

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

Present: Cllrs Terry Rich (Chairman), Frank Eve; Ian Kinloch; Hilary Thomas; Russell Wallington; Rosie Wenham; Clerk: Jill Johnson; parishioner

- 1 Apologies for absence** were received from Cllr Geoff Hayward and Borough Cllr Jane Midwood, County Cllr Mary Evans.

*Chairman opened the public section of the meeting.*

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

County Cllr Evans was unable to be present at the meeting but provided a written report received from Tom Mann of Suffolk County Council's Flood and Water Management Team; this is attached as Appendix 1 to these minutes.

**3 Borough Councillor's report**

Cllr Midwood's written report was circulated. She referred to a recent meeting with the St Edmundsbury Borough Council Locality Officer for the Withersfield Ward. The Locality Officer should be the first point of contact if the Parish Council wished to apply for funding for help towards parish projects.

Cllr Midwood referred to planning application DC/17/2429/VAR for change of use from research park to light industrial units. She reported that there had been 24 negative responses from neighbours, the Parish Council and her own response; however, other councils and agencies had supported the application for variation. The date for the meeting of the Development Control Committee which would consider the application had not yet been set.

Cllr Midwood encouraged a response to the preliminary consultation on 're-warding' which will be necessary following the creation of a single council for West Suffolk. Wards would need to have broadly similar numbers of electors; in rural areas parishes which have particular affinities with each other have the opportunity to make sure these community links remain strong for the future.

It was reported that more residents have taken up the brown bin waste collection in its second year; churches are exempt from the charge.

**4 County Councillor's report**

Cllr Evans provided a written report which is attached to these minutes as Appendix 2.

**5 Public Forum for parishioners**

A parishioner in attendance indicated that she had lived in Withersfield for five years and during that time more families with children had moved into the village and she was therefore enquiring about the possibility of a playground. Councillors were supportive in principle, pointing out that the creation of a play area might encourage more families with children into the

village and that grandchildren visiting could potentially also use such a facility. Cllr Rich informed the parishioner that the Parish Council would consider the logistics and practicalities and would keep in touch with her.

*Chairman closed the public section of the meeting.*

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

Cllr Rich declared an interest in respect of his application for planning consent for an extension to his property, and indicated that he would vacate the chair if other councillors wished to discuss the application in more detail under item 18 of the agenda.

## **7 Approval of minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on Tuesday, 21 November 2017, and public and extraordinary Parish Council meetings held on Monday, 11 December 2017**

It was proposed by Cllr Wenham, seconded by Cllr Kinloch, that the minutes for the 21 November meeting formed an accurate report and they were duly signed. Similarly, it was proposed by Cllr Eve, seconded by Cllr Thomas, that the minutes of the meetings held on 11 December were accurate and they were duly signed.

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

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

## **9 Matters arising**

- a) Relief road for new housing development north west of A143  
No response had been received in respect of the email sent to Suffolk County Council Highways and the Clerk was requested to press for an answer. Clerk
- b) Broadband developments  
A recent update from a parishioner was noted; it was hoped that cabinet Haverhill P46 would become fully operational very soon.
- c) Blocked drain in Queen Street  
Cllr Kinloch reported that Flowline had recently cleaned the drain but it had been indicated that the gullies leading from the drain were still blocked. Recent correspondence from County Cllr Evans had suggested that all gullies in Withersfield had been cleared, but Cllr Kinloch was not sure that this was the case. He would follow this up. Cllr Kinloch
- d) Traffic issues on A1307 alongside The Arboretum  
It was confirmed that Cllr Hayward had written an article for insertion in Withersfield News. Cllr Wallington indicated that he reported the poor condition of the road at the Spirit of Enterprise roundabout on a monthly basis but that no work had yet been undertaken. It was queried whether the A1307 at that point was the responsibility of Suffolk County Council or Highways England; the Clerk was requested to raise this with County Cllr Evans. Clerk
- e) Additional traffic calming measures  
As no response to requests to Suffolk County Council had been received, the Clerk was asked to keep pressing for a reply. Clerk

- f) Restoration work on war memorial  
The Clerk reported that the conditions set by the War Memorials Trust had been met, and that work would commence in the spring once weather conditions had improved.
- g) Road recovery post harvesting  
Enquiries about this had also been ignored; the Clerk was asked to continue to request a response. Clerk
- h) Progress with footpath issues  
Cllr Kinloch referred to the impressive work which had been undertaken by Suffolk County Council to the footpath running alongside the church; however, beyond this the path was a quagmire. He indicated that nothing had been heard from Thurlow Estate in respect of the request to divert the footpath running from the pub to the A1307 near the Arboretum. Cllr Kinloch
- i) Repair to bench adjacent to war memorial  
The Clerk confirmed that a request for work on this was in hand.

