

**Minutes of Withersfield Parish Council meeting held at 7:30pm on
Tuesday, 15th September 2020 via Skype**

Present: Cllrs Terry Rich (Chairman); Ian Kinloch (Vice-Chair); Frank Eve, David Huckstep, Julia Korona, Peter Lord; Clerk: Laura Crump; and 3 parishioners.

1. Apologies for absence

Received from Cllr Johnson and County Cllr Evans

2. District Councillor's report

Cllr Stevens began by offering to organise the removal of the sofa in the bus shelter which had been an item discussed in the previous PC meeting. The decision on whether to accept this offer would be made later in the meeting by the PC.

Parishioners from Barsey Close had been in communications with Cllr Stevens due to confusion over who owns, and is therefore responsible, for the flood park there. West Suffolk is continuing the grass cutting for this area however the ownership is unknown at present. Cllr Stevens assured the PC that officers are still looking into this and he will press them for a conclusion.

CPE had no recorded visits for parking enforcements wardens in Withersfield and Cllr Stevens urged that if there are elements of dangerous parking, to please ring the police.

The Spring Clean was previously cancelled but has just been re-organising for this weekend with equipment available.

As the Milton House application was refused, Cllr Stevens would be interested to hear the parish's views on proceedings for a re-application.

It was recommended to look on the West Suffolk website for information on the Council's Covid-19 reactions or grants procedures.

The Chair thanked Cllr Stevens for his great support with the Milton House application which was highly objected by amongst the parish.

3. County Councillor's report

Cllr Mary Evans who was not in attendance had submitted a written report which was circulated and is available on the Parish Council website.

4. Public Forum for parishioners

The Chair invited the parishioner who had attended the meeting to discuss current issues with Jaynic, to outline the problems to the PC. The PC would make an informed decision on action to be taken later in the agenda.

The parishioner raised 2 issues around Jaynic:

Firstly, the reed cutting - which was performed very early morning on the 21st July. The parishioner explained that guidelines state that during bird nesting season, people shouldn't cut back foliage where birds would be nesting - it is a wildlife crime to damage and destroy nests. The parishioner went on to say that he was aware that the reed warbler had been demonstrating all the behaviours of nesting prior to the reeds being cut. Ultimately, after the reeds had been cut down, the reed warbler only called for a few days after and has not been heard or seen since. This has led to the parishioner believing that this means they have destroyed a nest and he feels that Jaynic haven't taken any precautions to avoid destruction of bird nests. The parishioner has reported this to the Wildlife Crimes Officers, though as there is no actual evidence, they are unable to take any further action.

Cllr Huckstep pointed out that it is an environmental offence to do this in bird nesting season, which is from March to September, irrespective of whether there is a perceived nest. He suggested this could be reported to the Environment Agency.

The second issue is around the diesel generator on the building site of the epicentre. Despite Jaynic stating the generator is on a timer of Monday to Friday 5:30am-5:30pm and Saturday and Sunday 6am - 8am and 2pm-4pm, it is believed to be running through the night as the fumes has been smelt by nearby residents. Backing up this claim, the parishioner has captured a video of the generator running on a recent Sunday at 4:55pm.

Cllr Huckstep questioned why Jaynic haven't got mains electricity, meaning the diesel generator would not be necessary.

The Chair then invited the other 2 parishioners who had attended to speak about the broadband issue, to share their thoughts. The PC would decide on their actions towards this later in the agenda.

One parishioner summarised the proposal, which was recently seen in a local paper, being that Haverhill is to be one of the first towns in East Anglia to benefit from this upgrade of ultra-fast broadband service, installed by July 2021.

This is desirable, especially in the current climate where more and more are working from home and relying on their broadband. It could also benefit house prices if Withersfield is included in this upgrade.

Last time there was an upgrade, Withersfield was supposed to have been included with the Haverhill area but somehow ended up being missed. At the time, County Cllr Evans then had to push hard to get Withersfield the upgrade.

As a result of this past experience, parishioners are concerned that although it is identified on the Openreach plan as including Withersfield parish in this next upgrade with Haverhill, that it shall be missed once again.

