

**Minutes of Withersfield Parish Council meeting held at  
7:30pm on Tuesday, 12<sup>th</sup> September 2023 at the village hall, Withersfield.**

Present: Cllrs Terry Rich (Chairman), Sheila Horton, Gill Jarvis, Julia Korona, Philip Stiles;  
Clerk: Laura Crump; County Councillor: Bobby Bennett.

**1. Apologies for absence**

Received from Cllrs Eve and Wijenayaka. These were approved by the PC.

**2. District Councillor's report**

Cllr Wijenayaka sent the following updates ahead of his absence due to being be at a District Council meeting the same evening.

DC/23/0572/FUL - the new agricultural access; will be coming before the Development Control Committee in November and we need to get as many people to attend as possible .

I do not know when Milton House will be coming before the committee, but I have requested Gary Hancox to put it forward.

West Suffolk Council have taken the decision to shelve plans for the new development of the Bury St Edmunds community centre on Olding Road and instead to renovate the current building. This will enable the funds to be reallocated across the district in a more effective and efficient way.

**3. County Councillor's report**

Cllr Bennett's County Councillor reports for July and August 2023 can be found on the PC website. She made the following additional points to the PC:

At Cabinet today they had been looking at:

1. The fire response centre, which had been decided was no longer viable, would therefore be brought back into Suffolk meaning this will no longer be in conjunction with Cambridgeshire.
2. The budget outturn for quarter 1 and looking to minimise expenditure.

It had been decided to abandon the project at Western Way. Archives were going to be stored there but they are now having to reassess what to do with the archives.

Cllr Bennett had not heard anything further about the AD plant but said she would chase the Officer about this.

The 20mph zone has the support of Paul West and Cllr Bennett is awaiting the figures and time scale for the project.

In regards to the ancestry appointed to digitise Suffolk's local history sources, mentioned on Cllr Bennett's July report; Cllr Horton shared that she had been working with the history

group to create information stands about Withersfield to be displayed in the church. She also informed the PC that the clock had been temporarily taken away to be restored.

The Chair mentioned how other Councils had been going broke and asked Cllr Bennett whether she had any concerns about this for SCC, to which Cllr Bennett confirmed she had no concern.

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

None. The Chairman closed the public section of the meeting.

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

It was noted that Cllrs Horton and Jarvis are trustees on the VHMC.

#### **6. To approve the minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on 11<sup>th</sup> July 2023**

The minutes were approved – proposed by Cllr Horton and seconded by Cllr Stiles.

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

##### **a) Light over defibrillator – Cllr Horton**

This was brought up at the VHMC the previous evening and agreed that the Chair of the VHMC would fit a new bulb at the weekend.

##### **b) Consider possible projects for the bequest from Mrs Enid Rodgers**

The Chair had written in his report in the Withersfield News which is sent out to all parishioners, about the bequest and asked for parishioners to send any thoughts or ideas on how it should be spent. Neither the Clerk or the Chair had received any responses from this request.

Options were discussed among the PC and it was agreed that the three areas where the money could be spent were:

1. Contribution towards a play area,
2. Contribution towards the refurbishment of the village hall disabled access,
3. Contribution towards implementing the 20mph zone.

Cllr Wijenayaka previously confirmed he would look into retrieving some advice from the Communities Officer about implementing a play area. The Chair suggested that a consultant could be employed to carry out a feasibility study.

The three options will be explored in greater depth and discussed at the next PC meeting.

## **8. Update from the Muck-Off campaign**

Cllr Horton told the PC there had been no further progress here as they still await the public release of Acorn's application. The consultant had informed them that he had been looking at Acorn's other applications – some of which hadn't been approved. There will be a public meeting held when the application has been verified.

Cllr Bennett confirmed that the only information she had been told about the application is that further information had been requested from Acorn before the application can be verified and published. She also said that there is lots of local support from local Councillors including Haverhill TC, to the objection of the AD plant.

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

Cllr Korona said she had been working on the consultation statement and she plans for this to be completed in the next few days. This will then be sent to the Senior Planning Policy Officer at West Suffolk who will then send a list of examiners for the PC to choose from.

The list of appendices needs to be completed and Cllr Korona believes it is manageable for her to complete, but will call on Cllrs Horton and Stiles if she needs help.

Cllr Korona confirmed there would be no cost for the examiner, and after this stage there would be a referendum. It was requested that Cllr Korona finds out whether the referendum will need to be funded by the PC.

The PC gave their thanks to Cllr Korona for her continuing hard work on the project.

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

Cllr Eve sent the following update to the PC ahead of his absence.

Outlined below are the main points from the Traffic Working Group/Villages Road Group meeting which was held on 5th September:

- It was agreed that 40mph buffers and 20mph limits through and around villages should be established.
- Cllr Eve gave a short presentation of the 20's Plenty campaign and objectives
- Cllr Bennett confirmed she will continue to support Withersfield's 20mph zone and further 20mph zones for Thurlow outside the school and Great Wrating on the hill and bend.
- It was agreed that all Parish Councils in attendance would have 20's Plenty on their next PC meeting agendas for discussion.
- It was agreed that the Speed Watch Group would be having a 'Special Event' when all speed watch teams would be out gathering data. Withersfield Speed Watch would re-establish for this event and would be collecting data in Withersfield.

