

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

Present: Cllrs Terry Rich (Chairman), Geoff Hayward (Vice Chair), Ian Kinloch; Rosie Wenham; Clerk: Jill Johnson; County Cllr Mary Evans; Borough Cllr Jane Midwood; parishioner

- 1 Apologies for absence** were received from Cllr Frank Eve and Cllr Russell Wallington.

*Chairman opened the public section of the meeting.*

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

County Cllr Mary Evans gave apologies on behalf of Tom Mann, Flood and Water Project Officer, Suffolk County Council. Reporting on progress to date, Cllr Evans first provided a drainage map showing the locations of a proposed new pipe, new outfalls and gullies. The work involved would take 2 weeks; it was planned for January and would cost around £50,000.

Cllr Evans reported that landowners with properties through which the brook runs had been very helpful and were doing their best possible to clear debris and blockages. In addition, Thurlow Estate had come to an agreement with Natural England to install 23 buffers on their land to slow the flow of water; this work was due to be undertaken next summer. Work was also scheduled for December to remove the saplings which had grown in the silt in the brook close to the church, and to remove a large branch on an overhanging sycamore tree. This work would address kinks in the brook which were affecting flow. It would be necessary to close the footpath running alongside the brook whilst this work was being done. The resulting wood from the work was to be used to undertake buffer work in Stanton, which had also experienced flooding. Lastly, once landowners had completed their work, the area close to and under the bridge would be sluiced through.

Cllr Evans recognised that it had taken a long time to get to this point of agreement about what needed to be undertaken, but the structural work involved should make a big difference although no guarantee could be given that flooding would not recur if there were to be exceptional levels of rainfall in the future. Cllr Evans was thanked for all the support and persistence she had provided in this connection.

**3 Borough Councillor's report**

Cllr Midwood first enquired about progress with the noticeboard for the Arboretum. It was confirmed that the necessary licence had now been obtained from Suffolk County Council, and checks had been made that planning permission was not necessary for its erection. Cllr Midwood urged the Parish Council to seek publicity once installation was complete as this would strengthen the case against any boundary changes to the parish which could arise from a review which would take place as part of the future merging of the current St Edmundsbury and Forest Heath Borough Councils into one West Suffolk council. Councillors were also asked to involve Cllrs Midwood and Evans in this publicity, and in other matters affecting the Hanchett End and Arboretum area of the parish, for example, the footpath diversion bid.

Cllr Midwood confirmed that there will be elections for the newly merged council, if approved, in 2019.

Cllr Midwood referred to the cluster of planning applications recently received affecting Withersfield indicating that she was not commenting on these in the absence of representations either from residents or the Parish Council.

The proposed waste hub at Rougham Hill, described at previous meetings, was currently awaiting approval at ministerial level.

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

Cllr Evans followed up on her former report about changes to the entitlement for school transport confirming that the need to save money in this respect had now been considered by cabinet, and as a result there was likely to be a consultation. The performance of Suffolk's children's services was in the top 25% nationwide but unfortunately there was a national crisis affecting social services, the effects of which were unlikely to be resolved without more funding from government. It had been agreed that council tax would be increased by 1.99% in order to focus on ways of doing things better and differently in order to improve services for fragile people and areas.

There would be an appeal in the new year for more foster parents, particularly for adolescent boys and teenage mothers and their babies.

The proposed budget for 2018/19 was due to be scrutinised at a meeting on Thursday, 23 November.

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

One parishioner was in attendance who raised three issues:

- (1) Whether an application for permission to undertake work on a number of trees on their property had been considered by the Parish Council;
- (2) The influence the Parish Council should bring to bear on traffic and noise management affecting the village once the new Haverhill north west relief road had been completed;
- (3) Broadband.

In respect of (1) it was confirmed that the application had been circulated to councillors and that all were in support of the work proposed.

On (2), Cllr Midwood reported that there were currently discussions about whether the relief road should be built first, or the new housing development. There was concern amongst Withersfield residents that the 1000 houses due to be built on the Little Wratting side of the A143 could increase traffic through Withersfield, and whether or not sufficient screening and soundproofing would be provided. It was agreed that discussions with Highways were required both in order to determine the current state of play in connection with the final arrangements for the new relief road, and how to engage with them in respect of future traffic management. Further, the plans for the new developments either side of the A143, together with those for the new relief road, should be reviewed, and either Highways or the planning authority should be requested to talk to the Parish Council about the implementation and plans for landscaping and noise prevention.