The parishioner has been in contact with Openreach in an attempt to get in front of this and has been informed that Openreach are currently looking at Haverhill town for the upgrade and at this stage, are not sure whether it is viable to include Withersfield.

It was requested by the parishioner, for the PC to do what it can to lobby to make sure that Openreach do not forget Withersfield in this important broadband upgrade.

The 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 Parish Council meeting held on 14th July 2020

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

7. Matters arising - updates from previous Parish Council meeting

a) Milton House – next steps

As the Milton House application was refused, with a substantial majority at the committee meeting, the PC debated to what the next steps should be.

Cllr Stevens expressed he is keen to hear views towards the ongoing planning for future development of this site.

It had been suggested by a parishioner that the PC write to the developer to offer discussion to what the PC and parishioners would find acceptable for a development at the Milton House site. Drafts had been shared with the PC which clarifies that the PC is not against a re-development of the site but would welcome the opportunity for further discussion of an appropriate plan which doesn't over develop the site and enhances the conservation area.

The Chair feels that an appeal is expected and that it would be a good idea to open conversation with the developer to aid a plan which would be satisfactory to Withersfield PC and parishioners.

The PC agreed that writing to the developer would be the next step to take. This was proposed by Cllr Eve and seconded by Cllr Korona.

Cllr Stevens requested to be kept informed of the PC's further actions and assured he would also advise the PC on any progress to this planning application.

b) Progress with the Neighbourhood Plan

Concerns were raised that Neighbourhood Plans will become compromised by the consultations to reform the planning system, which was sent through by NALC. It was agreed that the consultations need to be further investigated to clarify whether there still remains a purpose to having a Neighbourhood Plan implemented. The PC actions towards the planning consultations are to be decided later in the meeting.

c) Removal of the sofa in the bus shelter

Cllr Korona had entered a piece into the most recent Withersfield News requesting parishioner views on the sofa. She received 3 responses -2 of which being in favour of removing the sofa, and 1 against removing the sofa.

The PC considered whether removing the sofa would cause upset amongst parishioners however feel that the sofa is likely to rot in the winter. It was proposed by Cllr Eve and seconded by Cllr Lord to take up Cllr Stevens offer to organise having the sofa removed. Clerk to action.

d) Meldham Flood Park – Cllr Huckstep

Cllr Huckstep informed the PC that the on-site meeting scheduled with the Environment Agency is the 2nd October which himself and Cllr Johnson will be attending. An agenda has been put together and the Councillors will report back to the PC at the next meeting.

8. Covid-19 - update and any future actions

The Chair asked whether there were any suggestions of what the PC could be doing at this time to help the community. It was agreed to re-publish the leaflet of those offering their help to others in the parish in the next edition of the Withersfield News along with encouraging residents to obtain their flu jabs.

9. Update from the Traffic Working Group including:

- Update on car parking problem along Melbourne Bridge
- Village highway signage

Prior to the PC meeting, Cllr Eve had shared the meeting notes from his meeting with County Cllr Evans and David Chenery from Suffolk Highways. At their meeting, it was confirmed that the PC would like to press ahead with the buffer zones and David Chenery was asked to chase up the design department as well as to schedule a meeting so decisions could be made to where the buffer zone signage would be placed.

It was suggested that the PC could use the same Traffic Order (T.O) to put in place the 20mph speed zone, as the buffer zones. County Cllr Evans also added that this could be extended to the lengthening of the yellow lines in Queens Street. This meant, they were left with 2 areas of discussion:

1. what would the extra costs be and how would they be funded, and;
2. if someone were to object to the extension of the double yellow lines, would this hold up the entire scheme

In response to the second point, Cllr Eve requested that Cllr Huckstep ask residents at the bottom of Queens Street to find out whether anyone would have an objection. Cllr Huckstep confirmed he had spoken to the residents previously about this and could assure the PC that there would not be any complaints towards the yellow lines being extended.

Cllr Eve explained he is awaiting the figures from David Chenery for what the extra costs would be for the three items to be under the one T.O.

Although being in favour of all elements of the scheme, there is concern amongst the PC that having the entire scheme together under one T.O, could potentially delay the implementation of the buffer zones, which the PC have already paid for.

