

**Minutes of Withersfield Parish Council meeting held at 7:30pm on  
Tuesday, 19<sup>th</sup> January 2021 held virtually via Skype**

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

**1. Apologies for absence**

None.

**2. District Councillor's report**

Cllr Stevens reported that waste services have been running as normal. There is soon to be a leaflet sent out to clarify acceptable waste for the blue bins.

Grants are available for businesses which have had to close due to lockdown.

The ongoing issue of identifying the owner of the triangle of land adjacent to Barsey Close has still not been resolved. The Council have carried out some limited maintenance here and continue to investigate into the ownership.

West Suffolk have made places available within the district for the NHS to use for vaccinations. The NHS decide which venues they use.

Cllr Stevens welcomed any questions from the PC.

Cllrs Kinloch and Eve explained they had been contacted by a parishioner on the Arboretum estate about some railings being knocked down and asked for advice on where this should be reported. It was agreed that Cllr Eve would report this on the County Council website.

**3. County Councillor's report**

Prior to the meeting, Cllr Evans shared her report with Cllrs, which can be found on the PC website.

Cllr Evans reported she had raised the issue of Withersfield being missed out when Haverhill receive the broadband upgrade from Openreach, to Matt Hancock, who endorsed the letter she went on to write to the CEO of Openreach. As a result of this, Openreach confirmed to Cllr Evans that Withersfield is included in the upgrade. Cllr Evans is going to invite the lead officer for the project from Openreach to the next PC meeting so they can explain what the programme is and how it will be rolled out.

Cllr Evans stated that the Epicentre is being used as a venue by the NHS for vaccinations.

It was pointed out that Cllr Evans would like to come to an agreement with the PC tonight on their decisions towards the buffer zones and is happy to discuss further when we come to the item in the meeting.

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

There were no parishioners.

*Chairman closed the public section of the meeting*

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

None.

#### **6. Co-option of new councillor following resignation of Cllr Johnson**

Cllr Johnson has notified her intention to resign as Parish Councillor, due to moving out of the parish in the near future. The Chair thanked Cllr Johnson for all her work on the PC, firstly as the Clerk for 4 years and then almost 2 years as a Councillor. The PC joined in giving their thanks for all Cllr Johnson's contributions over the years. Her resignation would be effective after this meeting. The vacancy will be advertised in the usual way.

#### **7. To approve the minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on 17<sup>th</sup> November 2020**

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

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

##### **a) Neighbourhood Plan**

The email that the Clerk had circulated to Cllrs, from a company offering help and assistance towards implementing a Neighbourhood Plan, was considered and it was proposed by Cllr Kinloch and seconded by Cllr Wijenayaka, that Cllr Kinloch and Cllr Rich would contact the company and explore the possibility of using their services. Cllr Wijenayaka stressed the importance of due diligence prior to any contract being entered into.

##### **b) Withersfield broadband**

County Cllr Evans and Cllr Wijenayaka worked together to make the case to Openreach as to why Withersfield needed to be included in the upgrade, which resulted in Openreach confirming Withersfield's inclusion.

As stated earlier, Cllr Evans is going to invite the lead officer for the project from Openreach to the next PC meeting so they can explain what the programme is and how it will be rolled out.

##### **c) Improving road to Village Hall and car parking – Cllr Eve**

Cllr Eve reported this road to Suffolk Highways and it has since been confirmed that work has been ordered to improve the road.

Resolved.

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

Cllr Lord has uploaded documents to the PC website to comply with the GDPR policies which was highlighted on the audit from SALC.

Resolved.

- e) Withersfield Church Preservation Fund

It was decided this would be covered in item 13 - use of section 137.

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

Cllrs discussed whether there was anything the PC could be doing to help the community at this time. The parish leaflet offering help to those in the parish is still being circulated through the parish magazine and website. The Clerk had shared a transport service for COVID-19 immunisations which was agreed to be published in the magazine and on the PC website.

