

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

Present: Cllrs Terry Rich (Chairman), Ian Kinloch (Vice Chair); Lucy Guest; Peter Lord; Borough Cllr Jane Midwood, and County Cllr Mary Evans; Clerk: Jill Johnson

- 1 Apologies for absence** were received from Cllrs Frank Eve, Russell Wallington, and Rosie Wenham. The Chair reported that in giving his apologies Cllr Wallington had notified his intention to resign as a councillor. The Chairman reminded councillors that that following previous resignations, three residents, all of whom were appointable, had put themselves forward for consideration and two had been co-opted. The Chairman had contacted the third person concerned, who had indicated her wish to be put forward once again, this will therefore form an agenda item for the November meeting.

Chairman opened the public section of the meeting welcoming a representative from Friends of Withersfield.

2 Borough Councillor's report

Cllr Midwood informed the meeting of discussions about the status of the new West Suffolk Council when it comes into effect, whether it should be designated a district or borough council, the latter of which would have a mayor, as is the case presently with St Edmundsbury. Residents would not be affected either way but the historical perspective was important to members of the existing councils. It was anticipated that the Boundary Commission would shortly inform the new council of the shape of its area; this in turn would affect current county council boundaries.

Cllr Midwood returned to the current impasse in respect of provision and emptying of dog waste and litter bins on the flood control park. She did not know whether payment from her locality budget could be made without resolving responsibility for the emptying of the bins. The Chairman, and the mayor of Haverhill, had both been in touch with St Edmundsbury Borough Council, to no avail, and Cllr Rich asked for Cllr Midwood's intervention. Cllr Midwood agreed to take up the case on behalf of the Parish Council. Cllr Midwood

She was also aware that the reeds on the verge by the entrance to the Arboretum were still causing visibility issues. Cllr Guest reported that her husband had already contacted County Cllr Evans in this respect.

3 County Councillor's report

Cllr Evans joined the meeting at the point of discussions surround Item 11, the possible development of a neighbourhood plan, having first attended a meeting at Thurlow. In respect of plans, she confirmed that St Edmundsbury Borough Council was currently calling for sites for development to be put forward, and how important it was for parishes to have control of future planning. She offered to ask the person who led the Hargrave plan to advise. Cllr Evans

Her more substantive report indicated an overspend by the County Council in the first quarter of the financial year, with projections of an £8 million overspend by the end of the year. The principal areas of involved were those holding the largest budgets, Adult Social Care, and Child Protection. The overspends were mainly due to a changing demographic with more young people with learning difficulties coming into adulthood, and the commitment of supporting an aging population in their own homes. Cllr Evans reported pressures on all councils, not only those which had already failed, or were in danger of failing. Suffolk County Council was not yet at the cliff edge but the current context was increasingly challenging. For example, it had been reported at a recent cabinet meeting that those most at risk of cyber abuse were 15 year-old boys, and a third of teenage girls were now accessing internet sites concerning bulimia and anorexia, subjects which had little or no impact in the past.

The Highways budget was small in comparison with the large budget holders; nevertheless Cllr Evans had recently established an Improvements and Innovation Board to look at efficiency achievement, starting with potholes. At present Suffolk was spending 37% of the pothole budget on travelling, partly because of the current one-off approach to dealing with reported potholes. Currently there was a trial to simplify the overall process by dealing in one visit with all potholes in a location, and tackling smaller holes before they became a reportable problem. Road closures were also recognised as a problem area, with lack of notification, odd diversions, and kit being left for days after completion of work. Grass cutting of verges was a further area under current consideration.

Cllr Evans turned next to Withersfield matters. She had not been pleased or impressed with the reply at long last received to issues raised by the Speed Watch co-ordinator and the Parish Council, and would consequently arrange for a Highways officer to walk around the village with herself, the Chairman and Speed Watch co-ordinator.

Cllr Evans was aware of the issues relating to reeds at the Arboretum; she had asked an officer to look at this but had not yet received a response. She was also still pursuing the problems caused to the flooding of the garden of the bungalow at Rosehill which was preventing a disabled user from leaving the property.

The Chairman raised speeding problems and asked if 40 mph buffer zones (similar to those recently implemented by Cambridgeshire for nearby villages) could be introduced on the roads leading into the village. Cllr Rich indicated particular problems with vehicles driving at around 60 mph down Silver Street; this was legal but dangerous.

4 Public Forum for parishioners

The representative from Friends of Withersfield had been approached by the Carpet Bowls Club for money to repair their cupboard in the village hall. It was indicated that she should approach the Village Hall Management Committee in this respect and confirmed that the Parish Council, as Trustees of the village hall, would have no objection to the work being undertaken.

It was also reported that new tenants at No 5 Queens Street were causing concern because of parking on Town Green and on the highway,

increased rubbish in neighbouring gardens and the general vicinity, and difficulties with deliveries because of a brown bin blocking access. The tenants and the owner of the property had been spoken to, and parking problems have been reported to the Police.

Councillors were sympathetic to these issues but pointed out that the Parish Council does not possess enforcement powers. It was proposed by Cllr Kinloch, seconded by Cllr Guest, that the tenants involved should be sent a letter indicating that permission is required to park on Town Green and pointing out difficulties caused to motorists by parking on the highway.

Clerk
Chairman

The Chairman closed the public section of the meeting.

5 Declaration of members' interests for any agenda item at the meeting

There were none.

6 Approval of minutes of the Parish Council and extraordinary meetings held on Tuesday, 15 July 2018 and 6 August 2018

These were proposed as accurate records by Cllr Guest, seconded by Cllr Kinloch, in respect of the Parish Council meeting, and by Cllr Guest, seconded by Cllr Lord, in respect of the extraordinary meeting, and duly signed by the Chairman.

