

**Minutes of Withersfield Parish Council meeting held at  
7:30pm on Tuesday, 12<sup>th</sup> July 2022 at the village hall, Withersfield.**

Present: Cllrs Terry Rich (Chairman); Frank Eve (Vice-Chair), Sheila Horton, Julia Korona,  
Indunil Wijenayaka; Clerk: Laura Crump; District Cllr: Peter Stevens.

**1. Apologies for absence**

None received.

**2. District Councillor's report**

Cllr Stevens told the PC that he had been on a site inspection for the last phase of the planning for the North-West Haverhill development of moving the bypass to the south. He passed on that local Cllrs had said there are still problems on the main Bury Road at school times which the roundabout hadn't solved. The North-West bypass is due to be opened in March 2023.

It was confirmed by Cllr Stevens that the new draft Local Plan doesn't contain any developments which should be a problem for Withersfield. He reiterated that the Neighbourhood Plan would need to sync with the Local Plan.

Cllr Stevens ensured he was inspecting planning applications received within Withersfield and encouraged the PC to contact him if there were ever any concerns.

The Chair asked Cllr Stevens about the land adjacent to Barsey Close, and whether the Council had made any decisions. The Chair explained to Cllr Stevens that the maintenance cost quoted from the DC was way beyond the means of the PC – the cost would use too high a proportion of the precept. Cllr Stevens had heard nothing further about the plan for maintaining this area of land. The Chair stated that the DC have an obligation to take action on the dead tree there as this could be dangerous to pedestrians. Cllr Stevens agreed to raise this issue.

Cllr Wijenayaka asked Cllr Stevens whether in the interim of the temporarily closed footpath in Withersfield (from 70 metres north of Hales Barn Road for 40 metres northbound for safety reasons to facilitate earthworks relating to the relief road) there is any mitigation to compensate the closure. Cllr Stevens was unsure but explained there would be no new permitted right and therefore an alternative route would be unlikely. Cllr Wijenayaka will check the final plan with Highways.

**3. County Councillor's report**

Cllr Bennett emailed the Clerk her July report which was shared to the PC; a copy can be found on the PC website.

**4. Public Forum for parishioners**

No parishioners attended the meeting.

*Chairman closed the public section of the meeting*

**5. Declaration of members' interests for any agenda item at this meeting**

None.

**6. To approve the minutes of the Annual Parish meeting and Parish Council meeting held on 10<sup>th</sup> May 2022**

Cllr Horton clarified that although stated in the 10.05.22 minutes that "two other committee members resigned" from the VHMC, that this was incorrect and that only one member - the treasurer - had resigned. This was noted and other than this, the minutes were approved - proposed by Cllr Wijenayaka and seconded by Cllr Eve.

**7. Parish Councillor vacancies**

At the last meeting, the PC had received an expression of interest from a parishioner, however since then he had not replied to the Clerk's or Chair's emails and hasn't been in contact.

An item will be placed in the parish newsletter and Cllrs were asked to think about any potential candidates to fill the 2 vacancies.

**8. Chair's Report**

It was confirmed by the Chair that he and the Vice-Chair had approved the implementation of the Clerk's salary uplift. This moves the Clerk up to SCP 14 - on the SALC pay scale - as of June 2022, which had been agreed by the PC at the 15.03.22 PC meeting.

The Chair reported that the Clerk had submitted the PC response to the Community Governance Review, disagreeing with the proposal. It was stated in the response that the PC strongly opposed splitting the parish into two, but see a benefit in having "reserved places" for each of the main areas i.e., the village and the Arboretum/Hanchett End. Two reserved places would ensure that there is always an onus on achieving representation from all parts of the parish, whilst not setting an unrealistic aim of achieving 50-50 representation. It was however, made clear that the PC are in favour to an increase in the number of councillors from 7 to 8 in the light of the increased size of the parish population.

**9. Matters arising - updates from previous Parish Council meetings**

None.

**10. Update from the Traffic Working Group**

Cllr Eve explained that he had attended the Village Traffic Group meeting where a number of villagers, Cllr Bennett, and a member of Suffolk Highways were present. He told the PC that there had been a lot of discussion about development and traffic and that the main focus was on speed and how to reduce this by means of speed limits and cameras. The meeting ended with Cllr Bennett agreeing to arrange another meeting at which she would attempt to

get cabinet members to attend. Cllr Stevens stated he was disappointed with the Highways interaction in the meeting.

Cllr Eve informed the PC that there is a villages' meeting group on the 25<sup>th</sup> July and he believes they need to widen the number of villages involved to help combat the traffic issues shared by neighbouring villages. Cllr Eve said he will try to get Chris Oakes of speed watch to attend the meeting too and hopes to encourage getting speed watch back up and running.

It was explained by Cllr Eve that when the 20mph zone was originally approved, he had a meeting with then County Councillor Mary Evans and David Chenery, where it was agreed that the estimated costs would be £6,000 for the TRO and £5,000 for signals and roundels: totalling £11,000. However, since then, David Chenery has said a further £20,000 is needed as a contingency before the signs go up and that another survey will need to be held after implementation which could demonstrate the need for additional measures. This was a great disappointment as it could preclude progress being made unless challenged.

