

**Minutes of Withersfield Parish Council meeting held at 7:30pm on
Tuesday, 21st January 2020 in Withersfield Village Hall**

Present: Cllrs Terry Rich (Chairman); Frank Eve; Peter Lord, Jill Johnson; Clerk: Laura Crump; District
Cllr: Peter Stevens; County Cllr: Mary Evans.

1. Apologies for absence

Received from Cllrs Kinloch and Molyneux-Summers

The Chairman welcomed David Huckstep, the 3 representatives from J.A.P Architects and 2 parishioners.

2. District Councillor's report

At the last PC meeting, Cllr Stevens assured he would find out more information on the 'deferred sites' stated on the Local Plan, as there was some confusion to the meaning of this. He explained he had raised the matter with the Local Plan officers and was assured that Withersfield Parish Council will be updated on the timescale for the Local Plan and be very much in the forefront in choosing any appropriate sites for future developments. Cllr Stevens declared the term 'deferred' meant not deemed an acceptable location. The Chair added, that Cllr Kinloch and himself had attended a meeting regarding the Local Plan, where they discovered that a site is named as 'deferred' when nobody has requested it for the purpose of development before.

Cllr Stevens shared the news that the new household waste development in Bury St Edmunds opened on the 16th January.

Cllr Evans revealed there is a plan to increase the Haverhill site.

The Haverhill Forum is fast approaching and Cllr Stevens shall be attending. The PC is also invited.

Correspondence was received by Cllr Stevens from residents of Barsey Close regarding the overgrown green and a dead tree which he has arranged to be eradicated.

Cllr Stevens explained that from the 6th April there will be a new civil parking enforcement which should bring positive changes to parking habits. There are to be periodic visits to check for dangerous parking in villages and tickets will be issued.

3. County Councillor's report

Cllr Evans covered the following points:

- Suffolk County Council is reviewing its lorry route map and submissions to the review are to be made through the local county council. Cllr Evans believes the best way forward is to hold a meeting of Withersfield and Great Wratting parish council representatives so we can draft a submission.

- The previously cancelled meeting with the rural crime police has been rearranged for 17th February.
- There is going to be a further meeting concerning the problems with the Haverhill doctors' surgery.
- Suffolk County Council is working to create nearly 900 new places for children with Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND). Most will be in specialist units attached to mainstream schools in the county but the programme does include building new special schools.
- Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service has been rated "Good" for its effectiveness, efficiency and how well it leads and manages its staff. We are proposing to increase the service's budget by £500,000 plus inflation next year.
- The Council is currently looking for projects for some back money received. Cllr Evans is researching the possibility of signing up communities in this area to a scheme to have Automatic Number Plate Recognition cameras to combat speeding.
- It was voted at SCC cabinet last week to invest to complete the rollout of superfast broadband to all premises in the country. This will result in better broadband access for all. The final phase of the rollout will be expensive as broadband is connected to remote and isolated properties.

4. Public Forum for parishioners

J.A.P Architects will outline their initial proposals for a development of houses on the site of Milton House

Lee Frere of J.A.P Architects presented these initial proposals. He showed their pre-application proposals including the multi sheet analysis of the village - produced to build up an idea of how Withersfield developed.

Thumbnail sketches of different possible dwellings options, involving different numbers and scales of dwellings, were shown and described. The option which they decided to focus on is the courtyard style of 5 or 6 dwellings with a range of 2, 3, and 4 bedroom houses. This option was explained in more detail accompanied with larger sketches and plans.

Lee expressed their desire to meet with the Parish Council and residents of Withersfield to retrieve their views before formally applying for planning. He welcomed any questions and comments.

One parishioner voiced his concern over the number of cars per property there could end up being and with that, a lack of parking spaces for these cars.

Lee explained that as architects there is a standard they have to adhere to in providing a particular number of parking spaces per dwelling.

There was also a discussion about the flooding in this particular area in previous years, due to the run off of water from field and Burton Green. The access for the chamber, which facilitates the flooding, is at Milton House. This will need to be considered by the architects.

As a developer, Lee guaranteed that they have a responsibility to matters such as these, ensuring they have to satisfy the environmental agency with their plans.

The Chair questioned the number of dwellings being proposed here, as it is of the understanding set out in the Local Plan, that as an infill village, developments within Withersfield village should be restricted to small scale developments of five homes or less.

In response to this, Lee justified the number of dwellings by sharing the view that this policy is a guideline and that they also believe that smaller dwellings is the better option here rather than having fewer yet larger homes built.

Another parishioner brought the subject of the removal of trees in the area to discussion as several trees had already been taken down.