Chairman  
Cllr  
Kinloch  
Cllr  
Hayward  
Clerk

As far as (3) was concerned, it was pointed out that the promised date for

Clerk

introduction of faster broadband had now passed; there was also concern that even when the cabinets were finally operational, properties at the Thurlow end of the village may not fully benefit. Cllr Evans reported that a Broadband Board was due to meet on 8 December, with local MP, the Right Honourable Matthew Hancock, attending. She indicated that she was aware that the two new cabinets for Withersfield had been completed but not yet switched on reportedly with BT waiting for action by UK Power Networks. Cllr Evans requested that a short note about the Withersfield experiences should be forwarded to her in time for the 8 December meeting.

*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, 3 October 2017**

It was proposed by Cllr Hayward, seconded by Cllr Wenham, that these formed an accurate report of the meeting 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) Blocked drain in Queen Street  
It was confirmed that this was still blocked awaiting clearance by Flowline. Cllr Kinloch would oversee developments. Cllr Kinloch
- b) Speeding figures  
The Clerk was requested to chase these up. Clerk
- c) Noticeboard for Hanchett End/The Arboretum  
It was proposed by Cllr Rich, seconded by Cllr Kinloch that the noticeboard should include the name of the Parish Council on the top; the Clerk would liaise with the contractor. It was also agreed that there should be an opening ceremony, that Cllr Wallington and the leader of the Arboretum community group should be present, and that the press should be invited to attend. It was further proposed that consideration should be given to the placement of the name of the Parish Council on the noticeboard in Church Street. Cllr Wallington should be asked about progress in connection with contact with the community group leader agreed at the 3 October meeting. Clerk  
Cllr Wallington
- d) Traffic issues on A1307 alongside The Arboretum  
Cllr Hayward reported that it had not been possible to undertake the survey previously suggested, and that as an alternative an article should be placed in the February edition of Withersfield News seeking evidence of, in particular, speeding. The problems with potholes on the Spirit of Enterprise roundabout should be followed up by Cllr Wallington. Cllr Hayward  
Cllr Wallington
- e) Defibrillator training  
The Clerk confirmed that a date had been agreed for training to take place; it was agreed that notices should be placed in the village hall, on the noticeboard and on the blackboard. Clerk

- f) Additional traffic calming measures  
As there was still no reply from Highways, the Clerk was requested to re-send the request for these to an alternative contact. Clerk
- g) Restoration work on war memorial  
The Clerk provided an update on current slow, but positive, progress.
- h) Village hall extension  
Cllr Wenham reported that there had been no meeting of the Village Hall Management Committee since the last meeting of the Parish Council and that as far as she was aware the planning application for the proposed extension had not yet been submitted.
- i) Sunken graves  
Cllr Rich indicated that these had now been dealt with. Cllr Wenham agreed to keep an eye open for any further problems. Cllr Wenham
- j) Repairs to Sports Pavilion roof  
The Clerk reported that the chair of the Sports and Recreation Committee had confirmed that he wished to take up the Parish Council's offer of a 50% contribution towards the cost of this work, and that as a result the contractor would be undertaking the repair in December.
- k) Awareness raising of sports and recreation facilities  
An update was awaited from Cllr Wallington. Cllr Wallington
- l) Future of Withersfield News  
Cllr Wenham reported that a new editor had been appointed, and that the newsletter would be moving to 6 editions a year. The parishioner who had kindly been paying for the printing would pay for that for the edition about to be distributed, and thereafter printing costs would be met out of advertising revenue with any shortfall being borne jointly by the Parochial Church Council (PCC) and the Parish Council. Any profits from advertising would go to the PCC for maintenance of the church.
- m) Road recovery post harvesting  
Cllr Kinloch had contacted Cllr Evans in this respect. There was a need to establish a principle of checks post harvest and Cllr Kinloch would continue to push for this. Cllr Kinloch

## 10 Report on progress with footpath issues

Cllr Kinloch was pleased to report that Suffolk County Council (SCC) had now replaced all missing and damaged signs. He indicated that Footpath No 5, running alongside the church, was deeply rutted and this had been reported to the SCC Footpaths Officer; this would be chased if a satisfactory outcome was not achieved in the near future. In respect of Footpath No 3, that running to The Arboretum, a reply was awaited from the Thurlow Estate office. Cllr Kinloch

## 11 Update on unsung hero award

Cllr Wenham reported that Cllr Midwood had agreed to the nomination received by the Parish Council, and that the award was currently being inscribed. This would be presented at the Annual Village Meeting next May; it was recognised that some measures would be required to ensure

attendance by the recipient of the award.

