

**WHATFIELD PARISH COUNCIL  
MINUTES OF ANNUAL PARISH MEETING  
HELD AT WHATFIELD VILLAGE HALL ON 8<sup>th</sup> MAY 2019**

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The meeting opened at 745pm.

**Present**

Mr. P. Whittle	Chairman
Mr David Cross	Vice Chairman
Mrs H Landon	Parish Councillor
Mr. D. Dray	Parish Councillor
Mrs C Curtis	Parish Councillor
Mr G Smith	Parish Councillor
Mr S Clifford	Parish Councillor
Mrs. L. King	Clerk

**1. Chairman's Welcome**

Mr Paul Whittle was elected Chairman for a period of 12 months at the Annual General Meeting

**2. Apologies for Absence** Robert Lindsey and Joy Green

**3. Matters Arising and Confirmation of Minutes of meeting 2nd May 2018**

No matters arising. The Minutes were approved as a true record of the meeting and signed by the Chairman. Prop Mrs H Landon; Sec. Mr. S, Clifford. Accepted unanimously.

**4. Chairman's Report**

One of our first jobs was to move the council's bank account from Barclays to TSB in order to bring our level of service back up to our needs.

The residents at Sheckie Meadow have been living in the village for coming up for three years now and are well settled into the village with at least one child attending the school. The larger development at Church Farm is nearing completion with many houses now occupied, and several of those people nicely 'integrating' themselves into the village at various functions and the village hall bar on a Friday evening. The two acre field alongside the development is being landscaped for villagers' use. A village welcome pack has been distributed to help new villagers understand and gain access to all the wonderful clubs and facilities in the village. Thanks to Councillor David Dray.

At the other end of the village, the continuing success and use made of the village playground is very rewarding for the council, the original work and ongoing maintenance led by Councillor Helen Landon.

The project to try to reduce speeding in Whatfield has progressed greatly this year with the installation of the speed indicator device (SID). The SID is expensive and was purchased with help from SCC and is shared with Monks Eleigh. The equipment is used alternately in both parishes and managed and installed in Whatfield by Councillor Graham Smith. The SID displays the current speed being driven by motorists and records the data for later analysis. Graham has been installing the SID at both ends of the village for maximum effect.

SID statistics for January 2018 showed that about 47,000-48,000 vehicles travelled through the Whatfield; that's about 1600 per day. The busiest days for our roads were Mondays, Tuesdays and Wednesdays, when 56% of all weekly travel took place on those days. The quietest were Weekends with about 19% of all weekly travel. Peak periods for travel were between 8-10am, and 5-7pm. Traffic was up to 4 times the hourly average at those times.

Almost all traffic was recorded at travelling at over 30mph when approaching the first 30mph warning signs, but most vehicles slowed to 29-31mph once the drivers had either spotted SID's warning, or were just considerate drivers. The main culprits who continued to speed into the village were approaching before 7pm, and at an average of 41mph.

The Parish Council through David Dray, have been investigating whether to set up a Speedwatch scheme for the village, where volunteers could be trained, do patrols, and use a mobile camera to record speeding vehicles. Unfortunately, the police have informed us that the layout of most of our village is unsuitable for this to work, and so we need to think more about different ways of making the village a safer place to walk and drive in. We are still trying to push the County Councillor to support us in the development of a footpath along the verge to the school entrance but this continues to be difficult on the usual grounds of 'no money available' and/or 'other priorities'. Robert Lindsay, our County Councillor, has asked someone from Highways to come and review the road (again!), and has also suggested that probably the only way to make it happen would be to try to force a Community Infrastructure Levy as part of a large planning application. On this

note, we have been informed by the owner and her architect that they will try for planning permission on the field opposite Wheatfields (again) sometime in 2018. At this time there is no paperwork to assess what may be proposed.

