

Minutes of Withersfield Parish Council meeting held at 7:30pm on Tuesday, 19th November 2019 in Withersfield Village Hall

Present: Cllrs Terry Rich (Chairman), Ian Kinloch (Vice Chair); Frank Eve; Peter Lord, Jill Johnson, Sam Molyneux-Summers; Clerk: Laura Crump; District Cllr: Peter Stevens.

1. Apologies for absence

Received from County Cllr, Mary Evans.

2. District Councillor's report

Cllr Stevens began with the change of bin days in West Suffolk, mentioning a number of households did not receive the letter stating their bin day change. This information is available on the West Suffolk website, where you are just required to enter your postcode. Despite this, all has been running quite smoothly so far. Any problems - inform Cllr Stevens.

Cllr Stevens spoke about the development of the Local Plan which led to queries from the PC over the definition of the word 'deferred' on potential housing sites. Cllr Stevens ensured he was going to raise the issue next week at his meeting with senior officers, as local parishes seem to have information about this which he has not had himself.

The Chairman asked Cllr Stevens to put across Withersfield PC's concerns over the deferred sites at his meeting and to feedback to the PC afterwards for reassurance that deferred sites in Withersfield are not actively being considered for future building developments.

For traffic concerns within Withersfield, Cllr Stevens expressed he supports the idea of closing off some junctions during rush hour to defer traffic coming through the village and using it as a 'rat race', which is a system successfully carried out in other areas.

Barsey Green has an overgrown grass area and therefore Cllr Stevens has arranged a mowing and cutting regime for the next season.

Cllr Stevens expressed he has noted the number of planning applications coming in and offered his help if ever the PC need any information.

It was requested by Cllr Eve for Cllr Stevens to support the PC in attempting to allow the approval of the 20mph limit in the village, even though the mean speed was just over the required speed, all other criteria is met.

Cllr Stevens left to attend other local Parish Council meetings.

3. County Councillor's report

Mary Evans sent the submitted her report in advance to her absence covering:

- Clare community hub started operations at the library.
- We are looking to re-arrange the rural crime meeting which was regrettably cancelled.

I raised the concerns mentioned about drug dealing at your last PC meeting with the police.

- A new and improved recycling centre will open in Bury St Edmunds at the end of November, replacing the current recycling centre at Rougham Hill.
- Suffolk Trading Standards are warning people about sharing an Argos giveaway post as it "is fraudulent." It comes after Suffolk Trading Standards issued a similar warning about a £50 Morrisons voucher giveaway, which is also fraudulent.
- Gritta Garbo has been patrolling our roads on the recent frosty nights.
- The local government boundary commission for England is reviewing Suffolk County Council to bring the divisions into line – the population size can vary from just over 5,000 to nearly 9,000. It has been agreed to cut the number of County Councillors from 75 to 70.
- I have left highways and taken over the role of cabinet Member for Children's Services, Education and Skills. I have launched a review of the implementation of the new home to school transport policy which is being led by Suffolk's Fire Chief Officer Mark Hardingham. I am also focussing on the children's mental health, improvements to the support we provide to the young people leaving care and provision for more school places for children with SEND.

4. Public Forum for parishioners

Two parishioners gave details on their views for retrospective planning application DC/19/2202/HH of garage re-location in Homestall Crescent.

One parishioner explained to the PC the original plans and how it now appears to have many differences including; dormers added, larger windows, and mains and drainage installed.

The parishioners believe the garage is not in keeping with the neighbouring garages, of which only have small windows and do not possess dormers.

There was also mention of the positioning of windows potentially overlooking neighbouring gardens, and that if the small dormer does have a window installed, it will directly overlook the neighbour's garden.

The parishioners also mentioned that the garage is right on the border of the conservation area. They believe the garage detracts from visual amenity of the area and that onlookers have commented on it looking like a new house is being built. Opposite Homestall Crescent is a Grade II listed building, which was considered when the original 4 homes were developed, but this garage is not in keeping with this.

There are concerns that at some point in the future, the applicant will apply for a change of use as it already seems to be being made into a liveable space, unlike the purpose of a garage.

The Chairman expressed his thanks to the parishioners for attending the meeting and sharing their views. He explained that the PC would take their comments into consideration when the item came up in the meeting later on.

The Chair closed the public section of the meeting. The parishioners left.

5. Co-option of new councillor

Unfortunately, the parishioner who had applied to join the PC has since withdrawn his interest. Therefore, the Parish Councillor position is still available and the vacancy for this is on the village noticeboards and website. The Chair asked Cllrs to think about whether they knew of anyone who might be appropriate for the role and to encourage them to make contact with the Chair.

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

Two councillors for planning application DC/19/2202/HH:

Cllr Lord - resident of 3 Homestall Crecent

Cllr Kinloch - friend of applicant

It was agreed that the PC would be interested in hearing both Cllrs views when the meeting came to this part of the agenda however, if the decision required a vote from the Cllrs, Cllr Lord and Cllr Kinloch would not be able to vote.

