

**Minutes of Withersfield Parish Council meeting held at  
7:30pm on Tuesday, 21<sup>st</sup> January 2025 at the village hall, Withersfield.**

Present: Cllrs Terry Rich (Chairman), Frank Eve (Vice-Chair),  
Julia Korona, Jaclyn Lake, Philip Stiles, Indy Wijenayaka;  
Clerk: Laura Crump; County Councillor: Bobby Bennett;  
District Councillor: Indy Wijenayaka and 4 parishioners.

**1. Apologies for absence**

Received from Cllr Mallalieu - approved by the PC.

**2. District Councillor's report**

Cllr Wijenayaka spoke about the thermal camera project. Great Wratting PC are willing to hold the camera and arrange for its insurances and booking system. Each parish involved are responsible themselves to advertise to residents about its availability and residents would need to book through Great Wratting PC. Cllr Wijenayaka and Great Wratting PC would help with any training needed to use the camera. Parishes that do not contribute to the purchase of the equipment would need to pay a fee to use the camera.

DC are reintroducing a weed killer spray but this shouldn't affect Withersfield.

Cllr Wijenayaka touched on the devolution deal, saying that it is progressing and the DC are being briefed but this is being held at a County level.

**3. County Councillor's report**

Cllr Bennett said the Council is going through its budget process, and they are looking to take their full precept. They are on track from last year, there have been increased pressures, but so far they are not having to make too difficult decisions here.

Cllr Bennett spoke about the devolution and local government reorganisation. Local government reorganisation would see the abolition of the county, districts and borough councils and replacement with a single unitary council. Town and parish council structures would not change. Devolution would see the creation of a Mayoral Strategic Authority, with mayor elected in May 2026 and holding devolved funding and powers over strategic policy.

Suffolk County Council requested to join the Devolution Priority Programme, noting that acceptance onto this Programme may postpone the 2025 County Council elections. They are currently waiting for the minister to confirm which areas he has decided to include on the Devolution Priority Programme.

Cllr Bennett said she would like to attend the next villages road group meeting which Cllr Eve confirmed he was intending to arrange another meeting sometime in February and would liaise with Cllr Bennett.

#### 4. Public Forum for parishioners

A parishioner asked for an update on the following points:

- Road marking extension over old Rail Bridge

Cllr Eve explained that he had tried to get the yellow lines extended here but Highways decided there were no safety issues and therefore will not approve. Highways say there has been no reported issues over the last 12 months and they have been in contact with the Police who confirmed that they believe there is not a safety issue at this location. Cllr Eve offered to write again to Highways about a review of this decision

- Access road/footway to village hall – only footway to the hall and is a trip hazard

Cllr Eve confirmed that the road to the village hall is the responsibility of Suffolk Highways and therefore any works on this road has to be agreed and undertaken by Highways. Cllr Eve has spoken with a Highways Engineer who informed him that the road is inspected every 12 months and the last time was March 2024 when no action was taken. The road will be inspected again soon to establish if resurfacing is required. An inspection could occur sooner if pot holes are repeatedly reported on the online Highways reporting tool.

- Contaminated water course entrance to STW – ditch is full of discarded white goods; live water way is filthy.

The PC thanked the parishioner for informing them of this and will report this to Anglia Water.

The additional information the County Council requested from Acorn in regards to their Anaerobic Digester plant application had been received. It is believed that it would take a fortnight for the consultation papers to be sent out to consultees, then there would be 30 days to respond. The Muck-Off campaign will receive the same papers as the PC. The Chair had written to SCC to enquire about the re-consultation.

The parishioner spoke about his following suggestions to the PC:

- PC response to Committee if/when
- PC to register
- PC to lobby
- PC to contact local Councillor for the Cangle Ward/Committee member
- PC to seek updates from Bobby Bennett to confirm case officer and order of representation at committee if/when.
- PC to contact MP

It was discussed that it would be unlikely for the application to go to committee before June, although Cllr Bennett said she would push the planning officers to aim for June. Individuals can also respond to the additional information.

It was confirmed by the Chair that the PC would be making strong representations and speak at the committee meeting.

The parishioner suggested that the PC lobby the 12 planning committee members. This was discussed and the PC said they will be sure to not go beyond bounds of appropriate behaviour and stick to the rules of engagement. In this case, the parishioner said he himself would write to the committee members.

Cllr Bennett said there may be some opportunity to speak to committee members at the site meeting she expects will occur.

The parishioner suggested the PC contact MP Nick Timothy for his support. Cllr Bennett said she would check his position on the matter hasn't changed.

The three parishioners expressed that the PC, Muck-Off group, and residents of Withersfield, need to work together as a united front in order to successfully object to the application once again. They believe it to be important to not repeat things at the committee meeting. The PC agreed that they should work with Muck-Off and will continue to keep ongoing communications through the Parish Councillors who are also involved in the Muck-Off campaign.

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

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

None.

#### **6. To approve the minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on 12<sup>th</sup> November 2024 and the extraordinary meeting on 13<sup>th</sup> January 2025**

The minutes for the PC meeting on 12/11/24 were approved – proposed by Cllr Korona and seconded by Cllr Stiles.

The minutes of the extraordinary meeting on 13/01/25 were approved – proposed by Cllr Wijenayaka and seconded by Cllr Korona.

#### **7. Parish Councillor vacancy**

As Gill Jarvis had resigned from the PC, Cllrs were asked to think about any potential candidates within the parish to fill the vacant position.

