

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

Present: Cllrs Terry Rich (Chairman), Frank Eve, Ian Kinloch, Sheila Tibbenham, Rosie Wenham; Clerk: Jill Johnson; County Cllr Mary Evans; Tim Barling, Thurlow Estate Office; 2 parishioners

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

Chairman opened the public section of the meeting.

- 2 Flooding update**

Tom Mann, Flood & Water Project Officer, and Jamie Evans, Flood & Water Technician, from Suffolk County Council attended. Tom explained that he had started in this role in January and would be the on-going contact for the future. It was reported that not as much progress as hoped had been achieved. The Environment Agency would not release funding to remove the sluice under the bridge in Church Street until benefit could be proved. In order to do this it would be necessary to produce a hydraulic model for the length of the Stour and its tributaries; this would take three months to complete. County Council officers were aware of the Parish view that it was necessary to remove the sluice but it was not definite that benefit would accrue and the Structural Team were of the view that in turn it might be necessary to remove the footbridge which would cause a further and different problem. Cllr Rich pointed out that in fact removal of the sluice had been suggested as a potential solution by members of the Flood Team.

The modelling to be undertaken would be key to creating solutions which would be dependent on funding from the Environment Agency. There was also a view that natural flooding measures, implemented with the help of local landowners, would be preferable. Concern was expressed by parish councillors that there was not a timeframe nor a proposed solution and in view of the time lag since the major flooding which occurred last June, residents in the area were worried about the possibility of a further event. Residents were also concerned about the lack of maintenance of drains and the build-up of silt under and to either side of the road bridge. Tom Mann indicated that he would check how often silt would be monitored, and County Cllr Evans reported that now a new contractor (ProLine) was in place, drains would be cleared more regularly. It was pointed out that it is the responsibility of the riparian owners to ensure water courses running through their property were kept clear; the County Council would work with landowners but would enforce action if necessary.

County Cllr Evans suggested that a further presentation should be made at 6 pm prior to the July meeting of the Parish Council to enable parishioners to receive more detailed information on what should, by then, be firm plans for measures to be taken to alleviate any future storm damage, such as that experienced in June 2016. Jamie Evans pointed out that it was not possible to completely prevent disaster, but Cllr Rich insisted that what was needed was preventative measures to avoid disaster. A parishioner present suggested that the water course channel should be enlarged to take the water away; any such action would be guided by the modelling but it was

indicated that constant dredging would not be cost beneficial. Tom Mann would keep in touch to firm up details of the presentation to take place in July.

As far as the problems in Thurlow Road were concerned, it was confirmed that Highways would be undertaking in early May the work outlined at the last meeting of the Parish Council. The immediate residents had been notified of this by County Cllr Evans. A parishioner present was concerned about a potential full closure of the road for up to two weeks; Cllr Evans agreed to check this situation and report back to the parishioner via email. The Chairman would also advertise the situation via Withersfield News. Lastly, it was enquired whether the potholes in this area of Thurlow Road would be dealt with at the same time as the projected works. Cllr Evans confirmed that this should be the case.

Cllr Evans
Chairman

One of the parishioners present raised the condition of a drain by the war memorial. Cllr Evans encouraged people to report such problems via the Highways online tool and Cllr Rich agreed to include this request in Withersfield News.

Chairman

Tom Mann and Jamie Evans were thanked for their attendance at the meeting.

3 Borough Councillor's report

In giving her apologies, Cllr Midwood had indicated that she was pleased about progress to date in respect of the problems with litter and fly tipping at the flood park. The parishioner who raised the original concerns had been kept informed of actions so far and was asked to keep Cllr Midwood apprised of any on-going issues.

Clerk

4 County Councillor's report

Cllr Evans continued her input to the meeting by reporting that the officer with Suffolk Police responsible for the speed van had now left the force, and a second officer was on maternity leave. The new officer appointed, Phil Payne, had indicated that he wanted to be proactive with speeding issues in Withersfield. It was agreed that the lead member of Speed Watch should be notified.

Clerk

Cllr Evans also reported that there had been a series of recent burglaries in Suffolk and indicated the need for householders to do more to protect their property.

