

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

Present: Cllrs Terry Rich (Chairman), Geoff Hayward (Vice Chair), Frank Eve, Ian Kinloch, Sheila Tibbenham; Clerk: Jill Johnson; County Cllr Mary Evans; Borough Cllr Jane Midwood; Tim Barling, Thurlow Estate Office; 6 parishioners

- 1 Apologies for absence** were received from Cllrs Stuart Murlis and Rosie Wenham.

Chairman opened the public section of the meeting.

2 Flooding update

Unfortunately Steven Halls and Jamie Evans were unable to attend and in their absence County Cllr Evans reported on the present position. It had been confirmed by the Environment Agency that the old sluice at the church could be removed. A bid has been submitted to the Environment Agency for Local Levy for the remedial work to be undertaken by members of the County Council Highways team; this would include removal of the sluice, clearance of the channel at the church and attention to the failing arch bridge. If funding was not forthcoming, Highways would remove the sluice but the riparian owners would have to clear the channel at the church. If partial funding only were to be forthcoming, for instance, insufficient to replace the failing bridge downstream, the County Council has notified the owner that this would be their responsibility. However, it was pointed out that the County Council had no powers to enforce such responsibility, only to require maintenance.

Once the outcome of the bid is known (expected early February), a contractor will be requested to provide costings for the work and hopefully work would be ordered by mid-February in order to get it undertaken before the bird nesting season starts.

Tim Barling, from the Thurlow Estate Office, confirmed that he had received notification from the County Council. He indicated that the top of the bridge was one metre lower than the level of the nearest property and that although the culvert was not in a good condition, it had been cleared and water was flowing well. The Estate Office was awaiting the outcome of the bid for funding.

There was discussion following provision of this information and pointed out that the riparian owners were the Church and the owners of Ashley Grange. A number of points made at the November meeting had not been followed up. The first was that it had been suggested that non-return valves should be fitted to stop water backing up. Second, it had been queried who would be responsible for clearing the channel under the road bridge which was badly silted, the riparian owners or the County Council. It was further pointed out that drains in Church Street were permanently blocked which in wet weather led to water forming across the road. Cllr Evans requested that residents of Church Street provided photographs showing the extent of the problem (and residents elsewhere in the village should similarly provide photographs of other blocked drains); she confirmed that on-going problems should be dealt with monthly and that residents should notify the County Council through the

Cllr Evans
Chairman

on-line system of problems as they arose. Cllr Evans was requested to request members of the Highways and Flooding teams to address these points as soon as possible. It was further requested that the outcome of the bid for funding should be shared with the Parish Council as soon as it had been received. It was agreed that parishioners should be kept up-to-date with the current position via Withersfield News. Cllr Evans agreed that if further reports became necessary she would ensure attendance by representatives at the next meeting.

As far as the problems in Thurlow Road were concerned, work had been agreed to replace the failed existing pipe and to install a new gully/storm water chamber at Milton House. Verges and accesses would be reinstated as necessary on a like for like basis. In order to ensure the safety of the workforce and the travelling public, a road closure would be necessary for the duration (anticipated to be one week) of the works currently scheduled for early May. Properties affected by the closure would be notified by letter and advance notice signs would be erected on site prior to commencement of the works. Plans showing the extent of the works were circulated. It was confirmed that this information had already been conveyed to the owners of the affected properties. Cllr Midwood suggested that the work should be undertaken during half-term when the road closure would cause fewer problems. Cllr Evans agreed to make this suggestion to the Highways team

Cllr Evans

3 Borough Councillor's report

Cllr Midwood reported that the results of an independent remuneration panel had recommended pay increases for councillors but considered that it was unlikely that St Edmundsbury Borough Council would implement the recommendation.

A new award for unsung community heroes had recently been introduced and Cllr Midwood had two to give during her current term of office. She requested names of persons who had performed above their call of duty to be put forward; nominations together with a case study of the persons involved could be made by anybody but the formal notification needed to be effected through the Parish Council. Councillors agreed later in the meeting that proposals for considered should be sought via Withersfield News and that Cllr Midwood should be informed of this action.

Chairman
Clerk

She referred to the agenda item concerning proposed registration of the village pub as a community asset, indicating that any application needed to come from the Parish Council and be made via St Edmundsbury. Other villages had been extremely successful in protecting the future of their local pub.

St Edmundsbury Borough Council had a budget setting meeting scheduled for February. If any points wished to be raised these should be channelled through Cllr Evans who would be substituting for Cllr Midwood who would not be available to attend.

4 County Councillor's report

Cllr Evans continued her input to the meeting by firstly emphasising the importance of registering the pub; this had worked well in Thurlow by giving the community a negotiating opportunity.

In anticipation of the forthcoming County Council budget setting meeting, Cllr Evans confirmed that although the base rate council tax had been frozen, a 3% social care precept would be imposed resulting in an increase of £57 this year for Band D properties. Social care was a major problem for Suffolk with care homes in crisis because of difficulties in recruiting staff particularly in the coastal regions, and a rising demographic of people over the age of 75. The additional ring-fenced precept for social care would ease care homes' existing problems with funding and staffing.

