

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

Present: Cllrs Terry Rich (Chairman), Geoff Hayward (Vice Chair), Ian Kinloch; Russell Wallington, Rosie Wenham; Clerk: Jill Johnson; County Cllr Mary Evans; parishioners

- 1 Apologies for absence** were received from Cllr Hilary Thomas, Cllr Frank Eve, and Borough Cllr Jane Midwood.

Chairman opened the public section of the meeting welcoming new Cllr Russell Wallington.

2 Presentation on action in respect of flood prevention

County Cllr Mary Evans presented the report prepared by Tom Mann, Flood and Water Project Officer, Suffolk County Council. The flood team had recently been surveying the drains and outfalls near the bridge in Church Street and had met with members of the drainage team. In addition, Tom had been liaising with the owners of properties where work was required to clear the water course of major constrictions. This work was in progress but was complicated and would therefore take some time. There had also been liaison with the Parochial Church Council and thanks were given to Cllr Wenham for facilitating this. A quote was being obtained to re-profile the bank and St Edmundsbury Borough Council had been approached about removal of trees; it was envisaged that this work would be undertaken in October/November, depending upon the availability of contractors.

The Parish Council was thanked for the work undertaken to mark drainage and flooding problems on a large map of the village. This had been useful in order to work with the drainage team which had now been notified of problem areas. It had been noted that drains had recently been cleaned and cleared.

The flood team was also working with Natural England and the Environment Agency to investigate natural flood management solutions. Through working with Thurlow Estate, there were opportunities to install dams and other measures which would improve the quality of the water course in general.

The owner of the parking area in front of Ashley Grange was queried; it was confirmed that it was understood that this formed part of the highway.

Cllr Kinloch reported that he had notified Highways of continued problems with a drain in Queen Street which was completely covered and blocked. The Clerk reported that this had not been shown on the large map, probably because it had been missed as it was not visible. Cllr Evans requested Cllr Kinloch to send her details of the missed drain.

Cllr Kinloch

3 Borough Councillor's report

A written report had been provided by Cllr Midwood who firstly provided information on the progress towards a single council for West Suffolk. Both

St Edmundsbury and Forest Heath Councils had recently voted very positively in favour of the creation of a single council. An independent survey of residents had also confirmed that two thirds of respondents were in favour.

The Development Control Committee of St Edmundsbury Borough Council had granted planning consent for the WSOH at Hollow Road, Bury St Edmunds, despite a number of local objections. This site would take all the waste from the West Suffolk area: blue bin waste for transfer to the recycling plant at Great Blakenham, black bin rubbish for transfer to the Energy from Waste plant (also at Great Blakenham)) and the brown bin waste for open air composting on site.

Almost 6000 comments and suggestions had been received following an 'Issues and Options' public engagement relating to the Bury Town Masterplan. Once adopted, the plan would become a supplementary planning document supporting the statutory policy for the town centre, meaning that all future planning applications for development and redevelopment in Bury town centre would need to meet the expectations of the masterplan.

Cllr Midwood had been delighted that her application for £500 for a new notice board for Hanchett End/The Arboretum had been approved but disappointed to hear that there had been a delay in gaining permission from Suffolk County Council Highways on the placement.

Finally, Cllr Midwood reported that she had been in touch with Cllr Wenham about the Parish Council nomination for the Councillor Award for Outstanding Contributions and the necessary wheels would be put in motion shortly.

4 County Councillor's report

In addition to reporting on the flood and drainage works, Cllr Evans confirmed that a public meeting with Inspector Danny Cooper, Suffolk Police, would take place on Tuesday, 10 October. This would provide parish representatives with opportunities to pursue areas of concern. Cllr Rich confirmed that he would try to attend. A further meeting would be held next Spring in connection with local rights of way.