Outlined below are the main points from the Teams meeting between Cllr Eve and Suffolk Highways held on the 3rd July 2023:

- Cllr Eve presented the problems of the area for consideration in the review of the Local Transport Plan
- It was confirmed that when Highways were consulted by Greater Cambridgeshire Partnership, they did lobby for the needs of Haverhill but they had little input into the decision-making processes of Cambridgeshire or Essex
- Cllr Eve stressed that there is an urgent need for a 20mph Strategy in the Suffolk Highways Local Transport Plan, similar to that in place in other areas including Wales and Oxfordshire. Withersfield, Great Thurlow, Little Thurlow, Great Bradley and Great Wratting should be considered for 40mph Buffer zones in conjunction with 20mph zones as a strategy for reducing traffic speed and volume through these rat-run villages. Highways confirmed that Suffolk Highways had no current strategy for 20mph zones and thought the Police may be an obstacle. They may consider this in future planning
- Cllr Eve pointed out that Withersfield's 20mph zone was agreed in May 2020 by Councillor Andrew Reid and Mark Stevens but the project had stalled. Suffolk Highways said there was no record of the project as David Chenery did not brief the department before he left but the project is now being discussed with Bobby Bennett and Paul West and they would decide if or how to move forward.

Cllr Eve feels progress is being made towards our 20mph zone in that Cllr Bennett has committed herself to the project and we are getting some support from other Parish Councils for the 20's Plenty campaign.

#### **11. Update from the Village Hall Committee including response to PC's request for an annual donation towards upkeep of the green – Cllr Horton**

It was reported by Cllr Horton that the extension works on the village hall had begun and she shared the project plan with the PC. The projected end date for the works is mid-November. Some amendments had been made to the plans in order to lower the costs. Cllr Horton will be looking into funding for the roof.

The VHMC has had two resignations and therefore Cllr Horton has taken on the role of secretary. They are looking for someone to take on the treasurer role.

There are two PC representatives on the committee being Cllrs Horton and Jarvis, and a representative of the Church is desired.

The committee has employed their stand-in cleaner to help with the opening up duties of the village hall hirers. The hire rates have been increased to cover extra outgoings.

Some contractual concerns had been previously raised but Cllr Horton assured that they had carried out a tender process and she was project managing the extension works.

The next VHMC meeting would be being held in January 2024.

The Chair asked about the annual donation towards the upkeep of the green and Cllr Horton said the committee had agreed to contribute £50. This was discussed and Cllr Horton

agreed to raise the query again at the next VHMC meeting with the idea of contributing a percentage of party hires to the PC for the purpose of maintaining the village green, which is used for parking by party hirers.

The PC had received a request of using the marquee on the green for a wedding. The PC were in support of this and requested for the Thurlow Estate to ask Mr Vestey for his permission. If this was approved, it was suggested for the PC to ask for a contribution towards the use of the green from the organisers and the VHMC would set out the conditions for the use of the marquee and green. The PC were in agreement.

## **12. Harvest tour feedback**

Cllrs Korona and Stiles told the PC that the tour had been very interesting and informative. They shared some of what they had conversed about and showed photos of the tour. Cllr Wijenayaka had also attended.

Thanks was given to Andrew Crossley for inviting and hosting the PC.

## **13. Order of wreath and arrangements for Remembrance Sunday**

The available wreaths on The Royal British Legion website were perused and it was proposed by Cllr Korona for the PC to order wreath type B with a donation of £19.99. This was seconded by Cllr Stiles with all Cllrs in agreement. It is noted that this will be an S138B payment of £19.99.

The Remembrance Sunday service will take place on Sunday 12<sup>th</sup> November at 10:50am at the war memorial.

## **14. 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 Korona and seconded by Cllr Horton.

## **15. Correspondence**

None received.

## **16. Planning**

- a) Borough notifications since last meeting

Noted.

- b) Applications received since last meeting for consideration

All applications were considered and noted.

The PC had sent a resubmission of their original objection to planning application DC/23/0572/FUL - new agricultural access, with the addition of the following:

*The Parish Council objects to this application. Although the resubmission appears to have reduced the overall size of the entrance, the changes do not significantly alter the substance of the application nor address the concerns raised by the Parish Council.*

The PC sent a further letter to the Planning Officer for application DC/23/0572/FUL which she had uploaded to the public case file:

*Withersfield Parish Council has received an unprecedented number of objections and comments about the above application. We therefore wish to make some further comments which reflect the recent comments from our Parishioners.*

*1. There are no safety issues with the current access that has been used without incident for the last 15 years and is perfectly adequate for the current farm activity in this field, there is no demonstratable need. The current double gate is used successfully for 40-ton articulated lorries, please see pictures below supplied by a Parishioner of gate being used within the last two weeks for harvesting.*

*2. The new gate would destroy an ancient meadow and adversely affect The White Horse Public House.*

*3. The application does not show how the new access would link to the existing farm network of hardened tracks. We assume this is not Permitted Development and will therefore, need another application, we would request that the case officer ask "How will the Gate link to the current farm tracks?"*

*4. Although the application does not mention the Anaerobic Digester as we have stated in previous objections the gate appears linked to this application and should be differed to be decided at the same time. We would request that the case officer ask the applicant "Will this gate and supporting track be used, in the event that the Anaerobic Digester is approved, for the transport of silage and other farm materials to the Digester" to establish this.*

*5. With the unprecedented response to this application, we ask that the application be brought before committee and for a representative from the Parish Council to attend to put forward our objections.*

These can be viewed online on the West Suffolk Council planning portal.

## **17. Agenda items for 14 November 2023**

- Draft budget (including a rise in the precept).

*The meeting closed at 20:51.*