Cllr Evans referred to the Prime Minister's recent speech on mental health issues particularly for young people. Nationally an average division of funding provided 90% for adults and 10% for young people; in Suffolk this was a 70/30 split but nevertheless the County Council realised the need to increasingly focus on the problems of young people. More positively, education was improving with Suffolk now in the top half of authorities for GCSE results. The focus was now on improvement of schools in poorer areas, for example Lowestoft and Ipswich.

Finally, Cllr Evans reported that she would be pleased to provide a small grant from the Suffolk Fit programme in order that yoga classes could be commenced in Withersfield.

Cllr Evans

5 Public Forum for parishioners

a) Village pub

A parishioner in attendance was invited to put forward his case for registration of the pub as a community asset. He voiced his concerns that the owners, Enterprise Inns, might wish to dispose of the property for residential or development purposes. The Chairman confirmed that there was a formal agenda item to consider registration. He indicated that potential risks needed to be addressed although it was unlikely that registration alone would do anything other than indicate community interest. Tim Barling pointed out that when registration had been effected for The Cock in Thurlow. The general view expressed was that registration drew a line in the sand in order to communicate that it was important for the village that the property remained a pub. However in practice it was a delaying tactic in that registration only gives the right to hold up a sale for a period of six months.

b) Fly tipping and litter at the flood park

A parishioner shared photographs of the problem. He had attempted contact with Anglian Water, the Angling Club and the Borough Council to little avail. It was agreed that the Parish Council should consider whether any action could be taken. Cllr Midwood agreed to clarify the responsibility of the Borough Council for clearing any accumulated rubbish at this location.

Chairman/
Clerk
Cllr
Midwood

c) Jubilee tree on Burton Green

A parishioner enquired if the Parish Council had any plans to trim the bottom of the jubilee tree so that it grows as a tree and not as a bush. Tim Barling confirmed that the Estate Office would have no objection to such work and it was agreed that a tree surgeon should be asked to provide the Parish Council with advice.

Clerk

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, 15 November 2016

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

8 Update on actions from previous Parish Council meeting

- a) Requirements of the Pension Regulator
The Clerk reported that no further action was required until 1 May next.

9 Matters arising

- a) Additional road markings
Cllr Hayward reported that at the Speed Watch meeting held in November it was suggested that an additional SLOW should be painted on the portion of road where Hollow Hill led into Church Street. Additionally, trimming of overhanging trees/shrubs in Queen Street, and cleaning of road signs had been considered appropriate. Councillors suggested that consideration also be given to a central white line along the length of Church Street/Hollow Hill.

- b) Restoration of the war memorial
The Clerk reported that the outcome of the bid to the War Memorials Trust was not yet known.

- c) Defibrillator
The Village Hall Management Committee (VHMC) had received one quote for necessary electrical work and was awaiting at least a further one. In respect of training villagers in the use of the defibrillator it was suggested that the Clerk should make one more attempt at contact with Mark Milsom and Fiona Andrews and that if this did not result in provision of possible dates, consideration should be given to purchase of training by an external provider. Cllr Tibbenham agreed to seek further advice from an alternative parishioner. It was further proposed by Cllr Kinloch, seconded by Cllr Eve, that use of the defibrillator was in practice self-explanatory and that although training was desirable, it could be used without, and that in the circumstances the VHMC should be asked to proceed with installation as soon as possible. Clerk
Cllr
Tibbenham

- d) Early years feedback from parishioners
It was reported that no comments had been received on the report contained in the minutes.

- e) Use of the village hall
Cllr Kinloch confirmed that he had received complaints about noise from children playing outside the village hall when it had been hired for events. Cllr Tibbenham confirmed that the hirer's agreement stated limitations on noise after a certain time and that local bye-laws apply in this respect. She agreed to share a copy of the licence with councillors. It was recognised that any problems reported should be referred to the VHMC. However, councillors were of the view that the use of the village hall and village green by families and children was generally to be encouraged. Cllr
Tibbenham

10 Village pub

There was further discussion following the points made in the Public Forum. The Chairman had circulated advice from a villager who was also a consultant in town planning about the process of registration as a community asset.

Chairman
Cllr
Hayward

The pub had recently closed for business, the licensees having surrendered their lease. However, although it was understood that interviews were taking place for new tenants, concern remained about the risk of a potential change of use in the future. It was recognised that registration provided a delaying tactic only and that it implied no intention or expectation that it would result in a bid to buy the property; in the circumstances registration posed no risks to the Parish Council. The following actions were therefore proposed by Cllr Hayward, seconded by Cllr Kinloch:

- a) an application for registration should be made taking advantage of the help offered by the consultant planner;
- b) the Chairman should speak to Enterprise Inns to seek their perspective on future plans for the pub;
- c) Cllr Hayward should speak to the Chair of Thurlow Parish Council about their experience of registration.

11 Noticeboard for Hanchett End/The Arboretum

Two quotes had been received following nine invitations to provide an estimate, one for the sum of £784 and the other for £1,530. It was proposed by Cllr Hayward, seconded by Cllr Eve, that the quote for £784 should be accepted.