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

##### **a) Update on playground feasibility study – Cllr Wijenayaka**

Cllr Wijenayaka suggested that the PC apply for funding for the implementation of a playground of which a feasibility study would be part of. However, Councillors felt that we are at a much earlier stage, and it is a feasibility study that is needed before we could consider applying for a capital grant. Cllr Wijenayaka said he would go back to the West Suffolk officer and try and acquire information regarding, land, budget, permissions. It was suggested that we may be able to identify a consultant able to assist with a feasibility study independently.

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

The Clerk had contacted the Thurlow Estate again and had received a response saying that the newly appointment Estate Manager, would be in touch. He wanted to confirm the details however, we are still awaiting further communications from him.

**9. To consider funding of "No Parking on the Village Green" signs.**

The Chair proposed that the PC look into the implementation of the signs independently of Thurlow Estate if no response is forthcoming. The Cllrs agreed and so research regarding costings for said signs will be brought to the next PC meeting for further consideration.

**10. Draft parish survey – Cllr Eve**

Cllr Eve asked the Cllrs whether it was still wise to proceed at this time with the survey for the parish as he didn't want it to be a distraction. It was agreed to continue with the plans for the survey as it could reinforce and encourage parishioners to become involved in current matters arising.

The questions drafted were discussed and suggestions were made. The PC agreed for the survey to go live with the previously agreed annual subscription. The intention is that early results should be available to report to the next Annual Parish Meeting in May.

**11. Update on the Neighbourhood Plan**

Cllr Korona had spent a lot of time reconfiguring the Neighbourhood Plan following more comments received from West Suffolk as amendments to be made. Cllr Stiles just needs to check the maps and then the Plan can be submitted. The Plan will then go to an assessor and a referendum will follow.

Cllr Korona and Stiles were thanked for their continued efforts to get the plan over the line.

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

Cllr Eve had been in contact with the Community Liaison Engineer at Suffolk Highways and had shared the estimates received for the installation of gates at the five entrances to Withersfield village. The cost for supply/installation of 9 x gateways in 5 locations = approx. £11,348.52. Cllr Eve said other contractors could be looked in to in order to bring the costs down but after some discussion it was agreed it would be sensible to have Suffolk Highways commission the works to implement the gates to ensure the correct requirements and processes would be adhered to.

Cllr Bennett said she may be able to contribute a small amount from her locality budget.

It was agreed to proceed with the implementation of the gates through Highways along with the previously agreed upon refresh of the 'SLOW' road markings. Cllr Eve will confirm the works with Highways. It was agreed that the Section 106 monies held by West Suffolk Council on our behalf should be used to part fund these works, the remainder coming out of our traffic calming reserves.

Cllr Eve will be arranging the next Villages Road Group meeting, possibly some time in February and inviting Cllr Bennett to attend.

Cllr Wijenayaka asked Cllr Bennett about the reported obscured road sign along the A1307 between the Arboretum bus stop and the roundabout by Sainsbury's. She said the engineer could not find the obscured sign. Cllr Wijenayaka had sent a photo of it and Cllr Bennett ensured she would chase this again.

### **13. PC representative for the VHMC**

Since the last PC meeting, Cllr Mallalieu was invited to attend the Village Hall Management Committee as the PC representative. Her nomination was approved by the Parish Council. Proposed by Cllr Rich and seconded by Cllr Eve.

### **14. Update from the Village Hall Committee**

It was reported that the Burns Night event had been cancelled due to lack of numbers and a Games Afternoon and Quiz Night have been arranged taking place on 22<sup>nd</sup> March.

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

It was reiterated that the campaign will work with the PC in order to have successful speakers at the committee meeting and the group will be organising another meeting soon.

### **16. Roles and responsibilities of Parish Councillors, Chair, and Vice Chair**

A 'Roles and Responsibilities' document had been drawn up and circulated to all Cllrs prior to the meeting. Cllrs considered the draft and all were in agreement to approve and publish the document. It would be available on the Parish Council website.

### **17. Village Greens maintenance contract - annual review of performance**

The PC reviewed the work commenced in 2024 and confirmed they were happy.

### **18. To consider a date for the 2025 Annual Spring Clean**

It was agreed for the spring clean to take place on Saturday 12<sup>th</sup> April, meeting on the village green at 10am. The Clerk will organise the equipment and rubbish collection.

### **19. 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 – quarter 3, 2024/25

These were all noted and approved – proposed by Cllr Eve and seconded by Cllr Lake.

- d) To note the precept form has been submitted

Noted.

## **20. Correspondence**

- a) Letter - Headway Suffolk donation request

Noted.

- b) Email - Parking outside Ashley Grange

Cllrs considered the parishioner's email where the PC were asked to support their plans to install two planters to restrict parking in the immediate vicinity of their entrance and to enable them to be able to view oncoming traffic from either direction. The PC agreed to formally support their application.

The Clerk will write to the parishioners concerned.

- c) Email - Work to St Mary's Church

Noted.

## **21. Planning**

- a) **Borough notifications since last meeting**  
b) **Applications received since last meeting for consideration**

All were considered and noted.

## **22. Agenda items for next PC meeting in 4<sup>th</sup> March 2025**

- Update on the installation of gates and refresh of 'SLOW' markings.
- Update on the Biodigester application.
- Invite MP Nick Timothy to PC meeting.

*The meeting closed at 20:56.*