We continue to rent and maintain the car park off The Street for use by villagers for off-street parking. We have chased up the repair of potholes and cracks with the county council highways with some success. There appears to be simply too much work across the county for the resources allocated. In mid-March, soon after the second lot of snow had melted and disappeared, we had a major water pipe burst on the main road at the Hadleigh end of The Street. It took about a week to fully repair, only to burst again some 1-2 weeks later in almost the same place. I spoke to the AWA repair team (who came from Southend!) who said that that the pipework was very old cast iron. Several villagers turned out to try to channel the huge amount of flowing water away from houses in Wheatfields, Sheckie Meadow and Bay Tree Cottage before Anglian Water could turn down the flow and begin the repair overnight. The traffic diversion was via Wheatfields which was not really up to carrying the heavy flow of traffic that Whatfield now has to endure. In hindsight there probably should have had a 20mph limit attached. We are also monitoring the number of heavy goods travelling through the village. We have written to the quarry on Aldham Hill about the number of JT Few Lorries coming through The Street. Other ongoing items include the future use of the telephone box in The Street which we now own; emptying of the Dog Poo bins around the village; upkeep of the village seat around the oak tree on the corner of Wheatfields. We have also asked Babergh for a litter pick from the village to the bypass.

Once again we have not raised the parish precept. For this year it equates to £23.32 per year for a Band D property. The precept pays for all the items that the Parish Council manage and contribute towards for the welfare of the village, amongst other things, is the upkeep of the church graveyards and village footpaths. These are kept in an excellent state by Councillor Graham Smith and helpers. Bobby Smith has been our village footpath warden for a number of years with Graham Smith doing all the grass cutting. Sadly, Bobby has tendered her resignation from the role from this AGM. We shall miss her and her reports! Thanks for all your good work Bobby. A map showing the footpaths can be found on the village website. It is worth adding that, sadly, there are a few ignorant dog owners who don't clear up after their animals and are making these much appreciated jobs hazardous.

Just to add a final thanks to all those who manage all the other jobs not mentioned above, e.g. cutting the grass on the village green, management of the conservation areas etc.

Lastly I could not sign off without mentioning the sad loss in January of Lesley Legge of Furneaux farm. Lesley sadly passed away on 20th January 2018. She was a great stalwart of the village and a valued member of the Parish Council for a number of years.

## **5. Clerk's Report**

Following the APM in May last year, the Parish Council meetings in July, October and December 2018, and January and April 2019. We have had a good attendance from the Parish Councillors and one meeting was moved due to England playing in the World Cup.

**6. Playground report** We've had the Playground 7 years now! It is still popular with families from the village and also visitors. The School also makes good use of it too. After the last inspection I had to do a little maintenance i.e. re attaching some wood and filling knot holes... and recently it was noticed the bolt on the basket swing was loose, it took weeks for someone to tell me, even though the PC is the contact on the signs, it was reported to school and the newish office administrator contacted Mid Suffolk DC... She did then arrange a quote to fix it but Tom Allen did it for us! I cordoned it off in case dangerous, it is heavy so could have been an issue. Grass cutting - we are in need of volunteers- our previous has resigned after several years - I did give him the usual £50 for fuel for last year. Matthew Gant did cut it at the start of the season i.e. March but no one else has come forward, hoping he can do it again... Our maintenance funds remain healthy. The VHMCs rent of £10 is paid for the year. We are due our annual inspection next month, so hopefully nothing major.

Still of concern is road safety outside... But I say this every year...

## **7. Annual Accounts for YE 31.3.19 and appointment of internal Auditor**

(Appendix A) It was agreed to re-appoint Mr. Roy Plumbly as Internal Auditor if he is agreeable. The Accounts were circulated and approved and signed. Prop Mr. D Dray sec. Mr David Cross Unanimous.

## **8. County Councillor's Report**

### **School bus cuts**

I and my group did all we could to oppose this, including referring it twice to scrutiny committee. I fully expect it will lead to more cars on the road, confusion for parents and little savings. Catchment areas are so far being retained for school admissions policy but "nearest school" will apply for free school bus. I am glad though, that, through our consistent opposition to the policy, we were able to reduce the severity of the final policy change. The final policy that was agreed in

July 2018 was much less damaging than the original proposal. In particular, we were able to ensure that children who are currently attending a school will continue to receive free school transport until the end of their time at that school – thus reducing the upheaval and ensuring no child is forced to move schools in the middle of their education.

