

**Minutes of Withersfield Parish Council meeting held at
7:30pm on Tuesday, 17th September 2024 at the village hall, Withersfield.**

Present: Cllrs Terry Rich (Chairman), Frank Eve (Vice-Chair),
Gill Jarvis, Julia Korona; Clerk: Laura Crump; County Councillor: Bobby Bennett;
Cllr Candidate Patricia Mallalieu and 3 parishioners.

1. Apologies for absence

Received from Cllrs Lake and Wijenayaka – these were approved by the PC.

2. District Councillor's report

None received.

3. County Councillor's report

Cllr Bennett's County Councillor reports for July, August, and September 2024 were shared with the PC and can be found on the PC website.

Cllr Bennett disappointingly said that the Government had withdrawn the devolution deal but that the Council were campaigning for a small amount of money for certain areas such as adult education.

No further information has been received in regards to the anaerobic digester planning application. Cllr Bennett guaranteed that she will ensure there is enough time given in order to read all the information when this comes through.

Cllr Bennett reported there had been some negativity received about a Haverhill Cllr who had been silent on this issue. Cllr Bennett said that this Cllr is on the planning committee so cannot be seen to form a view in advance of the committee that will consider the application.

Cllr Bennett offered her support to Cllr Eve in regards to his efforts in implementing traffic calming measures to Withersfield.

A complaint about the overgrown reed beds on the Arboretum junction had been shared and Cllr Bennett said she would look into the problem.

Cllr Bennett suggested parishioners attend the Police engagement event being held on Thursday 19th September in Haverhill where this issue could be shared along with the concern about the speeding along the A1307 between the Sainsbury's roundabout and the Spirit of Enterprise roundabout.

Cllr Bennett encourages parishioners to report any potholes in the roads as well as any blocked drains via the Suffolk County Council online reporting tool:

<https://highwaysreporting.suffolk.gov.uk/>

4. Public Forum for parishioners

One parishioner spoke about the problems residents on the Arboretum estate have been facing when exiting the estate from Three Counties Way onto the A1307. The reed beds are overgrown and causing difficulties to motorists. This stretch of road sees a lot of speeding vehicles making the turn out of the estate even more dangerous with the lack of visibility. The hedges/trees are also overgrown along the pavement and cycle way causing difficulty for pedestrians and cyclists next to speeding cars, and road signs are being obscured. The parishioner said this had been reported online a while ago but the response was that the criteria hadn't been met for any action to be taken by Highways. Cllr Bennett will be reporting the issues raised and asking for a further review.

Two parishioners brought up the inconvenience they have been experiencing with a car which has been parked and left on the village green for over two weeks in front of their property and feel that the car should no longer be parked there. The parishioners would like to put up a sign stating that the track across the green is private access to Cranford House and Jacobs Manor only.

It is believed that the owner of said car had attended a party at a nearby residence and the car had broken down which is why it hadn't moved since.

The Chair proposed to write an article in the village magazine, which goes out to all houses in the parish, explaining that the PC do not authorise parking on the green. The Chair will state that villagers who wish their guests to park on the greens for a family event should seek approval from the PC in advance. Parking on the green is only permissible in special circumstances and with the condition that the weather has been dry beforehand. It would also be mentioned that motorists should be respectful of neighbours.

The Chair also proposed that the PC put a notice on the car in question, asking them to move their car as soon as possible and to get in touch if they are unable to do so.

The Chair also suggested to the parishioners that if they wanted to purchase this piece of land, they should get in touch with the Thurlow Estate.

The Chairman closed the public section of the meeting and the parishioners left the meeting.

5. Parish Councillor vacancy

Patricia Mallalieu had expressed her desire to join the Parish Council and had sent her statement of application to the PC. The Chair invited her to introduce herself and speak a little about why she'd like to become a Parish Councillor.