## 10 Quotes for grass cutting and strimming 2018

The Clerk outlined the three quotes which had been received ranging in price from over £6000 (including VAT) to £3300. The Chair reminded councillors of the different approach taken for this round of invitations to quote where an emphasis was placed on the outcomes required, and a consequent sharing of risk between the Parish Council and the person to whom the contract would be awarded. Councillors referred to the importance of the work involved from the perception of all who lived in and used the village, and the fact that this formed the largest item of expenditure in the budget. One councillor warned against accepting the cheapest quote based on past experience where the work had not been undertaken to an acceptable standard. Fears were also expressed that the person who had given the cheapest quote had been unable to supply any references and that his contact had not been as professional as the others. Clerk

Following discussion, the Cllr Rich deliberated that two options could be considered:

- (1) To offer a contract at a capped amount to the person who had satisfactorily undertaken the work in the past;
- (2) To make further contact with the person who had submitted the cheapest quote to check recommendations and determine whether his machinery was suitable.

A number of different sums were debated for a capped amount to be offered. On the other hand, councillors were seriously interested in the lowest quote but mindful that this needed to be balanced against the increased risk of not knowing the standard of work which could be offered.

In the event, it was proposed by Cllr Rich, seconded by Cllr Wallington, with all in favour, that the contract should be offered at a capped sum of £3,850 to the tried and tested provider of services ensuring that it was understood that he would bear the risk of possible additional grass cuts. The person who had provided the lowest bid should be informed of the considerable interest in the competitive sum but told that councillors were unhappy with the lack of references and firm evidence of capability. Notwithstanding the latter, it was agreed that if the capped sum was not accepted, there should be the opportunity to go back to the lowest bidder.

It was proposed by Cllr Eve, seconded by Cllr Thomas, that in the event of the contract terms not being finalised by the time the first grass cut was necessary, authority should be agreed for the commissioning of a one-off cut before the date of the next meeting of the Parish Council.

## **11 Annual Spring Clean**

The Chair reported that it had been necessary to identify the date of 24 March for the spring clean so that information could be placed in Withersfield News. Cllr Rich, in his article, had suggested that an additional approach should be made this year, requesting residents to clear the areas in the vicinity of their properties a few days before the spring clean, either putting rubbish in their own bins or leaving it in a sack by the side of the road to be picked up by volunteer litter pickers on the 24 March.

Depending on whether this approach was successful or not, it may be necessary to consider additional volunteer action for the future.

## **12 Further actions associated with defibrillator use**

Discussion centred on suggestions received from a parishioner who had attended one of the recent Heartstart training sessions. In respect of the proposal for a list of volunteers who could be called upon in the case of an emergency, this was welcomed in principle. However, there were concerns about the very small window of time available for use of the defibrillator to be effective, and personal risk which could fall on volunteers.

Clerk

Separately, advice on the status of potential volunteers had been taken from the Community Heartbeat organisation. This had confirmed that a team of volunteers locally should be available using the Community Heartbeat Village Emergency Telephone System (VETS) – this latter could also be used for other situations such as Neighbourhood Watch. However, in order to minimise liabilities for volunteers it would be necessary for them to undertake further training which would then be registered at national level. Councillors considered that this offered a potential way forward and it was therefore proposed by Cllr Kinloch, seconded by Cllr Wenham, that further contact should be made with Community Heartbeat. It was considered that there could be a pool of 20 people who might be approached to act as registered volunteers.

In respect of other issues raised, it was confirmed that the offers of another Heartstart training course should be accepted, together with the checking of the defibrillator on a weekly basis and recording of these checks. It was confirmed that the packet containing the shears and razor was present in the defibrillator cabinet.