Finally, Cllr Evans referred to the helpful announcements made in the recent budget for additional social care funding, and said that the new arrangements for business rates should help the local pub.

5 Public Forum for parishioners

A parishioner enquired about the current position in connection with the installation of superfast broadband in the village. An Ofcom map showed plans for higher speeds for the lower half of the village (although not superfast), but indicated that the higher section of the village would not get these speeds. It appeared that Great Wratting and Thurlow already have superfast connections available. The Parish Council was asked to make

Chairman

implementation of superfast broadband throughout the village a priority; residents had been very patient but still nothing was happening, and there had been no notification of slippage of future indications for the first half of 2017. It was agreed that the issue should be raised once more with Matthew Hancock MP, and that parishioners should be informed of the position via Withersfield News.

A parishioner asked Tim Barling of Thurlow Estate if signage could be made clearer in order that people do not inadvertently trespass on private paths; Tim Barling indicated that a lot of signs had already been erected but that the Estate does not sign from the road as this is a County Council responsibility.

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, 24 January 2017

It was proposed by Cllr Kinloch, seconded by Cllr Tibbenham, that these reflected a correct record and they were accordingly signed by the Chairman.

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) Flooding matters

There was further discussion following the update provided by Tom Mann and Jamie Evans. Concern was once again expressed that it would be more than a year before any work was undertaken in Church Street. It was agreed that a letter should be written to the Flood & Water team expressing this concern and stating that although the technical issues involved were recognised, the Parish Council wants urgent preventative measures to be undertaken in order to give reassurance to residents who were so badly affected last June.

Chairman

b) Suffolk Fit programme

Cllr Tibbenham reported that the yoga classes were now running successfully and that a further application would be made to introduce tai chi to the village.

c) Fly tipping and litter at the flood park

It was reported that some action had been taken to address these issues, but that the parishioner involved had now raised parking as an additional problem.

d) Jubilee tree on Burton Green

It was reported that this had now been dealt with by the tree surgeon approached to investigate whether pruning was necessary.

- e) Defibrillator
It was thought that an electrician had been requested to undertake the necessary installation work; Cllrs Tibbenham and Wenham agreed to seek confirmation of this at the forthcoming Village Hall Management Committee (VHMC) meeting. It was reiterated that training for users would not be necessary prior to installation of the defibrillator. Cllrs Tibbenham and Wenham
- f) Noticeboard for Hanchett End/The Arboretum
The Clerk reported that no reply had been received from Taylor Wimpey requesting permission to site the noticeboard on a public area; it was therefore requested that Highways should be approached to agree to a suitable location for siting the board. Clerk
- g) VHMC accounts
It was agreed that Cllrs Tibbenham and Wenham should request that the Parish Council should have sight of these, and that they would be placed on the agenda for the next meeting. Cllrs Tibbenham and Wenham
- h) Traffic volume and speeding
It was reported that a letter requesting the additional measures outlined at the January meeting had been sent but that a reply had not yet been received. The Clerk was requested to chase this up to ensure that a reply was forthcoming before the next meeting. Clerk
The possibility of a survey of traffic, particularly heavy lorries travelling to the jelly warehouses, was something that could be considered further in the future. However, in the meantime it would be helpful if councillors would note companies using Withersfield roads via an informal log, and possibly contact the companies concerned if thought appropriate.
- War Memorials Trust
An enquiry was made on the outcome of the application for funding to restore the war memorial; the Clerk reported that no reply had yet been received and agreed to chase this up. Clerk

10 Village pub

Cllr Rich referred to the re-closing of the pub, with the current tenant returning the tenancy to Enterprise Inns. He confirmed that the registration as a community asset had now been completed and sent, and also that he had attempted contact with Enterprise Inns, but had not received a response. The Clerk reported that Cllr Hayward had spoken to the Chair of Thurlow Parish Council, which had secured registration for The Cock; he had confirmed that the process was straightforward and provided a six months' moratorium on any sale.