Clerk
Cllr
Tibbenham

Cllr Tibbenham had tried repeatedly to communicate with Taylor Wimpey at their site officer regarding a possible location, but had not received any success. It was agreed that Taylor Wimpey should be written to formally requesting permission to locate the notice board on their land.

12 Proposed Village Hall Extension

The Chairman reported on his attendance at the last meeting of the VHMC and a subsequent meeting to explain the Parish Council's view that an Options Appraisal should be prepared before a final decision could be made about this scheme. St Edmundsbury Borough Council guidance on village halls advised that they should expect to use 20% of the area for storage; Withersfield village hall currently had 9%. The Village Hall Committee had agreed that it would prepare an options appraisal which reviewed all options which would be costed and weighted. The Parish Council's suggestion that consultation should be undertaken would be fulfilled by the VHMC placing an article in Withersfield News seeking villagers' and hirers' views.

Clerk

Cllr Tibbenham confirmed that new quotes were being sought by the VHMC for the extension option. She also confirmed that the VHMC had decided that no more than £20,000 would be committed to this project in order to preserve a level of reserves necessary for any future contingencies. It was confirmed that the Parish Council welcomed the approach being taken by the VHMC and agreed to invite Tom Mytton-Mills to present options to the next meeting of the Parish Council.

Cllr Tibbenham confirmed that new quotes were being sought by the VHMC for the extension option. Cllr Tibbenham also confirmed t

Cllr Tibbenham also reported that the VHMC was investigating the option of

improving kitchen facilities, including the responsibilities of the VHMC or the individual hirers for the operation of an equipped kitchen providing for the public.

On a separate note, it was queried whether VHMC accounts were presented to the Parish Council, and agreed that Cllr Tibbenham should check the position.

Cllr
Tibbenham

- 13** Cllr Hayward summarised the outcomes of the public meeting organised by the Speed Watch Team on 29 November 2016. It was acknowledged that Withersfield had a traffic problem with over quarter of a million vehicle movements throughout a year, with the majority using Queen Street, Church Street, Hollow Hill, and Skippers Lane. This included more lorry traffic and movements earlier in the day than in the past. Data from the VAS indicated 32% of vehicles were travelling at a speed over 30 mph, 1.6% over 40 mph, and a top speed recorded at 60 mph; 68% of those vehicles travelling at over 35 mph were coming into the village, and 58% were going out. The VAS data was being shared with the Police. In addition, further traffic calming measures had been suggested including those recorded under Item 9 (a) above.

It was recognised that the Speed Watch Team need more people in order to monitor vehicle movements more effectively. It was suggested that a traffic survey be undertaken in order to determine whether lorries travelling to and from the Jelly warehouses were adhering to an agreed route, with registrations and names of companies displayed on vehicles being recorded.

Cllr
Hayward

It was proposed by Cllr Rich, seconded by Cllr Tibbenham, that Cllr Hayward, working with the Speed Watch Team Co-ordinator, should send a letter to County Councillor Evans and to Abdul Karim, Suffolk West Area Engineer, making suggestions for the additional traffic calming measures that had been suggested over the past few months.

Cllr
Hayward

14 Communications re concerns of parishioners over volume of traffic and speeding

The two communications were noted and it was agreed that Cllr Hayward should bear the contents in mind when writing the letter to Suffolk County Council, although it was thought that at this stage soft and less intrusive options should be put forward although in view of increasing lorry traffic a chicane in Skippers Lane might be appropriate. The Clerk was asked to acknowledge receipt of the communications stating that the Parish Council would be writing to Suffolk County Council with suggestions for further traffic calming measures in the village.

Cllr
Hayward
Clerk

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) Budget for 201/18
It was proposed by Cllr Tibbenham, seconded by Cllr Kinloch, that the draft considered at the November meeting should be confirmed.
- c) Confirmation of precept for 2017/18

Following receipt of information from St Edmundsbury Borough Council that the draft taxbase figures had been confirmed, the precept form was signed by the Chairman and the Clerk was asked to despatch this as soon as possible.

Clerk

16 Correspondence

a) David Sharman, Fields in Trust
Noted

b) SALC, audit arrangements
Noted

c) Mayor's Office, St Edmundsbury Borough Council
Noted and agreed that Cllr Tibbenham should pass a copy to the VHMC.

Cllr
Tibbenham

17 Planning

Noted.

18 Agenda items for next meeting

a) Presentation by VHMC on options for storage solutions

b) Consideration of names to be put forward for Borough Councillor award for unsung community heroes

c) Draft policy on land registration and rights of way. The Clerk was requested to provide Cllr Kinloch with a copy of the licence for use by the village of land owned by the Thurlow Estate.

Cllr Kinloch
Clerk

The meeting closed at 9.20 pm

Annual Spring Clean

This will be held on 11 March, with notices placed in Withersfield News and on the Parish noticeboard. The Borough Council and Haverhill News would be contacted in order to make arrangements for collection of the refuse collected and for a photographer to be in attendance.