The Chair thanked Cllr Eve for his continuing work on traffic calming in the parish and urged him to ask if he needed any support from the PC.

Cllr Stevens asked whether the money which he had donated to Withersfield traffic calming last year had been spent. It was confirmed that this money had been used towards the implementation of the 40mph buffer zones.

## **11. Neighbourhood Plan - approval of draft plan**

It was reported that there had been a meeting with Neil Homer, the consultant working on the parish Neighbourhood Plan, and the draft of the plan had been sent.

The draft was discussed amongst the PC. It was noted that West Suffolk's revised Local Plan redesignated "infill villages" as "Type B villages". Withersfield will become a type B village. It was deliberated whether the policy for planning applications containing the maximum number of 5 dwellings, that the size of units should be stipulated so as to have a certain number of 2-bed dwellings, should still be included. It was pointed out that this requirement would need to be justified with proof for the need of 2-bed houses in the parish and a housing needs study would need to be carried out, which would be difficult. The Chair suggested that the Plan should not specify the requirement for "small" or 2 bedded houses. This was agreed by all Cllrs. It was agreed that the policy should state any developments should reflect the nature of the village and be of appropriate size and scale of the site.

It was also agreed by the PC that the terminology where 'Haverhill urban area' had been used to describe the Arboretum area, be removed.

The PC agreed for Cllrs Korona and Wijenayaka to move onto the next stage, to inform Neil to drop the size of dwellings and not go for the housing needs study, and to push for a timeframe for referendum.

Proposed by the Chair and seconded by Cllr Wijenayaka.

## **12. Update from the Village Hall Committee and reimbursement of expenditure – Cllr Horton**

Cllr Horton thanked Cllr Stevens for his donation to the parish's Jubilee event held on 5<sup>th</sup> June 2022, which went very well and was thoroughly enjoyed by many, despite the weather. Commemorative coins were handed out to all children at the event and Cllr Horton has given out remaining coins to children of the parish who were not able to attend the event. The few remaining coins have been given to the vicar to hand out to children in Haverhill. It was proposed by Cllr Horton, for the extra spend of £36 for refreshments at the Jubilee event, be reimbursed to her, making a total of £78.56 to be donated by the PC. This was seconded by Cllr Rich and agreed by all Cllrs.

It was reported that the outside of the village hall will be decorated soon.

Cllr Horton informed the PC that the Chair of the VHMC is leaving the village in a few months' time and therefore, the committee are seeking a replacement Chair.

The VHMC are holding their AGM on the 20<sup>th</sup> July at the village hall. All parishioners are welcome to attend.

## **13. Graveyard control – Cllr Korona**

Cllr Korona circulated her draft of 'Graveyard Rules' to the PC for perusal prior to the meeting. The document was discussed and Cllrs gave their comments to each section. Cllr Korona will make a few amendments to the draft, agreed by the PC in discussions, and finalise the rules. The new rules make it clear that trees and shrubs should not be planted on or beside graves.

The Clerk will then be able to share the document with those wishing to use the graveyard and publish it on the PC website for clear instructions to all.

It was agreed that charges for burials and headstones should remain the same for a further year.

## **14. To consider draft of PC comments on West Suffolk Local Plan Preferred Options by Cllrs Korona and Wijenayaka**

Cllrs Korona and Wijenayaka had read through the preferred options and details and summarised that in all they are happy with the Local Plan. The PC welcomes the title of 'type B' village for Withersfield and is secure in terms of there being no additional sites identified for planning in the village. However, Cllr Wijenayaka felt that plans for green infrastructure were unambitious.

It was agreed by the PC for Cllrs Korona and Wijenayaka to send comments as discussed and agreed this evening by the PC. The consultation closes 26<sup>th</sup> July 2022.

## **15. Finance**

- a) Presentation of monthly accounts – Income and Expenditure and Bank Reconciliation
- b) To note payments made since last meeting

These were approved. Proposed by Cllr Eve and seconded by Cllr Korona.

- c) Quarterly report of expenditure and comparison to budget

The report was approved – proposed by Cllr Wijenayaka and seconded by Cllr Horton.

- d) Consider and agree to adopt the new LGA Councillor Code of Conduct

The Cllrs discussed and agreed to adopt the new Code of Conduct.

- e) Consideration of Internal Audit Report from SALC

The Clerk explained that there had only been one recommendation made on the report and everything else had met the requirements. The Clerk and Cllr Korona will look further into this item being it is related to the website and accessibility.

- f) To note Annual Internal Audit Report received for AGAR which has been submitted

Noted.

## **16. Correspondence**

- a) Emails – WEBNOS Defib site check x 2

Noted.

- b) Email – Statement of Licensing Policy – Consultation

Noted. No comments to be made by the PC.

- c) Email – SALC Subscription Review

This was noted and the increase of rate will need to be considered when the budget is drafted in November.

## **17. Planning**

- a) Borough notifications since last meeting
- b) Applications received since last meeting

All applications were considered and noted.

## **18. Agenda items for meeting to be held 13<sup>th</sup> September 2022**

- Retendering for grass cutting contract – to be reviewed by Cllr Wijenayaka in preparation for the next meeting.

*The meeting closed at 21:00.*