7 Update on actions from previous Parish Council meeting

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

8 Matters arising

a) Litter and dog waste bins for the flood control park

The Environment Agency had responded indicating that it was not in a position to pay for the emptying of the bins. See further report under Item 2 above.

b) Orchids on the flood control park

The Environment Agency had responded to the person raising the need for protection of these, copying in the Clerk.

c) Potential permissive footpath at Arboretum end of that running from White Horse and lease of greens from Thurlow Estate

The Clerk reported that she had contacted the Agent for Thurlow Estate following the July meeting but had not yet received a reply; the Clerk was asked to get in touch again.

Clerk

d) Possible rounders match between Arboretum and Withersfield village residents

In the absence of any progress, it was thought that discussions should be resumed next summer.

- e) Further contact with Suffolk Clinical Commissioning Group

Cllr Kinloch reported that he had recently agreed to attend the Clements practice Patient Participation Group, and as already determined, would get back in touch with the Clinical Commissioning Group in November. Cllr Kinloch

9 Consideration of reply from Suffolk County Council Highways in respect of outstanding issues relating to Withersfield roads

See report under Item 3 above.

In respect of a recent communication about changes to the provision of grit, it was proposed by Cllr Kinloch, seconded by Cllr Guest, that requests should be made for bins to be placed on Town Green, Burton Green, outside the recreation ground, half way up Hollow Hill and at the junction of Hollow Hill with Skippers Lane. Cllr Guest would check the situation in respect of the Arboretum and notify the Clerk as soon as possible. Clerk

10 Celebration/commemoration of end of World War I

- a) Update on arrangements

The Clerk provided an update of progress confirming the street party to be held at the village hall following the remembrance service at the church, the purchase of poppy seeds to be distributed for planting in gardens around the parish, and a visit to Bury St Edmunds Record Office to secure information on participants in the war from the parish who had returned – this would be displayed in the village hall along with information about those who had fallen and were recorded on the war memorial.

It had been suggested that those attending the street party could provide their own food, but recognised that some top-up would be necessary to ensure sufficiency and variety. The representative from Friends of Withersfield who was in attendance for this item confirmed that she had already agreed to contribute some funding, and also offered a further £200 to purchase drinks for the occasion. It was proposed by Cllr Kinloch, seconded by Cllr Guest, that the Parish Council should match fund up to £200 to pay for refreshments. The Clerk would notify the co-organisers of this. Clerk

- b) Wreath order

The various types of wreath available from the Royal British Legion were considered and in recognition of this special year, it was proposed by Cllr Guest, seconded by Cllr Kinloch, with no objections, that the Clerk should order Type G. Clerk

11 Receipt of initial report from Cllr Kinloch on the possible development of a neighbourhood plan

Cllr Kinloch reported that he had had a couple of conversations with the Planning Department at St Edmundsbury Borough Council, which had confirmed that, if undertaken, the process would be expensive and would require considerable attention and foresight. The new West Suffolk

Council was in the process of reappraising its attitude and approach to housing numbers, settlements and boundaries, and it might be better to wait for the outcomes in respect of these. Alternatively, it might be considered that the Parish Council would be better served by having a plan which could inform any decisions. Cllr Kinloch had looked at the Hargrave plan, and realised the huge amount of work involved and questioned whether councillors had the commitment and money necessary. A further issue which would require consideration was the relativity between the two parts of the parish, the village on one hand, and the Arboretum on the other.

It was highlighted that in the past a plan had been mooted but a small group of local neighbours had resisted change; this had led to a situation of having no framework against which the Parish Council could effectively consider new planning applications, for example, the recent application to build on garden land in Homestall Crescent. It was accepted that it would always be difficult to please everybody but with a plan at least ground rules would be available to consider and observe.

Councillors confirmed that in principle the development of a plan would be helpful, but were concerned about setting appropriate parameters, the size of the council, and the work involved. It would therefore be necessary to apply for a grant to buy expertise and time for preparation, and that it would be advisable, as part of the process, for any consultant employed to explore potential conflicts within the parish. Cllr Kinloch offered to continue to be involved on a small basis, and it was determined that he and Cllr Rich should agree an initial blueprint.

Cllr Kinloch
Chairman

It was proposed by Cllr Kinloch, seconded by Cllr Lord, that the development of a potential neighbourhood plan should be taken forward on the above bases.

12 Request from Speed Watch for the purchase of two post brackets

It was proposed by Cllr Lord, seconded by Cllr Guest, that up to £100 (excluding VAT) should be made available to the Speed Watch co-ordinator.

13 Finance

- a) Presentation of monthly accounts – Income and Expenditure and Bank Reconciliation

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

- b) Payments made since last meeting

These were noted by councillors and as a result the Chairman signed the payments section of the accounts for attachment to these minutes.

14 Correspondence

- a) Email – Litter problems in Withersfield village

It was agreed that this was an unacceptable ongoing problem and as custodians of the recreation ground, the Parish Council had a responsibility to take some action. It was therefore proposed by Cllr Kinloch, seconded by Cllr Lord, that as an initial step the Clerk should contact St Edmundsbury Council to explore the cost of signs asking people to take litter away, the provision of waste bins and the emptying of these. The parishioner raising this problem should be notified of the action being taken.

Clerk

- b) SARS thanks for donation

Noted

15 Planning

- a) Borough notifications since last meeting

It was noted that none had been received.

- b) Applications received since last meeting

Noted

16 Agenda items for meeting to be held on Tuesday 20 November 2018

- Litter management
- Neighbourhood plan
- Co-option of councillor to fill vacancy
- Meeting dates for 2019
- Draft budget for 2019/2020
- Tender for grass cutting/strimming 2019
- Licence for greens from Thurlow Estate

The meeting closed at 9.25 pm.