

**Minutes of Withersfield Parish Council meeting held at 7:30pm on  
Tuesday, 17<sup>th</sup> November 2020 held virtually via Skype**

Present: Cllrs Terry Rich (Chairman); Ian Kinloch (Vice-Chair); Frank Eve, Jill Johnson, Julia Korona,  
Peter Lord; Clerk: Laura Crump; District Cllr: Peter Stevens; County Cllr: Mary Evans,  
and parishioner: Indunil Wijenayaka.

**1. Apologies for absence**

None received.

**2. District Councillor's report**

Cllr Stevens began by reporting West Suffolk Council is in the budget setting process. There has been quite a lot of pressure due to the number of grants the Council have given out this year and the lack of income from various sources, causing the Council to have had to rely on reserves. Nevertheless, they are hopeful for a balanced budget.

Civil parking enforcement has been successfully going ahead. Withersfield has not been visited but Haverhill has.

The market in Haverhill is selling food at present and it is hoped the Christmas market will be restored when the restrictions are lifted from 2<sup>nd</sup> December.

The Council has had to rely on use of bed and breakfast accommodation for homeless people during the pandemic as other temporary accommodation has been in short supply.

The virtual Local Plan meeting for Parishes was recently held and Cllr Stevens is keen to hear the PC's views on how they see the vision of Withersfield moving forward. This needs to be formulated with a view to where future expansion and where development may be appropriate, while maintaining the village's character. Cllr Stevens will then bring these views forward as the local plan moves along its various stages.

All waste operatives are operating normally.

The Chair asked Cllr Stevens if there had been any further developments with the issues of the land on the corner of Hanchett End/Barsey Close that had been raised by a resident. Cllr Stevens reported that the ownership of the land still had not been discovered. The Council have recently cut the grass but have not dealt with the dead tree or overgrown scrub. Cllr Stevens will press the officers to come to a conclusion of ownership of the area and ask for a report to come to the next meeting of the Parish Council.

Cllr Kinloch voiced his concerns over the West Suffolk Local Plan in relation to the position of Withersfield, which seemingly is a function of whatever happens in Cambridgeshire. Cllr Kinloch emphasised that he struggles to see the relationship between what happens in the rest of Suffolk, to Withersfield.

Cllr Stevens replied by assuring the Councillors that the Withersfield area is not forgotten and that Haverhill will play a pivotal part in the new plan because of the demands of Cambridge and the opportunities that Haverhill has for increased housing. The focus for comment towards the Local Plan needs to be to seek reassurance for future planning to ensure the identity of Withersfield is retained.

### **3. County Councillor's report**

Cllr Mary Evans submitted a written report to the Parish Council which is available to view on the Parish Council website.

In relation to the traffic calming schemes the PC are working towards, Cllr Evans expressed her discontent with the proposed costs and timeline. Cllr Evans agrees with the serious concerns of the Parish Council about the safety problem of the parking after Melbourne Bridge and is keen to get this issue resolved ASAP.

Fortunately, Cllr Evans revealed she will be able to help with some of the costings with her locality budget. She would like to set up a meeting with Cllr Eve over the next few days to discuss the traffic calming schemes and also arrange another meeting with David Chenery.

Cllr Eve declared the revised costs for 20mph zone totalled £1189.20 and that he has secured a total of £2250 donations towards the scheme so far. Cllr Evans again confirmed that she will be able to help with some of the cost.

The Chair reemphasised that he felt it was not acceptable that the PC were being told they would have to pay for the double yellow lines to be extended along Melbourne Bridge, when the PC were reporting to the statutory Highways authority a risk to life, rather than attempting to implement a PC proposed improvement.

Cllr Evans replied by stating that the view from The Suffolk Roadsafe Board is that the accident blackspots around the county have been dealt with. She will speak to David Chenery from Highways about this but justified that the budgets have been cut over the years for Highways.

### **4. Public Forum for parishioners**

No parishioners attended the meeting.