Cllr Korona informed the PC she had recently seen that 'Matilda Rose' in Haverhill have partnered with Star Cars to provide free transport to the Epicentre for vaccinations for those who are otherwise unable to get there.

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

- Buffer zones

Cllr Eve told the PC that at present, 3 of the 4 proposals of where the signage should be placed along the roads into Withersfield village, have been agreed and that there are only contentions over Skippers Lane. It was explained that David Chenery of Suffolk Highways insists the signage should be placed at around 400m from the current 30mph signs along Skippers Lane as this is standard for a buffer zone. If placed further away, the police may object resulting in holding up the implementation of the entire scheme.

Cllr Eve put across his concerns to the PC that if the signs are placed at 400m as proposed, there would not be enough time for motorists to decelerate, as the signs would appear after a bend. He feels they would be more effective being placed at 600m, which would be before Lawn Farm, to ensure better visibility to motorists. The Chair agreed with this viewpoint and stressed that this would also address the current dangers for residents at Lawn Farm and Barns from speeding traffic and the blind corner.

It was noted that the proposed positioning of the signs on Skippers Lane will result in a reduced income to the Parish Council from pledges as the buffer zone would not offer the expected benefits for some residents.

After some discussion about this, the Chair asked Cllrs whether they thought the PC should either accept the proposal made by Highways or ask Cllr Evans to represent the view being that the signage should be located further down the road, nearer to Lawn Farm. Cllr Kinloch proposed the PC accept the Highways proposal of signage at 400m which was seconded by Cllr Lord. The Parish Council voted 3 in favour 2 against with 2 abstentions.

Cllr Eve will communicate the agreement of the Parish Council to David Chenery.

The Chair asked Cllr Evans to enquire to whether there could also be count down signs leading up to the buffer zone, rumble strips or something else appropriate, places along Skippers Lane. Cllr Evans will take this enquiry forward.

- 20mph zone

The 20mph zone has been approved and it was reported by Cllr Eve that there is a total of £3100 of pledges with a contingency of PC funds of £2000, meaning we would be short of around £5500 for the scheme. He requested to Cllr Evans to see if the PC could receive funding for this from the County Council. Cllr Evans will look into this.

- Quiet Lanes

Cllr Eve gave a synopsis of the Suffolk wide project to the PC. Great Wrating Parish Council had been in contact to inform the PC that they had applied for Withersfield Road to become a Quiet Lane, which becomes Great Wrating Road in Withersfield, and that it has been approved as meeting the criteria. After some liaising with Great Wrating PC, Cllr Eve said the estimated cost for the project would be £720. He explained that there is potential for a grant of £600 for the scheme, and so the cost to the PC could be £120; however, this will not be confirmed until the end of March.

As Great Wrating Road is the only road into the village which will not benefit from the buffer zones being implemented, Cllr Eve feels this could be a positive step forward for further traffic calming measures.

Cllr Evans encouraged the PC to pursue this. It was proposed by Cllr Eve and seconded by the Chair to move forward with this initiative.

- Parking at Melbourne Bridge

After a virtual meeting with Cllr Evans and David Chenery, Cllr Eve told the PC it had been decided that the PC needs to canvas opinion of all residents down the road by Melbourne Bridge as the parking and lengthening of the double yellow lines will affect them all. Cllr Eve also stated that funding will need to be sought.

It was proposed by Cllr Eve and seconded by the Chair for the PC to proceed with a consultation with the residents to ensure they would be in support of an extension of the double yellow lines, and that this should be undertaken in advance of the funding being identified.

## **11. Speed watch and use of VAS**

Cllr Eve had been in contact with the parish speed watch team and relayed to the PC that due to the group not having had a meeting for some time, that traffic levels have fallen of late (both due to the pandemic), and that all data required for their objective has been retrieved; the speed watch team feels there is little need to continue to set out the VAS at present. They suggested that the VAS could be recalibrated once the 20mph zone has been implemented in order to collect fresh data from this point forwards.