Chairman

Inspector Cooper had sent figures of prosecutions as a result of use of speed cameras. There had been 300 in this area, of which 10-12 had involved Withersfield. Highest speeds recorded had been 70 mph in Great Bradley, and 74 mph in Haverhill. Cllr Evans indicated that she would send the full figures to the Clerk.

Cllr Evans

GCSE and A level results had been very good, with Suffolk overall doing well and narrowing the gap, and even overtaking, in comparison with other counties.

Cllr Evans reported on discussions and consultation about future changes to the free school transport entitlement with this reducing, where entitlement would continue, to the nearest available school. For Withersfield this would mean that there would be no free transport to Thurlow School, only to schools in Haverhill. She indicated that only 12% of school children currently use free transport in Suffolk and that those on free school meals

and with special educational needs would continue to receive transport irrespective of location of their school. Changes would come into effect in 2019; these would bring Suffolk into line with the law and other counties. Cllr Evans urged parishioners to engage with consultations such as this on the basis that responses do affect the view of councillors and indicating that the County Council was becoming much better at consultation in general.

It was confirmed that the Highways Team had now moved to the Rougham where they were closer to other relevant teams. She asked that complaints relating to highways should be reported through the online tool as opposed to making contact with individual officers.

In respect of the licence for the Hanchett End/Arboretum notice board, Cllr Evans indicated that she had understood that this had been granted and sent to the Clerk; however, the Clerk reported that this had not yet been received. Cllr Evans agreed to chase this up. Cllr Evans

5 Public Forum for parishioners

Two parishioners were in attendance to hear the presentation about flood and drainage management. They indicated that they were in contact with members of the flood team and were generally happy with current progress. The Chairman was of the view that although there were still areas of lying water in the village following heavy rain, these were dissipating more quickly. Cllr Kinloch thought that the problem in Church Street was because the road was at the lowest point in the area and thus the problem was purely down to inadequate drainage. It was proposed by Cllr Hayward, seconded by Cllr Kinloch, that Tom and Steven's presence should be requested for the next meeting on 21 November. Clerk

Cllr Wallington referred to traffic issues on the part of the A1307 running alongside the Arboretum Estate, between the roundabout at Sainsbury's and that where the road joined the Haverhill bypass. These issues related to speeding, difficulties with visibility when exiting the Arboretum Estate, and the condition of the road surface on the roundabout at the bypass. Cllr Hayward agreed to undertake a survey, take photos, talk to the local police, and report findings to the next meeting. Cllr Hayward

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 meeting held on Tuesday, 18 July 2017

It was proposed by Cllr Kinloch, seconded by Cllr Hayward, that these formed an accurate report of the meeting and duly signed by the Chairman.

8 Update on actions from previous Parish Council meeting

It had been disappointing that Tom Mann and Steven Hall from the flood team had not attended the meeting, but it did appear that matters were progressing, albeit slowly. Otherwise, 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
Cllrs Eve and Wallington were requested to forward their completed forms to the Clerk as soon as possible. Cllr Eve
Cllr
Wallington
- b) Defibrillator training
It was agreed that this should be arranged for early 2018 following liaison with Mark Milsom, with details of courses arranged being placed in Withersfield News. Clerk
- c) Noticeboard for Hanchett End/The Arboretum
Now that installation would shortly be possible, Cllr Wallington was asked to liaise with the leader of the community group for the Arboretum Estate to let her know that it would be possible to use it for notices, etc. Cllr
Wallington
- d) Additional traffic calming measures
It was noted that the response from Suffolk County Council Highways had not been positive. The Clerk was asked to request Highways to include the additional road markings requested on the log of future work to be undertaken. Clerk
- e) Restoration work on war memorial
The Clerk reported that following the full application had been successful with confirmation that a grant of just over £1000 would be made available subject to the fulfilment of two conditions. These were in the course of being dealt with and the Clerk would be back in touch with the War Memorials Trust shortly. Clerk
- f) Progress with footpath exploration
Cllr Kinloch reported that parish footpaths were generally usable but could do with tidying up. He had spoken to a footpaths representative at Suffolk County Council and was of the opinion that the County Council was reluctant to spend money to assist with work required. It was reported that aggregate used by Thurlow Estate on footpaths had contained glass and that there had been complaints from dog owners. It was proposed by Cllr Hayward, seconded by Cllr Rich, that Cllr Kinloch should contact Tim Barling of the Estate Office raising concerns about both the state of the footpaths and the glass problem. Cllr Kinloch
- g) Three further areas were highlighted by Cllr Wenham. One, she had chased the Chair of the Village Hall Management Committee about submission of the application for planning permission for the extension, but did not think progress had yet been made. Two, the sunken graves had still not been dealt with; Cllr Rich had been in touch about provision of topsoil which would cost around £30, and subsequently chased further. He and Cllr Kinloch had agreed to undertake the necessary work. Three, the Clerk was requested to contact Pest Control Services about moles in the churchyard. Chairman
Cllr Kinloch
Clerk

