

**Minutes of Withersfield Parish Council meeting held at  
7:30pm on Tuesday, 9<sup>th</sup> July 2024 at the village hall, Withersfield.**

Present: Cllrs Terry Rich (Chairman), Frank Eve (Vice-Chair),  
Gill Jarvis, Jaclyn Lake, Indunil Wijenayaka; Clerk: Laura Crump;  
District Cllr: Indunil Wijenayaka; County Councillor: Bobby Bennett.

**1. Apologies for absence**

Received from Cllrs Korona and Stiles – these were approved by the PC.

**2. District Councillor's report**

Cllr Wijenayaka spoke about the recent General Election. The District Council had worked hard to ensure the process worked effectively. If anyone had experienced any problems regarding postal votes, or being turned away at poll stations to vote, Cllr Wijenayaka urges those to share their experiences with the Council.

As a result of the election, we have a new MP and Cllr Wijenayaka looks forwards to working with him.

The District Council recently had a market survey and their market development plan will be going to cabinet in July. They will be investing in the markets and hope for a positive impact in the surrounding areas also.

The Council are contributing £1million towards decarbonisation projects and want to hear project ideas from parishes which they could help to fund.

**3. County Councillor's report**

Cllr Bennett began by speaking about the General Election which had taken place the preceding week. During the election period, the County Council had been focussing on enforcement work such as blue badge misuse.

The Council are still awaiting further information which was requested from the applicant for the proposed anaerobic digester plant. Cllr Bennett suggested it would be a good to hear and understand the stance that the new MP takes in regards to the proposal.

Cllr Bennett said she had received some critical comments regarding WS Planning officers, to which she pushed back against, and dealt with how she felt was appropriate. The Chair affirmed that the planning officers have always been helpful and supportive to the PC.

**4. Public Forum for parishioners**

There were no parishioners.

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

None.

**6. To approve the minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting and Parish Council meeting held on 14<sup>th</sup> May 2024**

The minutes were approved – proposed by Cllr Eve and seconded by Cllr Lake.

**7. Matters arising - updates from previous Parish Council meetings**

a) Update on playground feasibility study – Cllr Wijenayaka

Cllr Wijenayaka is yet to have a meeting with the West Suffolk Parks Infrastructure manager. He is in the process of arranging this and will then be able to enquire about a feasibility study. He will report back at the next PC meeting.

**8. Parish survey – Cllr Eve**

It was suggested by Cllr Eve, for the Parish Council to put together a survey to find out the views and priorities of parishioners in terms of what they would like the Cllrs to focus on and use the PC reserves for. It was discussed and agreed that this would be a good idea. How to administer a survey was considered, including using social media, an online questionnaire, and a survey delivered through residents' homes.

Cllr Eve agreed to draft a survey which would then be shared among the Cllrs for their input and any alterations. The PC hope to get the survey finalised for approval at the next PC meeting in September for distributing shortly afterwards.

**9. Update on the Neighbourhood Plan– Cllr Korona**

The Chair and Cllr Stiles had met with West Suffolk Council Planning officers regarding the Neighbourhood Plan to seek what additions/amendments need to be made before final submission. The officer committed to sending a detailed document outlining these changes after the election period. The Chair and Cllr Stiles will together make these changes and it is hoped that the consultation will begin in September for a 6-week period. In October, it would then go to an inspector which could last 6-8 weeks. This would mean we would be looking at the Plan going to Council in the new year and a potential referendum in February/March 2025 with the hope of the Neighbourhood Plan being adopted this time next year.

**10. Update from the Traffic Working Group – Cllr Eve**

Cllr Eve wrote to the SCC Head of Transport Strategy asking what virtual traffic calming could be available for implementing in the village. It was explained that these included reinstating the gateway treatments where appropriate, possibly with enhanced measures, as well as other interventions such as perceived narrowing of carriageways by painting lines on roads, or tightening up junctions. Other possible interventions could include further speed limit roundels or granite setts. If the PC is interested in any of these, the Local Highways Budgets team could be commissioned.

It was explained that these options would not require traffic orders and Cllr Bennett advised the PC to move forward with the options put forward from SCC Highways but to still push for the original goal of the 20mph zone.

It was agreed for Cllr Eve to pursue what is on offer from the Highways team and to request for these to be designed and costed for the PC to consider and potentially invest in, all while maintaining the long-term aim for the 20mph zone.

Cllr Eve said he was going to pursue the '20s Plenty' campaign and there was a meeting scheduled due to the change of Government. Perhaps there could be a change of emphasis.

Suffolk Highways had responded to the PC's request for an options appraisal for the increased traffic movements at the Arboretum estate, once the new houses have been occupied. It was stated that large scale sites are reviewed at various stages, essentially before, during and after construction. After the site is completed and 'normal' traffic patterns are established, SCC Highways will monitor it to see if the volume/flows are within the parameters that were projected. If there is a marked difference and the volume is higher – or if the impact to the wider highway is more than expected, they will consider any additional works that might be needed - this could range from additional road markings and junction alignments, to the provision of traffic lights or additional roundabouts.