11 Grass cutting quotes

Two quotes had been received. It was proposed by Cllr Wenham, seconded by Cllr Eve, that the most competitive quote, that provided by Simon Ratford, should be accepted. The Clerk was asked to notify Simon Ratford of his successful bid. Clerk

12 Storage at the village hall

It was confirmed that a document had been prepared with the various options which were being costed and weighted; it was expected that all necessary information would be to hand shortly and the options, with the VHMC recommendation, would be presented to the May meeting of the Parish Council. The Treasurer had advised that not more than £20,000 should be spent on the solution. Official guidance indicated that a village hall should have 25% of its area dedicated for storage but the Withersfield village hall had nowhere near this amount.

Concern had been expressed that fewer people were attending organised events, such as Race Night, and the question had been asked whether upgrading the premises should have a higher priority than a storage solution. It was thought that parishioners' views could be sought, perhaps via a questionnaire distributed at Quiz Night, or through insertion of a flyer in Withersfield News.

13 Report on recent A1307 meeting

Cllr Hayward's report was noted and thanks were given to him for his attendance at the meeting and preparation of the report. It was disappointing that the measures currently being mooted would have little effect on the Haverhill end of the A1307.

14 Land registration and rights of way

The need for a possible policy had arisen following attendance at a briefing meeting by Cllr Kinloch. Tim Barling of Thurlow Estate, which licenses the use of land (such as Town Green) to the Parish Council, explained the position in respect of land registration in England. He also explained that licences, such as the one held by the Parish Council, would not appear as part of a registered title as such documents confer temporary and not exclusive possession.

Cllr Kinloch referred to some recent complaints about use of the land held under licence enquiring where final responsibility lay. Tim Barling indicated that the licence had tried to formalise in words what happened in practice, but that any ultimate recourse would lie with Thurlow Estate although attempts at prior resolution before referral would be helpful. Tim Barling confirmed that Thurlow Estate would be supportive of any guidelines but it was pointed out that the VHMC already places restrictions on use of, for example, Town Green, after certain times, but that in practice these were difficult to enforce. It was agreed that initial responsibility should remain with the VHMC as past experience had proved that too much prescription or restriction were unhelpful. The current licence would require renewal in 2019 and it was agreed that before negotiating this with Thurlow Estate the VHMC should be asked if its letting agreement needed review.

Requests for access over the land held under licence were more problematic as no categorical rights and rules were in place. Laying of pipes or creation of paths would be an Estate decision, and preventing people from taking unagreed action was technically an Estate responsibility although it would wish to work with the Parish Council in respect of individual problems if they occur. The situation would continue to be monitored until 2019.

15 Finance

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

16 Correspondence

- a) Battle's Over - A Nation's Tribute
The possibility of a beacon was discussed but thought that interest in celebrating the centenary of the end of World War I should be sought from parishioners via Withersfield News. It was proposed by Cllr Rich, seconded by Cllr Eve, that Cllr Kinloch should act as lead person in this respect. Chairman
Cllr Kinloch
- b) SALC - Better broadband
The lack of adequate broadband provision in Withersfield had already been discussed under item 5 above.

17 Planning

- a) Borough notifications since last meeting
Noted
- b) Applications received since last meeting
The application for alterations to 7 Rose Hill was discussed. It was pointed out that the adjoining semi-detached property had already been extended, that the extension would not affect neighbours, and that the property was not listed. It was therefore proposed by Cllr Rich, seconded by Cllr Tibbenham, that the Parish Council should return the form to Planning indicating that it had no objections provided that the property continues to be used as a single dwelling and that the finish reflected the character of the building. Clerk

18 Agenda items for next meeting

- a) Annual Parish Council meeting
- Presentation by VHMC on recommended storage solution
- Broadband - an appropriate representative should be invited to attend
- Election of Chair and Vice Chair and agreement of appointments and responsibilities
- Completion of register of pecuniary interests forms
- Chairman's report on financial position 2016/17, approval of end of year accounts and Annual Return Clerk
- b) Annual Village meeting
- Reports from eg Footpaths Officer, Chair of Sports and Recreation Committee, Chair of VHMC
- Invitation for attendance by Speed Watch team Clerk

In camera - nomination of award for unsung village hero

Various names were considered and the proposals voted upon. As the voting resulted in a tie, the Chairman cast a final vote. It was agreed that the necessary profile for submission to Borough Cllr Midwood should be prepared. Cllr Wenham

The meeting closed at 9.40 pm