The Chair expressed his concerns that this investment will not be in use and as a PC asset which has been loaned out to speed watch, that if they will not be using it for the time being, whether it should re-deployed.

Cllr Korona added that the VAS is a good deterrent to speeding motorists which should be utilised.

The PC were in agreement that as speeding remains an issue through the village and if the current arrangements with the speed watch team are not to be continued, the PC should take possession of the VAS and endeavour to establish a group of parishioners willing in turn, to house and set up the VAS. It was proposed by Cllr Kinloch and seconded by Cllr Korona for Cllr Korona to take action in speaking to parishioners who may be willing to help and Cllr Eve would inform the speed watch team of the PC's decision.

## **12. Village Hall Management**

Cllr Johnson informed the PC that the approved planning application for the store room extension on the village hall is soon to expire as works need to have begun no later than 3 years from the date of permission, which was 20<sup>th</sup> March 2018. As there has been no progress since the approval of the application, it was decided the Chair of the Village Hall Management Committee would need to be contacted to ask whether he is able to take action on this before the application expires.

There were conversations around VHMC which led to the agreement that further considerations around management of the village hall would need to be discussed at the next PC meeting, including assigning a new Cllr for this responsibility as Cllr Johnson has resigned.

## **13. Use of section 137 powers, grants and donations**

The Chair explained that he had put together a draft proposal of how the PC should use the section 137 power in terms of grants and donations. The Cllrs all had a copy of the document and after some discussion and clarifications, including the 1874 Local Government Act which prohibits donating to places of worship, it was proposed by Cllr Johnson and seconded by Cllr Korona that the PC accept the draft proposal.

## **14. To consider whether to set a date for the 2021 Annual Spring Clean**

It was deliberated whether or not the PC should set a date for the annual Spring Clean as last year it had to be cancelled due to being in lockdown, which we are once again in. It was proposed by Cllr Lord and seconded by Cllr Wijenayaka to provisionally set the date of Saturday 27<sup>th</sup> March for the spring clean, subject to the approval of the district council that this can go ahead.

## **15. 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

These were explained by the Clerk and approved by the PC – proposed by Cllr Kinloch and seconded by Cllr Eve.

- d) To note submitted precept form

The submitted precept form for 2021/2022 of £9324 with a 0% increase/decrease, was noted.

## **16. Correspondence**

- a) Email – Arboretum Traffic

The parishioner who sent the email was seeking an update on issues he raised a few years ago. It was agreed that Cllr Wijenayaka would look into this further by conversing with Cllr Evans and the parishioner to be able to put forward any items which need to be raised with the Suffolk Highways team.

- b) Email – Community Emergency Planning

Noted.

- c) Emails – D.Huckstep and Environment Agency

Noted.

- d) SARS letter of thanks

Noted.

- e) Email - Help Shape Guidance for New Housing Developments in Suffolk

Noted.

- f) Letter – Parishioner request for funding

The PC agreed that the request does not meet the criteria set out and agreed to earlier in the meeting. The parishioner will be informed of this decision.

- g) Email - Cricket Field Access

The PC was in agreement with this email that it is difficult to be able to enter the cricket ground. Cllr Johnson reminded the PC that the barrier was put up there because there had been drug dealings and this was the solution to cease this from occurring. It was agreed that the PC will write to Thurlow Estate asking them to consider creating a pedestrian access into the cricket ground.

- h) Email – Unfinished Ground Works Three Counties Way

Resolved.

- i) Email - Foxton Neighbourhood Plan

Noted.

## **17. Planning**

- a) Planning Department Bat Policy

Information which was obtained from the planning department on their policies and practice around bats and developments, was seen by the Cllrs. The PC were satisfied with these practices and happy that they had received the assurance sought.

- b) Borough notifications since last meeting

Noted.

- c) Applications received since last meeting

Noted.

## **18. Agenda items for meeting to be held on 16<sup>th</sup> March 2021**

- VHMC
- Action to be taken as nesting season approaching
- Spring clean

*The meeting closed at 21:34*