It was proposed by Cllr Kinloch and seconded Cllr Huckstep to pursue a single T.O but that the implementation would be sequential as the PC identifies funds to the other parts of the schemes. This was agreed to and concluded that the decision around the funds can only be decided once the actual costs have been revealed.

The Chair commended Cllr Eve and those of the Traffic Working Group for all their hard work and effort for these traffic calming measures and requested they push for a time frame for the buffer zones.

Cllr Eve announced he been in communication with a member of 'Friends of Withersfield' who is going to put in a request to the group for a contribution towards the 20mph zone fund.

Regarding the highway signage, Cllr Eve confirmed he had successfully reported the problematic road signs found around the village. This was carried out by using the online tool provided by Suffolk Highways where anyone can report such problems discovered in the parish.

10. Graveyard reservation markers – Cllr Kinloch

Cllr Kinloch explained he had attempted to find somewhere to order in bulk some reservation markers for the graveyard, though unfortunately found these were not available. Cllr Kinloch announced he is prepared to place a marker himself as and when required to mark reserved plots.
No further action required.

11. Footpaths and private paths

Members of the PC and other parishioners have recently experienced being challenged while using certain footpaths within the parish. This was deliberated and decided that Cllr Lord is to open dialogue with Thurlow Estate on the matter.

12. Proposal for creating a hard parking area at the village hall including funding options - Cllr Huckstep

Cllr Huckstep briefed the PC on his idea to improve the parking area at the village hall. It was explained how his meeting with the Thurlow Estate resulted in them having no objections towards the proposed improvements, but they would not be contributing to the cost. Cllr Huckstep suggested the parking could be enhanced in stages with a small section being focussed on at a time.

The Councillors agreed with Cllr Hucktepp's view that the first step needs to be to improving the road leading up to the village hall and primarily establishing whether this is a County road. This item concluded with the agreement that in his next meeting with Highways agents, Cllr Eve will confirm whether the road in question is a county road and if so, that they intend to maintain it.

13. Withersfield broadband

After hearing the parishioners concerns earlier in the meeting, the PC agreed to put in a representation to Openreach on the matter.

14. Order of wreath and arrangements for Remembrance Sunday

It was proposed by Cllr Eve and seconded by Cllr Kinloch to order wreath F from the selection from The Royal British Legion. It is noted that this will be an S137 payment of £20. The Clerk is to pursue the order.

15. Finance

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

These were accepted. Proposed by Cllr Kinloch and seconded by Cllr Lord.

- c) Consideration of the 'Action Plan' in response to the Internal Audit Report from SALC

The action plan entailing responses to the recommendations and comments made by the internal auditor was accepted and agreed. Item 14 on the list, which recommended the PC to publish certain GDPR policies, needs further investigation which as the data protection lead to the PC, Cllr Lord is to pursue. Proposed by Cllr Rich and seconded by Cllr Lord.

- d) To note the effectiveness of the internal audit
- e) To note that the Clerk is appointed as the Parish Council's Responsible Financial Officer and is responsible for administering the Parish Council's finances

These were noted.

16. Correspondence

- a) Emails – Jaynic Issues

The PC discussed what actions to take regarding the two issues the parishioner raised earlier in the meeting.

It was agreed that the PC will write to the Environment Agency to highlight the believed breach that Jaynic has made by cutting down the reeds during the bird nesting season and

to seek assurances for next year. The PC will also contact Jaynic asking for an explanation of this and what due diligence was carried out.

It was then agreed that the PC will also press Jaynic for a timeframe to when they would be ceasing to use the generator - which is causing disconcert to nearby residents - by connecting to the mains power.

b) Email – Village Green Fitness Classes

The PC agreed to allow the use of the village green for the requested fitness classes. It was proposed by Cllr Korona and seconded by Cllr Eve that if these classes were a commercial venture however, a contribution towards the PC funds should be requested.

c) Email – Planning Consultations

It was proposed by Cllr Rich and seconded by Cllr Eve that as the planning lead for the PC, Cllr Kinloch should look further into the consultations and circulate via email what responses the PC should submit. This was agreed.

17. Planning

a) Borough notifications since last meeting:

Noted.

b) Applications received since last meeting:

Noted.

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

None raised – email clerk if any arise in the meantime.

The meeting closed at 21:25.