**12 Report on new arrangements for Data Protection and update from SALC**

The recommendations made in the Clerk's report were considered, and it was proposed by Cllr Hayward, seconded by Cllr Wenham, that these should be accepted whilst recognising that some formal decisions, and some actions, could not be made or dealt with until further advice had been received from SALC. In the interim, the Clerk was asked to review administrative and data systems and make recommendations for change where necessary, and to contact the Council's insurers to determine whether its current cover was adequate.

Clerk

**13 System for the transfer of documents**

It was considered that this should be an administrative decision by the Clerk but whichever system was chosen steps should be taken to ensure ease of use by all councillors.

Clerk

**14 Tender document for grass cutting and strimming 2018**

This was agreed with a minor amendment. The Clerk was requested to send this out to potential bidders; a decision on which contractor to use would be made at the January meeting of the Parish Council.

Clerk

**15 Finance**

a) Monthly accounts

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

b) Issues Arising Report following external audit and approval of finalised Annual Return

The Report was considered and as a result it was proposed by Cllr Kinloch, seconded by Cllr Wenham, that the revised Annual Return should be accepted as reflecting an accurate and final position.

c) Audit briefing - SALC

The contents of the briefing were considered. It was proposed by Cllr Kinloch, seconded by Cllr Wenham, that a decision about whether or not the Parish Council should seek exempt status from external audit would be made at a later date, but that in the meantime the Clerk should be requested to contact SALC about acting as internal auditors.

Clerk

**16 Draft budget for 2018/19**

The Chairman presented his report explaining that consideration had specifically been given to future parish projects, comments from the external auditors about the current level of reserves and proposals as to how these should be used, and earmarked reserves. He explained that the amount suggested for administration would rise in real terms but would be reduced in percentage terms (the latter as a result of the increased precept). He further recommended that a sum should be made available for future investment on parish infrastructure, and that an earmarked reserve would cover costs of a computer using the balance of the contribution from the Transparency Fund allocation. Councillors were asked to agree that the Parish Council should not seek an increase in Council Tax rate for 2018/19

Clerk

as indicated on the draft precept submission. It was proposed by Cllr Kinloch, seconded by Cllr Wenham, that all these recommendations should be accepted, that the Clerk should submit the precept form in January and that the final budget would be agreed at the January meeting. The Chairman was congratulated on presentation of a well-considered case for the 2018 budget.

#### **17 Risk and Asset Registers for 2018**

It was proposed by Cllr Hayward, seconded by Cllr Wenham, that the updated Risk Register constituted an accurate reflection of current risks and it was duly signed by the Chairman.

Following confirmation that the Clerk would add the new noticeboard once it had been erected, it was proposed by Cllr Wenham, seconded by Cllr Kinloch, that the updated Asset Register should be signed by the Chairman. Reference was made to the need to repair the bench by the war memorial; the Clerk was asked to organise this. Clerk

#### **18 Correspondence**

- a) SALC - Suffolk Walking Festival 2018  
Noted.

#### **19 Planning**

- a) Borough notifications since last meeting  
The decision to approve application DC/17/2206/HH was noted.
- b) Applications received since last meeting  
It was confirmed that the following applications received since the last meeting had been considered by councillors and did not require formal comment by the Parish Council:  
DC/17/2146/TCA; DC/17/2145/TCA; DC/17/2206/HH; DC/17/2249/HH;  
DC/17/2397/TCA; DC/17/2394/TPO.

Attention was drawn to recent work by the Environment Agency to create a spur road from the roundabout adjacent to Sainsbury's in order to provide additional access to the Meldham Washlands. It was pointed out that although this work was taking place within the Withersfield parish, no notification had been received. The Clerk was asked to draft a letter for signature by the Chairman asking for details of the work, access to the plan, and the reasons why the Parish Council had not been consulted. Clerk

#### **20 Dates of meetings for 2018**

These were confirmed as 23 January, 13 March, 15 May (also Annual Village Meeting), 17 July, 18 September, and 20 November.

#### **21 Agenda items for meeting to be held on 23 January 2018**

- Budget
- Contract for environmental works
- Purchase of printer

*The meeting closed at 9.17 pm*