Patricia explained that she has lived in the village since 2007 and prior to this was living in a village in West Yorkshire, where she served 4 years on her local Parish Council. While in Yorkshire she managed training companies and set her own training company up specialising in Health and Social Care vocational training. The move to Withersfield brought their horse breeding and racing operation here. At present Patricia is the director of 2 companies - one is Training and the other Recruitment. She has family who also live in Withersfield and feels

that village life needs to be preserved and she would like to be more involved in the community.

The Cllrs thanked Patricia for applying for the position and it was proposed by the Chair to co-opt Patricia onto the Parish Council. This was seconded by Cllr Eve and all the Councillors voted in favour.

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

None.

7. To approve the minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on 9th July 2024

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

8. Matters arising - updates from previous Parish Council meetings

a) Update on playground feasibility study – Cllr Wijenayaka

No update received. To be revisited at the next PC meeting.

b) Parking on Burton Green – sign request to Thurlow Estate – Clerk

As previously agreed, the Clerk had requested a 'no parking on the green' sign be erected on Burton Green but had yet to receive a decision from The Estate.

c) Disabled Access to Recreational Ground – Clerk

The Chair of the Sports and Recreation Committee had cleared the area making it accessible. Thanks goes to Denis for effectively actioning this request.

9. Draft parish survey – Cllr Eve

Cllr Eve had put together a survey online and shared it with the Cllrs for their feedback and input. The questions on the survey were considered and discussed. It was agreed for the survey to be online only and Cllr Korona volunteered to be the point of call for any parishioner having difficulties or unable to complete the survey online. The link to the survey would be shared online via email and the Withersfield Facebook pages, and shared in the Withersfield News with an article encouraging residents to complete the survey.

10. Parking on Village Greens

As previously discussed in the public forum, the Cllrs agreed to the actions proposed by the Chair to:

1. Put a notice on the car which had been parked on the village green outside of Jacob's Manor for over two weeks, asking for the car to be moved and to get in touch if there was a problem with this.
2. Place an article in the Withersfield News explaining about parking on the village greens

The Clerk had requested that Thurlow Estate erect a 'no parking on the green' sign on Burton Green in response to a parishioner's complaint. The Estate confirmed that the request has been noted and would be put forward for approval as soon as possible.

11. Update on the Neighbourhood Plan

The Chair reported that he and Cllr Stiles had been working on the corrections required for the Plan and they were nearly complete. They are on track for their estimated timescale.

12. Update from the Traffic Working Group – Cllr Eve

Cllr Eve shared the VAS results recorded between 12th July – 11th August:

Rose Hill – average speed: 32mph, maximum speed: 55mph, number of vehicles per week: 4,900-5,600

Church Street – average speed: 28mph, maximum speed: 55mph, number of vehicles per week: 10,500 – 10,800.

Cllr Eve had shared with the PC the article regarding Labour's stance on 20mph speed limits, which gives him hope for a future 20mph zone for the village. Cllr Eve is keeping updated with the '20s Plenty' campaign who have an upcoming conference on the 9th October.

Cllr Eve said that the section 106 money from the Arboretum phase 2 is available towards traffic calming in Withersfield.

In his email exchange with the Highways engineer, it was confirmed that Highways would revisit the 20mph zone for Withersfield if speeds reduce due to traffic calming measures being implemented. The traffic calming measures options were explained as:

1. Pinch points and gateways on all entrances to the village
2. Edge markings and signs on the bend at the bottom of Hollow Hill and Church Street
3. Refresh of current road markings

The PC agreed that the discussions Cllr Eve has been having with Highways seemed positive and requested for costings and timescales of all three traffic calming options put forward. Cllr Eve will continue to action.

13. Update from the Village Hall Committee and permissions received regarding improved parking on the green – Cllr Jarvis

Cllr Jarvis confirmed that permissions had been received from both Highways and the Thurlow Estate for the implementation of the Grasscrete blocks on the green. Planning Officer at West Suffolk Council stated that if works proceed the planning application would be retrospective and as the highway authority have reviewed the details and do not object and the conservation officer does not object, then the Officer does not foresee any other issues with the proposal that would warrant the refusal of application.