Lee made clear that they must have consent to remove trees and that the decisions to which trees to remove, comes from the advice of an arboriculturist. There will be more trees being removed to make space for the development.

The Chair suggested that the sizes of the gardens these new properties would have, are not typical for the area.

Cllr Johnson stated she thought this proposal is out of keeping with the rest of the village and the other courtyards in Withersfield where are more linear developments.

This was reasoned by the detailed analysis research, previously carried out, where the architects looked at the densities of houses in the village and using their findings, they believe their proposal is in the average range of this. The cluster courtyard style is believed to be the most appropriate plan. Lee expressed their wishes to try to be harmonious in their plans to fit in with the character of the village while also bringing something pleasant and new to the area.

The Chair drew an end to the discussion, concluding that there is some anxiety over the density of the dwellings and how this will relate to parking, the constraints of trees and drainage, that this should comply with the maximum of 5 dwellings for a development, the nature of the village, and the impact on neighbours. He also informed the architects that the PC are beginning work on a Neighbourhood Plan which will state certain terms for future developments within the parish. The Chair stated that these factors would be what the PC would be looking at when the planning application is received for PC comment.

Lee thanked the PC and parishioners for their time and expressed his appreciation for all the comments and feedback. He assured that the concerns raised will be looked into along with other aspects of the scheme before finalising everything for a formal planning application.

Chairman closed the public section of the meeting

5. Co-option of new councillor

The Chair urged David Huckstep to say a few words to the Parish Council about his interest in joining the PC. David explained how his career background including planning experience, could be useful to the PC and he would like to help out where he can within the community.

It was proposed by Cllr Lord and seconded by Cllr Eve to co-opt David Huckstep onto the Parish Council. All were in favour, which now brings the Parish Council to a full complement of 7 Councillors.

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

None

7. To approve the minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on Tuesday, 19th November 2019

These were approved - proposed by Cllr Lord and seconded by Cllr Eve.

8. Matters arising - update from previous Parish Council meeting

- a) Village Hall Management Committee - update from Cllrs Johnson and Molyneux-Summers

No news to report on the management for the village hall. Cllr Johnson was asked to contact the Chair of the VHMC to find out what is happening here.

Cllr Johnson is in the process of organising a quiz held by the PC, where funds raised would go to the maintenance of the Village Hall.

- b) 'Support for village halls in West Suffolk' (Jamie Murphy email) – update from Cllr Molyneux-Summers

The PC are unaware of any progress made towards this by the VHMC.

- c) 'Website Accessibility' email – update from Cllr Lord on his findings

Cllr Lord is still to look into this and will update at the next meeting.

- d) Progress with the Neighbourhood Plan – update from the Chair

The Chair confirmed the application to designate a Neighbourhood Area and map had been submitted. This needs to be formally signed off by the County Council before moving onto the next step, which could possibly be to apply for funding.

9. Cllrs Johnson and Molyneux-Summers to report back from the Village Hall Management Committee General Meeting held on 14/1/20

Cllr Molyneux-Summers was unable to attend the meeting due to work commitments and Cllr Johnson was unaware of where the meeting was being held and had received no contact from the Chair of the VHMC.

Cllr Johnson is to contact the Chair of the VHMC to find out whether the meeting went ahead, and if so, to retrieve some feedback from the meeting. If the meeting had been cancelled, Cllr Johnson is to encourage a future date to be arranged.

10. To receive an update from the Traffic Working Group

Cllr Eve has confirmed the go ahead of the buffer zones - this is now awaiting final sign off. Suffolk Highways will then start the legal and assessment work. Once they have a design sketch, the Parish Council will be consulted to agree the extent of the terminal points. It has been implied to Cllr Eve that the 20mph speed limit is unlikely for the whole village. There is however, a precedent for a smaller 20mph zone in Church Street where the mean speeds were closer to the guidelines. It has been agreed that when the report for this is ready, it will be sent to Cllr Eve to insert any comments that the Parish Council feel may help the adjudication.

Cllr Evans advised Cllr Eve to email over the figures of the pledges received to fund the buffer zones, to move things forward. Cllr Eve is also to confirm approval to go ahead with the report for the 20mph limit.

In previous correspondence, it was brought to the attention of the PC that Great Wratting have requested signage at either end of Withersfield Road, Great Wratting, saying 'Unsuitable for HGVs'. While the PC are in support of this initiative, it would seem appropriate to extend this signage through parts of Withersfield village. Cllr Evans informed the PC that Suffolk County Council is soon to be doing its lorry survey and will organise for Withersfield to be assessed in this.