7. To approve the minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on Tuesday, 1st October

The Parish Council meeting minutes were approved - proposed by Cllr Kinloch and seconded by Cllr Eve.

8. Matters arising - update from previous Parish Council meeting

a) Village Hall Management Committee - update from Cllr Kinloch

Cllr Kinloch updated on a conversation he had with the Chair of the VHMC, who was on board with the PC's request at running a more open committee where the PC would be informed from now on, what was happening with the village hall. However, since this, there has been no further communication of future intentions of the VHMC nor any sign of an arrangement of a VHMC meeting, as previously promised.

The PC is unhappy that there has still not been a VHMC meeting in some time and that certain guidelines for the running of the village hall, are not being adhered to. The PC believe that the village hall needs attention. If there is continued failure to manage the village hall, the PC would need to seriously consider bringing the VHMC back under the control of the PC - to be made into a subcommittee of the PC.

Cllr Molyneux-Summers volunteered to be a PC representative on the VHMC alongside previously appointed Cllr Johnson. This was proposed by Cllr Johnson and seconded by Cllr Lord.

It was agreed that Cllrs Johnson and Molyneux-Summers are to attempt to contact the Chair of the VHMC - to offer their help in convening a meeting, to extend to him the assistance of the Parish Clerk in minuting said meeting, and express the PC's request of expecting a VHMC meeting to be arranged within the next 60 days which would look at either reviving a working VHMC or bringing it back to the PC for looking at their options for the future.

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

Cllr Molyneux-Summers explained the Chair of the VHMC stated he was going to meet with Jamie Murphy but has had no follow up information since. Cllr Molyneux-Summers has attempted to chase this up with the VHMC Chair, to no avail. Cllr Molyneux-Summers will continue to progress with this.

- c) Update on the implementation of new waste bins

The bins have now been implemented at the three sites –one outside the village hall, one on Burton Green by the bus shelter, and one near the recreation ground. Unfortunately, the positioning of the latter has received a complaint since its implementation, however, West Suffolk Council have chosen its location being near to the barrier as it is more efficient for bin collections.

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

Cllr Lord has still to look into this. Will provide an update at the next PC meeting.

- e) 'The Flying Shuttle' defibrillator – update from Cllr Molyneux-Summers

Cllr Molyneux-Summers has had conversations with 'The Flying Shuttle' regarding the PC offering to contribute towards the cost of the new defibrillator they are hoping to implement at the pub. He requested they let him know about the cost so he could give feedback to the PC, though has had no information communicated to him since. No further action required.

9. To receive an update from the Traffic Working Group and for the speed reduction fund

Cllr Eve gave feedback on the results of the mean speeds which were surveyed at 3 locations in Withersfield. None of which were at 24mph or less, which is one of the criteria to be met for introducing a 20mph limit. Church Street was just above at 26mph.

David Chenery has suggested to Cllr Eve that the PC move forward with implementing the buffer zones as phase 1. Once these are in, the mean speeds within the village could be brought down and so we could look again in 12 months' time by carrying out a further speed survey, which could then lead to a 20mph limit being phase 2.

Cllr Eve is keen to press on the fact that Church Street has resulted only just above the required mean speed and as all other criteria is met, he would like to put the question forward to see if the 20mph limit could be approved. Cllr Eve stated that despite this, there is no reason to hold up on implementing the buffer zones and that the donation received from County Cllr Evans to go towards this, would need to be spent in this financial year.

It was discussed that the PC would need to let pledgers to the Traffic Calming Fund know when the money would be needed. JAYNIC's contribution has been written into their S106 meaning this would be honoured if planning is approved.

It was proposed by Cllr Kinloch and seconded by Cllr Eve, that Cllr Eve is to contact David Chenery confirming the PC's approval to proceed with the buffer zones and would like to know details of where the buffer zones will start and the time frame for implementation.

10. Feedback from Cllr Kinloch on the Neighbourhood Plan Meeting held on 22nd October

Cllr Kinloch gave a brief synopsis of the meeting and provided the overall consensus, of all who attended the meeting, of being in favour of developing a Neighbourhood Plan for the entire parish of Withersfield.

Cllrs happy to endorse this – proposed by Cllr Molyneux-Summers and seconded by Cllr Kinloch.

Cllr Rich and Cllr Kinloch are attending a meeting with planning policy officers at West Suffolk House tomorrow, regarding the new Local Plan and to discuss the implications of this for the Withersfield neighbourhood plan area.

11. Discussion on new protocol for graveyard – Cllr Kinloch

Cllr Kinloch explained how it was apparent the PC doesn't have a definitive protocol when it comes to deciding on which rate to charge people wanting burials in the graveyard. There is a significant increase in rate if you are not from the village, therefore Cllr Kinloch fears there is a possibility of abuse. As the lead for the graveyard, Cllr Kinloch is keen to create a new protocol, determining any grey areas, to make the decision process clear.