With this information, the PC agreed to the submission of the planning application for the installation of the Grasscrete blocks in the name of the Parish Council. The PC agreed that

the works can proceed in advance of planning consent being received, subject to confirmation from West Suffolk Planning that the application has been validated.

Cllr Jarvis reported that the estimated cost for the improved parking would be £10,000.

It was proposed by Cllr Korona and seconded by Cllr Eve to commission the works to install the blocks from Tom Mytton-Mills's company, which the VHMC had consulted with, subject to the agreement that the VHMC will reimburse the PC for the full costs less the PC contribution of £3,000 and less the VAT, which the Clerk will claim back at the end of the financial year.

Cllr Jarvis explained that the free Wi-Fi service the village hall had been receiving has ended. The Committee agreed that as hirers rely on this service, the secretary has arranged for Wi-Fi to be reinstated as soon as possible.

The VHMC are looking into fundraising events for the village hall including a Burns Night in January.

The Chair reminded the PC that there was still a vacancy for another representative of the PC on the VHMC.

14. Update from the Muck-Off campaign - Cllr Wijenayaka

The campaign had a meeting recently with the new MP, who confirms his support with the campaign.

The campaign still awaits Acorn's response to the further information and questions requested from the Council. Acorn asked for an extension for their response before the application went to committee in September.

A further round of consultation will ensue once the information has been received before the application goes to committee.

15. Order of wreath and arrangements for Remembrance Sunday

The Clerk shared the available wreaths on The Royal British Legion website with the Cllrs 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 Jarvis 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 10th November at 10:50am at the war memorial.

16. 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 Jarvis.

c) Parish Council insurance quotes

The Clerk had acquired 3 quotes for the Parish Council insurance and it was agreed to move insurance provider to Zurich as the cheapest cost, providing the cover is the same. The Clerk will action this.

17. Correspondence

a) Email – Duke’s Cottage

Vice-Chair, Cllr Eve, took over Chair for this item.

Cllr Eve had received an email from a parishioner suggesting that the Chair, Cllr Rich, had exceeded his authority in his role by arranging for certain works to be carried out on behalf of the PC.

The Chair had been contacted by an elderly resident about the state of the passageway at the rear of her home. The overgrown trees/bushes were making it hazardous to access and move her and her neighbours’ wheelie bins. With this the Chair asked a parishioner - a local tree surgeon - to take a look and see if they could assist. He did so and cleared the pathway with no charge incurred.

Cllr Eve explained that he had spoken to the parishioner who wrote the email about the matter. He made clear that no public funds had been used for the works undertaken and that Cllr Rich was responding to the distress of an elderly resident.

The Cllrs reviewed all emails and information received in regards to the matter and agreed that Cllr Rich had not exceeded his authority in his actions taken and support the choices he made in responding to a vulnerable and distressed parishioner.

b) Email – Footpaths – Cllr Lake

A parishioner had emailed enquiring about the cutting of the footpaths around the village and said she had emailed the Thurlow Estate about this but had not received a reply.

Cllr Lake agreed to deal with the enquiry – to be updated at the next meeting.

c) Email – Parking in front of Jacob’s Manor

This was discussed earlier in the meeting and it was agreed that a sign would be placed on the car which has been parked in front of Jacob’s Manor for over two weeks and the Chair will write a piece in the Withersfield News about parking on village greens.

18. Planning

a) Borough notifications since last meeting

All were considered and noted.

There was disappointment over the appeal being allowed for the Milton House application although it was reminded by the Chair that the PC and objecting parishioners had been successful in reducing the scale of the development and number of dwellings.

b) Applications received since last meeting for consideration

All were considered and noted.

19. Agenda items for 12th November 2024

- Update on the overgrown reeds causing visibility issues on Arboretum junction
- Costings for the traffic calming options
- Christmas social event

The meeting closed at 21:02.