It was suggested about arranging a meeting with local parishes and officers from Highways, to discuss local traffic issues and coordinate strategies. Cllr Evans is to arrange this and Cllr Eve shall be in attendance.

The Chair brought up the issue of cars parking on the brow of the hill on the road next to the flood parks. The PC have been requested to send photos of this to Cllr Evans, who can then look further into the problem with police involvement.

11. The Chair to report on the parking/driving on Burton Green problem

Thurlow Estate had been in contact with the Chair due to having received complaints about people driving over and parking, on Burton Green. The Chair had met with Thurlow Estate to discuss this, which concluded with the agreement that Thurlow Estate would erect a sign on the green indicating for it not to be driven on, and the Chair would write to the residents on Burton Green re-emphasising this point.

12. To consider quotations received for 3 year Environmental Works contract 2020

Three quotations were received and henceforth, discussed and considered. It was agreed that the quote which was significantly higher than the other 2, was to be dismissed. The remaining 2 contractors quoted similarly. It was proposed by Cllr Eve and seconded by Cllr Johnson, to continue with the contractor who the PC had used previously due to it being a more local company to Withersfield and having had satisfactory work received from them in the past. It was agreed to pursue the 3 year contract with said contractor, subject to satisfactory works reviewed at the end of each year.

13. To consider the following graveyard drafts put together by Cllrs Kinloch and Johnson

- a) A new protocol for the running of the graveyard
- b) New rate of charges

It was informed by Cllr Johnson that herself and Cllr Kinloch, along with a former member of the Parish Council, had a meeting where they discussed these points. Cllr Johnson put across the following suggestions they had come to and asked the PC for their opinions so an appropriate proposal could then be put together.

- To introduce a clear reservation fee
 - Possible charge: Parishioners £100, non-parishioners £250
- Interment fees – to be raised?
 - Possible charges: Parishioners £250
- No refunds for cancelled reservations
- No change for rates for children
- Rates for the burial of cremations to raise

The PC responded to these points by agreeing Cllrs Johnson and Kinloch should look at the rates of other local graveyards. With this, Withersfield graveyard rates for non-parishioners, children, cremations, and reservations fees should reflect the rates from local graveyards. It was agreed the rates for parishioners should rise but remain lower than the non-parishioners' rates.

It was then discussed by the PC how to make clear and fair judgements when deciding which rate to charge people (parishioner or non-parishioner).

The following examples were discussed as possible requirements for receiving the discounted parishioner rate:

- > Currently residing in the parish
- > Has previously resided in the parish
- > Has parents and/or grandparents residing in the parish
- > Has parents and/or grandparents buried in Withersfield graveyard

It was suggested by the Chair that there could be a 'middle' rate for people who haven't resided in the parish but have strong connections to the village – such as close relatives.

Cllr Johnson advised the PC that there is possibly about 40 more years left of capacity in the graveyard.

With the guidance gained from the discussion, it was proposed by Cllr Lord and seconded by Cllr Huckstep, for Cllrs Johnson and Kinloch to proceed with putting together a proposal for the update of charges and a clear definition of who can receive which rates, to be presented at the next PC meeting.

14. Finance

- a) Presentation of monthly accounts – Income and Expenditure and Bank Reconciliation
- b) To note payments made since last meeting
- c) Quarterly report of expenditure and comparison to budget – Q3
- d) Approval of budget and precept submission

The precept for 2020/2021 of £9324 with a 0% increase/decrease, was approved. The accounts were considered and agreed as accurate - proposed by Cllr Rich and seconded by Cllr Johnson.

15. Correspondence

- a) Email – Headway Suffolk

It was proposed by Cllr Lord and seconded by Cllr Johnson for the PC to donate £50.

- b) Email - Melbourne Bridge

The PC raised this problem of cars parking on the brow of the bridge earlier in the meeting (section 10) with County Cllr Evans requesting for photos of the parked cars to be emailed to her so she can pursue it further.

- c) Letter – Dedham Vale

Noted.

- d) Emails – Meldham Flood Park

Noted. Cllr Huckstep to reply to the latest email from the environmental agency on the issues.

- e) Email - Suffolk Neighbourhood Watch Donation Request

Noted.

16. Planning

- a) Correspondence and updates:

- i) Emails – The Cedars

Noted.

- ii) Emails - DC/19/2202/HH: White Doves, revised scheme.

Noted. Copy of letter from representative of Peter Burrell which was received just prior to the meeting was also noted.

- b) Borough notifications since last meeting:

Noted.

- c) Applications received since last meeting:

Noted.

17. Agenda items for meeting to be held on 17th March 2020

- Update from Cllr Huckstep on issues with Meldham Flood Park

The meeting closed at 9:24pm.