#### **11. Update from the Village Hall Committee – Cllr Jarvis**

Cllr Jarvis gave the following updates:

- The village hall electrical works had now been completed and they are reporting this to their insurers.
- At the village fete, the fire alarm had been set off causing there to be a call out charge.
- The VHMC have changed suppliers for the fire alarms.
- It had been confirmed that planning permission is not needed for the installation of the improved disabled access.
- A new treasurer for the VHMC has been employed.
- The AGM is being held on the 17<sup>th</sup> July.
- The VHMC hope to move forward soon with the implementation of the Grasscrete blocks on the green for improved parking at the village hall.

The PC asked Cllr Jarvis to circulate the information shared after the AGM regarding the Grasscrete blocks. The PC cannot give their approval to the scheme until permissions have been granted by the Thurlow Estate and SCC Highways. As a conservation area, permission needs to be sought before any works carried out. It was previously agreed that the PC would contribute £3,000 towards the costs of the works, subject to Planning, Thurlow Estate and Highways permissions. Cllr Jarvis will relay this to the VHMC at the AGM and report back to the PC.

The secretary of the VHMC had written to the Chair of the PC asking whether the PC would be filling the vacancy for another representative of the PC to join the VHMC, along with Cllr Jarvis. The Cllrs were asked but a second nominee was not identified, therefore this would be revisited at the next PC meeting.

## **12. Update from the Muck-Off campaign - Cllr Wijenayaka**

There was no further information to share as the campaign awaits any news.

Cllr Bennett said the Council were still waiting for the further information requested from the applicant. She will press for a date of how much longer the Council are willing to wait to receive this, and what will happen to the application if the applicant does not meet the deadline.

Cllr Eve said the Streetly Farm anaerobic digester plant decision is upcoming and we should keep an eye out for notice of this.

The Muck-Off campaign will be inviting the new MP to their next meeting, once it has been arranged and Cllr Bennett said she would like to attend this also.

## **13. Finance**

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

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

- c) Quarterly report of expenditure and comparison to budget – quarter 1, 2024/25

Noted and approved.

- d) Approval and adoption of the new NALC Financial Regulations

These were approved and adopted.

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

The internal audit report was discussed and accepted and the action plan was approved. The report only highlighted 2 areas of recommendations, both of which the Clerk has already addressed.

- g) To note the Annual Internal Audit Report received for AGAR, which has been submitted

Noted.

- h) To note the effectiveness of the internal audit

Agreed and noted.

- i) To note that the Clerk completes the PC's re-enrolment duties every 3 years under the Pensions Act 2008. The last re-declaration of compliance was completed in 2023.

Noted.

j) Clerk annual salary appraisal

The Clerk left the room so the PC could talk about the Clerk's salary. The annual progression of the Clerk's salary was agreed. The Clerk's salary will be moved to SCP 16 on the Local Government Services salary scale, backdated to 1<sup>st</sup> June 2024. The Local Government pay claim 2024/25 is still being negotiated.

#### **14. Correspondence**

a) Email - West Suffolk Local Plan Consultation

Noted. Cllr Wijenayaka will keep the PC updated with any issues or information from the consultation in his future reports to the PC.

b) Email - Parking on Burton Green

A parishioner from Burton Green had been in contact regarding cars being driven over and parking on the green and requesting that a sign be erected to deter motorists from continuing to do so.

The Chair had requested that the Thurlow Estate erect a couple of 'No parking on the Green' signs on Burton Green but had not received a response as yet.

It was agreed for the Clerk to push for further action from the Thurlow Estate regarding this matter.

c) Email - Disabled access to the Recreational Ground

A parishioner had brought to the attention of the PC the overgrown access to the cricket pitch. She was unable to access the field with her relative in a wheelchair due to this and the chain across the entrance.

The PC discussed and agreed this needed rectifying. It was agreed for the Clerk to contact the Chair of the Sports and Recreation Committee who look after the maintenance of the cricket pitch, requesting that they make the entrance accessible as part of their maintenance.

d) Letter - CTEA Donation request

Noted.

e) Emails - Overgrown trees and bushes at Burton Hill

The Chair had been approached by a resident of Burton Hill regarding the overgrown trees/bushes over the passageway at the rear of her home, making it hazardous to access. The Chair arranged for the pathway to be cleared. Another resident stated that

this area had been maintained for many years by the Council or Havebury. After receiving this information, the Chair has raised the issue with Havebury Housing Partnership.

## **15. Planning**

### **a) Borough notifications since last meeting**

Noted.

### **b) Applications received since last meeting for consideration**

All were considered and noted.

It was proposed and agreed by the PC to submit the following comments:

DC/24/0749/TCA:

*Withersfield Parish Council have 'no comment' on the proposed works but would like to point out that the outstanding works to the overgrown hedge along the Church Street boundary, continues to impede upon the footpath.*

*The Council also request for extra vigilance during bird nesting season - with the changeable weather patterns, birds may breed accordingly to the weather conditions rather than the calendar.*

## **16. Agenda items for 10<sup>th</sup> September 2024**

- Approval of draft parish survey – Cllr Eve.
- Cllr vacancy and co-option.
- Update on permissions received for the VH parking Grasscrete blocks – Cllr Jarvis.

*The meeting closed at 20:39.*