Cllr Johnson explained that when she was Clerk, herself and a former Cllr, who was the PC representative for the graveyard at the time, would allow the village rate for interments to people of extended families and connections from the village.

It was agreed that Cllrs Kinloch and Johnson should arrange a meeting with the former Cllr, so they could collectively put together a protocol for deciding the conditions of which rates to charge for graveyard interments. A draft of this should then be brought to the next PC meeting for approval. The PC also invited Cllrs Kinloch and Johnson to review the charges at their meeting. Proposed by Cllr Kinloch and seconded by Cllr Eve.

12. Agree format of Notice of Tender for environmental works

The Chairman explained the advantages of tendering for a 3-year contract which included guaranteeing a reasonable price, not fettering a future Council, and it being a more efficient process rather than having to go through the same procedure annually.

It was proposed by Cllr Rich and seconded by Cllr Molyneux-Summers to tender for a 3-year environmental works contract with the inclusion of a break clause, covering satisfactory work reviewed after the first year.

13. To agree a date for the Annual Spring Clean in 2020

Dates discussed and concluded with 10am, Saturday 21st March.

14. Finance

- a) Presentation of monthly accounts – Income and Expenditure and Bank Reconciliation

These were agreed and accepted. Proposed by Cllr Molyneux-Summers and seconded by Cllr Johnson.

- b) To note payments made since last meeting

Noted. Proposed by Cllr Eve and seconded by Cllr Lord.

- c) Quarterly report of expenditure and comparison to budget

Noted. Proposed by Cllr Rich and seconded by Cllr Eve.

- d) Draft budget and precept submission for 2020/2021

The Chairman briefed the councillors on the draft budget report he had put together and shared with the PC prior to the meeting. He explained that the current year's budget and projected spend was reviewed and this along with the knowledge of changes in costs in the coming year, estimates for the 2020/21 budget were put together.

Councillors were asked to:

- i) approve the draft 2020-21 budget estimate for submission to West Suffolk District Council
- ii) maintain the earmarked reserve for future investment on parish infrastructure at £5000 and that this be called upon to fund the Parish Council's contribution to the introduction of reduced speed limits in 2020-21
- iii) that £2630 from Parish Council reserves be included in the budget
- iv) agree that the Parish Council should not seek an increase in Council Tax rate for 2020-21

It was proposed by Cllr Eve and seconded by Cllr Lord to permit the requests. The Clerk is to submit the precept form.

- e) Approval of Risk and Asset Registers for 2020

These were considered as an accurate record of the current risks and assets.

Risk Register was proposed by Cllr Johnson and seconded by Cllr Molyneux-Summers.

Asset Register was proposed by Cllr Eve and seconded by Cllr Kinloch.

15. Correspondence

- a) Email – Strategic Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment Consultation

The Chairman is to write to District Cllr Stevens reiterating the PC's request for clarification on the definition of 'deferred' sites.

- b) Email – SARS Donation Thank you Letter

Noted.

- c) Letter – RBL Poppy Appeal Thank You

Noted.

- d) Email – Council motion request re national community energy campaign

Noted – no further action.

16. Planning

- a) Review the PC's approach for commenting on planning applications

The PC conversed the matter and generally feel comfortable with their approach to making decisions on whether and what to comment on incoming planning applications to the PC. All planning applications are accessible to everyone through the West Suffolk Council website. It is also possible to apply to have notifications on applications received in a particular area. Applications received within Withersfield are put on the following PC meeting agenda for discussion.

It was decided that the Chairman would write a piece for the next parish newsletter to explain how to access the online portal and encourage parishioners to contact the PC if they see any application they have concerns over. The Chair would also clarify that the areas which the PC look at when considering planning applications are:

- Character of village
- Conservation area
- Settlement boundaries

b) Borough notifications since last meeting

Noted.

c) Applications received since last meeting

All applications noted.

DC/19/2202/HH:

Cllrs discussed the application and the views from the parishioners given earlier in the meeting. It was proposed by Cllr Molyneux-Summers and seconded by Cllr Eve that the Parish Council's response should be as follows:

"The Parish Council object to this application on the basis that the bulk and scale of the building with the addition of the large dormer windows is excessive and out of keeping with the garages of the other properties in Homestall Crescent. It has more in common with a house than a garage as now constructed and is way beyond the consent that had been given previously.

The PC did not object to the original application - even though neighbours raised concerns - as it considered relocation of the existing garage with one of similar size and design was not unreasonable. However, the proportions of the building as now constructed is out of character from neighbouring garages and would have led to the Parish Council objecting had this been indicated on the original application.

The PC has also heard concerns from neighbours that the dormer windows - if installed on the south elevation could result in overlooking of neighbouring gardens in Homestall Crescent.

The Parish Council feels that the applicant should return to the original consent and implement that unaltered."

17. To determine meeting dates for 2020

The following dates were accepted.

21st January

17th March

12th May

14th July

15th September

17th November

18. Agenda items for meeting to be held in January 2020

Nothing raised

The meeting closed at 9:33pm.