10 Report on A1307 meetings

Cllr Hayward explained that following a series of meetings Cambridgeshire County Council had now developed three different strategies costing

between £35 and £70 million to improve the flow of traffic on the A1307 between Haverhill and Cambridge. He pointed out that the emphasis was more on developments between Linton and Cambridge than closer to Haverhill, despite the likely increase in traffic once there were 4000 additional houses built near Kedington. The strategies would now go out to consultation; Cllr Hayward would continue to attend further meetings, monitor developments, and report back to the Parish Council. There had been no discussion at the meetings about a possible railway between Haverhill and Cambridge although he understood that there were now discussions elsewhere about the introduction of a light railway.

11 Consideration of accounts received from the Sports and Recreation Committee in connection with a request for funding for repairs to the Sports Pavilion roof

The Clerk reminded councillors of the details of the two quotes which had been submitted previously. In considering the accounts of the Sports and Recreation Committee, it was noted that they held an amount of £1400. It was thought that a better strategy would be to accept the more expensive quote to completely re-roof the pavilion on the grounds that these repairs should last well into the future and that the need for further patching would be avoided. It was proposed by Cllr Hayward, seconded by Cllr Wenham, that the Parish Council should offer to pay 50% of the cost of these repairs, ie just over £1000. There was also discussion about the need to raise awareness of the recreation ground facility with new residents of the Arboretum Estate. It was agreed that the Chair of the Sports and Recreation Committee should be approached with a view to organising an open meeting at the sports pavilion next Spring in order to encourage residents of the Arboretum to use the facility. It was suggested that Cllr Wallington should be put in contact with the Chair of the Sports and Recreation Committee, and that there should also be an approach to the new landlord of the White Horse to see if there was interest in developing pub-led use of the sports ground.

Clerk
Cllr Eve
Cllr
Wallington

12 Future of Withersfield News

Cllr Wenham outlined the challenges facing the current production and delivery of Withersfield News. She explained that responsibility for the newsletter had rested with the Church which was also the beneficiary of advertising income of between £500 and £1000 per annum. Now that the parish had almost doubled in size it had become difficult for the person who had kindly undertaken, and donated the costs of, the printing to carry on. The Church was of the view that it would not be possible to continue to produce an edition every month and deliver to every household although no changes could be made until the end of the financial year in March in view of advertising already paid for.

Cllr Rich suggested that Withersfield News should be a parish magazine as opposed to one solely organised by the Church, and that the first call on advertising income should be for printing. He thought that there should be six editions a year delivered to all households in the parish. He confirmed that Elaine McInnes had agreed to take on the role of editor following the resignation of the current editor. Business modelling could be undertaken to see if advertising revenue would be affected by these possible changes. In addition, Cllr Wallington indicated that he would take on responsibility for delivery to the Arboretum residents.