## **13 Latest advice in respect of new regulations relating to Data Protection**

The recent further information received from SALC was considered. The Clerk pointed out that it was now necessary to register the Parish Council's interest in using the services of the external data protection company advised by SALC. There was discussion about which band of service to use, Band C costing £800 per annum in the first year, or Band B costing £250. It was proposed by Cllr Wenham, seconded by Cllr Thomas, that interest should be expressed. It was further proposed by Cllr Rich, seconded by Cllr Eve, that unless there was a change in the bandings and prices the Band B service should be adopted, but that a final decision should be taken at the

Clerk

next meeting once the Clerk had prepared a detailed review of the data held, its security and its use.

#### **14 Raising awareness of and encouraging extended use of the Sports and Recreation ground**

Cllr Wallington suggested that in order to encourage use by residents of the Arboretum, information should be put on the noticeboard once this was installed. It was also thought that a meeting targeting Arboretum residents would be helpful. The failure to establish a Withersfield cricket side in recent years was referred to, but Cllr Eve suggested that at least one fixture a year could be used to bring people together, irrespective of where they lived in the parish. In addition, Cllr Kinloch thought it would be a good idea to prepare a flyer to be delivered to houses on the Arboretum estate, giving the telephone of the chair of the Sports and Recreation Committee and suggesting contact with him. It was proposed by Cllr Kinloch, seconded by Cllr Wallington, that Cllr Eve should make contact with the chair of the Sports and Recreation Committee in order to discuss these suggestions.

Cllr Eve

#### **15 Response to the survey on the West Suffolk Electoral Review**

It was considered that a parish response was appropriate, and that a natural linkage was with Thurlow. It was proposed by Cllr Kinloch, seconded by Cllr Thomas, that the Clerk should submit a response on this basis.

Clerk

#### **16 Finance**

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

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

##### **b) Confirmation of budget for 2018/19, agreement of focus for investments and projects, and submission of precept form**

A sum for donations had been included on the worksheet within the parish accounts; this had already been included in the precept form. It was confirmed that any additional expenditure under the donations heading could be adjusted within the administration heading. Aside from this, it was proposed by Cllr Kinloch, seconded by Cllr Wenham, that the budget should be agreed as presented, noting the presence of earmarked reserves in the sum of £5000. The Clerk was therefore asked to submit the precept form to St Edmundsbury Borough Council.

Clerk

Discussion on the use of the funding within the budget for parish projects followed. There had been a positive reaction to the proposal that Withersfield should have a playground but councillors were mindful of potential complications, including insurance and other responsibilities that a playground would place on the Parish Council. Cllr Wenham confirmed that these issues had mitigated against possible decisions to install a playground in the past. Notwithstanding these concerns, in principle, the addition of a playground was a good idea and Borough Cllr Midwood had already suggested that the Locality Officer should be approached.

Taking account of all these circumstances, it was proposed by Cllr Rich, seconded by Cllr Wallington, that Cllr Eve should take the lead in exploring the need for a playground with families in the parish, and investigating the implications in more detail.

Cllr Eve

##### **c) Notification of external auditor appointments for 2018/19**

It was considered that a final decision about the need for an external audit should be made once the Clerk had attended a briefing session at SALC on 30 January.

- d) The Clerk confirmed that an internal audit had been booked with SALC for the end of March.

## **17 Correspondence**

- a) SARS – thanks for donation  
Noted

- b) Email re paths  
Cllr Kinloch considered that the provision of footpaths which could be used by infant buggies was a good question to ask but thought this such provision was beyond the powers of the Parish Council to implement, and irrespective of this, he was not convinced of the need for paved footpaths in the village. It was pointed out that there was already a footpath leading to Haverhill but this was at present very muddy and could not be used by buggies. The Clerk was asked to communicate these views to the parishioner involved, pointing out the existence of the established footpath. Clerk

- c) Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire Local Plans  
Noted.

## **18 Planning**

- a) Borough notifications since last meeting  
Noted.
- b) Applications received since last meeting  
No issues were raised; any relating to the application for change of use for the research park had already been discussed under Item 3.

## **19 Agenda items for meeting to be held on Tuesday, 13 March 2018**

- Playground
  - Recommendations in respect of new regulations for data protection
  - Planning for centenary of end of WW1 – all councillors were asked to prepare ideas for discussion at the next meeting.
- Cllr Eve  
Clerk  
All  
councillors

*The meeting closed at 9.15 pm*