*Chairman closed the public section of the meeting*

### **5. Co-option of new councillor following resignation of Cllr Huckstep**

The Chair introduced the item by explaining that following the resignation of Cllr Huckstep, the Clerk had advertised the vacancy to which Indunil Wijenayaka had been in contact to express his interest in fulfilling the position. The Chair welcomed Indunil and asked him to introduce himself to the Parish Council and detail what relevant background he has as well as to explain his desire to join the PC.

Indunil gave a short explanation of his personal circumstances including that he has lived in Withersfield for the last 5 years on the Arboretum estate. After attending and being involved in the previous Parish Council meeting, Indunil felt the PC was a welcoming and positive group which he would very much like to be a part of, in order to help improve the area and give back to the Withersfield community. Indunil's particular areas of interest include nature, the environment and the recent parish broadband issue.

The Chair proposed, seconded by Cllr Kinloch, to co-opt Indunil Wijenayaka onto the Parish Council to which all the Councillors voted in favour.

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

The Chair declared that he lives in an area where the buffer zones are likely to cover, and it was noted that Cllrs Eve, Johnson, Kinloch, Korona, and Lord, as residents within Withersfield village, have a personal interest in the 20mph speed limit plans.

**7. To approve the minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on 15<sup>th</sup> September 2020**

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

**8. Matters arising - updates from previous Parish Council meeting**

a) Milton House – next steps

The Chair explained that following the previous parish council meeting, he had written to the developer which led the developer to contacting the Chair. They had a long conversation about the proposal where the Chair re-emphasised that the PC is not against the development on the site and would welcome a revised proposal which included less houses and a smaller footprint. The developer told the Chair he would discuss this with his partners. To date, there has been no appeal or revised application lodged.

b) Neighbourhood Plan

Cllr Kinloch said that despite the proposed changes to local planning law, there was still a case to pursue a Neighbourhood plan and will talk more on this when the meeting reaches the Local Plan feedback at item 12.

c) Withersfield broadband

On behalf of the Parish Council, the Chair wrote to Openreach raising concerns that Withersfield may not be included in the upcoming Haverhill town fibre broadband upgrade. The response was disappointing and they could not provide the assurance requested on the matter.

Cllr Evans believes it is worth going back and reminding Openreach that the reason Withersfield has endured such appalling broadband is because when BT were first

scoping broadband, they mistakenly thought that Withersfield was within Haverhill town and in turn, resulted in the village being missed out.

Keen on the subject, Cllr Wijenayaka is to meet virtually with Cllr Evans to together draft a more comprehensive case for why Withersfield should not be forgotten to Openreach in the upgrade.

d) Jaynic issues

Queries on the issues conversed at the previous meeting, were emailed to Jaynic to which no response had been received.

The generator issue has now been resolved as the building work has come to an end.

The environmental issue was reported to the EA and it was proposed by the Chair that Cllr Wijenayaka prepare a communication to be sent to Jaynic just before the beginning of the next nesting season reminding them of their responsibilities under the Environmental Protection Act on behalf of the PC, so as to avoid this situation again. This was seconded by Cllr Korona.

e) Footpaths and private paths – Cllr Lord

Cllr Lord briefed the PC on the discussion he had with a member of the Estate concerning the footpaths. It was decided that the advice the PC give parishioners on this matter, is to endeavour to stick to the public footpaths, though if you find yourself on a private path and are challenged about trespassing, politely ask to be directed back to the correct footpath.

The poor maintenance of the footpaths was raised among the Councillors and it was highlighted by Cllr Lord that this can easily be reported on the Council website.

No further action needed at this point.

f) Improving road to Village Hall and car parking – Cllr Eve

Cllr Eve had successfully found out that Suffolk Highways are responsible for the road leading up to the village hall.

Cllr Evans recommended reporting the pot holes, broken edges and other issues along this road on the online portal and if there appears to be no action taken, to send the reference numbers onto her so she can chase it up. Cllr Eve is to action this.

It was noted that there hasn't been any progress currently for funding towards a parking scheme and it will be something to raise in the future with the Village Hall Committee.

g) Publishing of GDPR policies raised in internal audit - Cllr Lord

After some research, Cllr Lord advised the PC to moving forward with a proportionate publication of GDPR policies as seen on other local parish council websites, as this seems to be more appropriate for a parish council. This was proposed by Cllr Rich and seconded by Cllr Lord. All Councillors were in agreement and Cllr Lord is to publish these in the next week.