Cllr
Wallington

It was proposed by Cllr Rich, seconded by Cllr Kinloch, with all in agreement, that it should be suggested to the Parochial Church Council that the newsletter should become a joint venture between the Church and the Parish Council with printing funded by advertising revenue, and that, if this was accepted, improvements could be made to the look, content and structure. Thanks were given to Cllr Wenham for her work to date; she agreed to take forward these suggestions to the next meeting of the Standing Committee of the Parochial Church Council.

Cllr
Wenham

13 Grass cutting and strimming

Cllr Wenham raised the issue of future arrangements for grass cutting and strimming. In conversations with the contractee it had emerged that the current arrangement of 14 cuts per grass growing season may not be sufficient to keep the greens looking good, and it had been suggested that contracting arrangements could be changed so that 15 cuts were quoted for but that only 14 would be delivered if this was all that was required. In addition, the cost of strimming under the trees and spraying of weeds around the war memorial had not been included in amounts quoted.

Cllr Rich pointed out that the budget for environmental works had in recent years been increased annually, but that it was clear that the tendering documentation needed to be changed, perhaps either continuing to specify the number of cuts/strims or designating a specified amount of money. He confirmed that the amount to be made available and the way in which contracting arrangements should be made would be reviewed as part of the budgeting process for 2018/19.

Cllr Rich
Clerk

14 Requirement to appoint a Data Protection Officer

The Clerk explained that new legislation in respect of data protection coming into effect in 2018 required more stringent approaches to the way that the Parish Council dealt with data. It was agreed that the Clerk should book a place on a forthcoming SALC seminar and report to the next meeting. It was recognised that the change in legislation may require parish councils to group together in order to contract with an external expert.

Clerk

15 Footpath re-route

Cllr Kinloch explained that the official footpath from the White Horse leading to the A1307 did not go directly to the Arboretum Estate and that because of this an unofficial route was being created. It was suggested that Cllr Kinloch should approach Tim Barling of the Thurlow Estate Office to determine whether or not a permissive footpath could be created in recognition that this would facilitate links between the Arboretum residents and Withersfield village.

Cllr Kinloch

16 Road recovery post harvesting

Cllr Kinloch reported the damage caused to local roads by large vehicles used during the harvesting period. It was difficult to report these to Suffolk County Council Highways because the online reporting tool only allowed for individual incidents to be detailed and in practice there were a number of different and connected problems. It was agreed that Cllr Kinloch should raise this issue with County Cllr Evans in recognition that this must be a

Cllr Kinloch

problem affecting a number of local parishes, and that there was a need for a regular post-harvest stock-take of damage.

17 2017 SARS report and request for donation

The report was noted. It was proposed by Cllr Hayward, seconded by Cllr Wenham, that a donation of £100 should be made. Clerk

18 Finance

a) Monthly accounts

It was proposed by Cllr Kinloch, seconded by Cllr Wenham, that these formed an accurate record of the current financial position.

b) Level of reserves

Cllr Rich reported concerns raised by the external auditors on the present level of reserves, pointing out that it was necessary for the Parish Council to budget not only for running costs but also for the allocation of funds to, for example, sports clubs. He requested that councillors give thought to projects which should be funded in future years and bring suggestions to the next meeting as part of the agreement of the draft budget for 2018/19.

All
councillors

c) SALC - Precept consultation

It was noted that the extension of powers to the lowest level of local government brought additional responsibilities and potential approaches to precept setting.

19 Correspondents

a) SALC - Litter Strategy

Noted

b) Fulfilment of requirements of Pension Regulator

Noted

20 Planning

The one planning decision was noted; there had been no applications.

21 Agenda items for meeting to be held on 19 September 2017

- Update from Tom Mann and other members of Flooding Team
- Update on footpaths
- Presentation of draft budget, including changes to the contracting for environmental works
- Risk and asset registers for 2018

Cllr Kinloch
Chairman
Clerk

The meeting closed at 9.27 pm