St Edmundsbury.
- b) SALC - Plant a Charter Tree Legacy Tree - noted

## **17 Planning**

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

## **18 Agenda items for meeting to be held on 19 September 2017**

- Report from Tom Mann and other members of Flooding Team
- Unsung heroes award nomination - Cllr Midwood required a name and brief explanation for reason for nomination which can be dealt with before next meeting.

Cllr  
Wenham  
Clerk

*The meeting closed at 9.25 pm*