## 9. Covid-19 - update and any future actions

The Withersfield News published the leaflet offering help and support to anyone needing it once again and this information remains on the parish website. There have been no requests for support in some time but the offer is there for the anyone vulnerable or having to self-isolate.

It was agreed for this to again be published in the December edition of the Withersfield News.

## 10. Update from the Traffic Working Group

Cllr Eve reminded the PC that the initial report recommended:

- A. Enable the 40mph buffer zones to be introduced
- B. Agree appropriate traffic calming measures with the Parish Council that are sympathetic to the village environment
- C. Implement those measures in conjunction with a 20mph zone
- D. Review traffic speeds within 12 months (after steps (a) to (c) are put into effect) to determine any supplementary traffic calming measures that may be needed to achieve a satisfactory level of speed compliance

Cllr Eve stated that the buffer zones and the 20mph limit will be going along at their own speed and not together in a joint Traffic Order.

The proposal for where the buffer zones will be located had been sent through from Highways which was explained and shown via the map which was shared on the screen for Councillors to see. It was unanimous among the PC that the proposed positions were not suitable. The PC discussed where the preferred locations should be.

It was proposed by the Chair that the PC makes representations through Cllr Eve to amend the proposal as described which was seconded by Cllr Kinloch.

Cllr Eve then went on to say that with the 20mph limit zone, he recommends that the PC go ahead with the minimum requirements, which he believes are sympathetic to the village environment, accept the estimates, and start a campaign to raise the money. He has already successfully secured a pledge of £2000 towards the funding of the 20mph zone from the Friends of Withersfield, which shows the commitment of the village.

The PC were in agreement to proceed with the 20mph zone and to seek financial support from County Cllr Evans, who earlier alluded to being able to help towards the costings.

Finally, Cllr Eve asked for clarification from Cllr Johnson about the car parks at the flood park and whether this may have any change to the dangerous parking along Melbourne Bridge. Cllr Johnson, who had recently had a meeting with the Environment Agency, explained that the EA are asking the fishermen to park in the official car park for the flood park and specifically on match days, in a newly created over flow car park. However, Cllr Johnson believes there is still dangerous parking along Queen Street. The PC have had more communications from residents in this area and it was noted that the parking is still a huge cause for concern here. As previously agreed, Cllr Eve will meet virtually over the next few days with Cllr Evans to strategize on moving forward on getting the double yellow lines extended and will arrange a meeting with the Highways Officer to discuss the matter further.

#### **11. Cllr Johnson to report back from the flood park site meeting with the Environment Agency**

Councillors were circulated with the minutes and reports from the meeting. Cllr Johnson summarised that littering has cut down since the PC purchased and installed the bins on the flood park, the issue with the hedge which had previously been cut down is being allowed to be re-planted, and she was pleased to report that all outstanding issues have now been resolved.

Thanks was given to Cllr Johnson for her efforts in helping to resolve the previous problems here.

#### **12. Cllr Kinloch to feedback from the virtual West Suffolk Local Plan Issues and Options Consultation workshop**

Cllr Kinloch is keen for the Parish Council to cumulatively compose a responding comment to the issues and options Local Plan documents. The Chair suggested using the vision statement which was put together when the PC first began looking into the Neighbourhood Plan, as a basis as a response. It was proposed by Cllr Kinloch and seconded by Cllr Eve that Cllrs Kinloch and Rich together come up with an appropriate statement which will be circulated to all Councillors for comment and approval before formally submitting.

#### **13. Cllr Kinloch's circulated Unitary Healthcare update discussion**

Cllr Kinloch asked whether Councillors had any comments on the information which he had circulated and if they found it a useful way to keep updated. It was discussed and agreed that it is beneficial, therefore, Cllr Kinloch shall continue to pass on any updates he is informed of.

#### **14. Remembrance Sunday ceremony**

It was noted that the church was unable to provide their usual Remembrance Sunday service because of the restrictions in place from the government. However, there was guidance provided for holding outside ceremonies to which the Chair worked with the PCC to make sure the service could go ahead and agreed to carry out a risk assessment and organise the safety precautions. Thanks to this, a successful and safe event was accomplished.

## **15. Withersfield Church Preservation Fund appeal**

The PC discussed the possibility of donating to the cause. It was determined that some more research was needed before a decision could be made. Cllr Kinloch is to have a conversation with a member of the PCC to clarify some queries raised and will also look through paperwork from a previously attended Councillor course which covered information on the topic. The Clerk will look into what powers the Council has, to make a contribution. A decision will be made at the next PC meeting.

## **16. To receive an update on the activity of Suffolk Accident Rescue Service (SARS) and consider the request for a donation**

This was considered and proposed by Cllr Eve for the PC to donate £100 which was seconded by Cllr Kinloch.

## **17. To agree a date for the Annual Spring Clean in 2021**

It was agreed to postpone setting a date until the next PC meeting in January where restrictions and government guidelines may have changed.

## **18. 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

All reports were accepted and approved. Proposed by Cllr Eve and seconded by Cllr Kinloch.

- d) Draft budget and precept submission for 2021/2022

The Chair gave a synopsis of the draft budget and precept which was put together by himself and the clerk, on the basis that we ask to a 0% council tax increase. Cllr Eve proposed to accept the draft budget and precept submission which was seconded by Cllr Johnson.

- e) Approval of Risk and Asset Registers for 2021 and insurance renewal

These were considered and approved as an accurate record of the current risks and assets. As there has been no change to the assets, the insurance policy has not needed to be amended and the insurance has been renewed to reflect this. Proposed by Cllr Eve and seconded by Cllr Kinloch.

- f) Chairman's report on the Clerk's salary increase and backdated payment

The PC agreed to the salary increase in line with NALC's newly published and updated national salary pay scales which backdates to April 2020. It was also decided to include the working from home allowance as set out by NALC, and for the Clerk to move one point

up the scale as of June 2020, on the employment anniversary. This was proposed by the Chair and seconded by Cllr Johnson.

## **19. Correspondence**

- a) Email - Division Boundaries for Suffolk County Council

Noted. No action required.

- b) Email – Headway Suffolk

Cllr Lord proposed the PC donate £50 to Headway Suffolk which was seconded by Cllr Eve.

However, Councillors felt that the Parish Council should have an agreed policy regarding donations, as we receive numerous requests and there is no criteria that we currently apply in making our decisions.

It was agreed that once the Clerk has researched into the S137 spending powers and limits policy, a report should come to the next meeting setting out some proposals.

- c) Email – Gateway roundabout

After discussing the complaints received about the state of this area and the fly-posting here, the PC feel the best course of action would be to direct the author of the email to the Suffolk County Council Highways portal where fly-tipping can be reported. The West Suffolk District website states they are responsible for fly-posting and so the clerk will also share the District Councillor's details when replying to the email.

- d) Email – Defib Site Check Confirmation

Noted.

- e) Email – Village Defib Checks

As the parishioner who had been carrying out the regular checks on the village defibrillator has moved out of the area, this role needed to be fulfilled and as a nurse and first aid trainer, parishioner Elaine McInnes-Rich has volunteered to take this on. The PC were happy to accept Elaine's kind offer.

- f) Email – Melbourne Bridge

This was noted and discussed in the Traffic Working Group update, item 10.

## **20. Planning**

- a) Borough notifications since last meeting

Noted.



b) Applications received since last meeting

The PC sent the following comments for application DC/20/1563/FUL:

*“The Parish Council do not object to this application but offer the following comments: Permission should include conditions regarding planting & screening of the units so as to not be visibly intrusive from the road and that signage and other traffic measures should be included to manage vehicles accessing and exiting the site.”*

Application DC/20/1829/FUL, was considered to ensure there were no concerns. The PC have no objections.

All applications were noted.

**21. To determine meeting dates for 2021**

The following dates were accepted:

19<sup>th</sup> January

16<sup>th</sup> March

11<sup>th</sup> May

13<sup>th</sup> July

14<sup>th</sup> September

16<sup>th</sup> November

**22. Agenda items for meeting to be held in January 2021**

- S137 policy
- Village hall management

*The meeting closed at 21:58*