### **Highways**

I said last year that much of my time has been spent urging highways to do jobs that appear to have slipped for whatever reason. This is still the case. However a new, more pro-active cabinet member for highways does seem to have helped speed up response times and has implemented a new pothole policy – filling in all holes in an area rather than just the largest – which the administration tells me is working to save money, though I have noticed a few failures lately which I have reported. A new head of highways, Mark Ash, who does not have a highways background, has just taken over and it is hoped he will further shake things up.

### **Pension fund risk**

I sit on the pension committee and have been steadily pushing for the committee to reduce the risk of “stranded assets” from holding a high proportion of fossil fuel shares. At the last meeting, the committee agreed to look at transferring some of its assets to a low carbon fund.

### **Leadership change**

In the past year, the leader of the Conservative administration was voted out by his fellow Conservatives and a new leader, Matthew Hicks, voted in. He has been less confrontational than his predecessor and has set up a series of ad hoc, cross party “policy development panels” which so far seem to be working well to bring in new ideas. After pressure from me, the “Suffolk Public Sector Leaders” group is now meeting in public with agendas and minutes published.

### **Special Educational Needs**

The best example of this is the recent panel on SEN which recommended cabinet invest up to £45m over the next five years in creating new places within the county. This has been approved by cabinet and now signed off by the finance officer and should be implemented in the New Year. It was cross party input and support that helped the Conservatives agree to invest. However on the downside, the county has just failed its SEND inspection, two years after failing its first one. The inspectors said leadership and governance changes had been made but it had not fed through into better outcomes for parents and children, as health care professionals and educationalists appeared not to be coordinating together.

### **2019-20 Budget and Cuts, Citizens Advice, staff**

Suffolk County Council’s 2019-20 budget was agreed on Thursday 14 February. This will see an increase in council tax of 3.99%, and savings across the council’s directorates totalling £10.1m.

One of the most concerning decisions by the Suffolk administration is to cut the entire grant for this service. I and my group have spoken out against this at every opportunity because I believe it is a false economy. The grant is being withdrawn over two years in two halves and the NHS Clinical Commissioning Groups have agreed to fund the other half alongside the county for the 2019/20 year only.

The budget also proposes staffing reductions across all directorates, totalling almost £3m. We do not currently have details of how these cuts will be distributed and which staff will be affected, but I am very concerned that this will result in less efficient services and an increase in stress amongst the remaining staff.

### **Children’s centres**

My group (made up of Liberal Democrat, Green and Independent Councillors) made the decision to withdraw our representative from a Policy Development Panel that was looking into the future of family services in Suffolk. This is because it became clear to us that the sole focus of the panel was on reducing the number of children’s centres in the county rather than a genuine attempt to find solutions. As a group, we value the work of children’s centres and will not be complicit in any attempts to reduce their numbers.

### **Successful motions**

I’m pleased to say that three motions that I either proposed or seconded were passed.

They are

- Developing a strategic, costed five-year cycling plan to improve investment in cycling infrastructure in the county.
- Committing to reducing single-use plastic waste in Suffolk;
- Declaring a climate emergency and pledging to make Suffolk carbon neutral by 2030.

## **9. District Councillor’s Report**

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**10. Conservation Report** – This has been a good year for conservation. Richard has worked hard and Buckles and Huntys are good. There have been brimstone butterflies seen and the fruit trees are flowering. The Drift trees are growing well and Richard has maintained the footpath. Joy has got owls in her barn.

There has been a series of robberies along the lane. The thieves obviously came prepared because the chain on Buckles was cut allowing access to Glebe house. I don’t know whether there anything we can do to prevent this. Do we renew the padlock and chain or is there an alternative system?

**11. Suffolk Tree Warden's Report** = you may wonder what a tree warden has to do with Whatfield.

I have been the Parish Council Tree Warden since 2007, and have taken part in many conservation projects. Two which stand out in my mind are the following;

The first was recording the field hedgerows and trees. It involved walking the footpaths with volunteers and recording what trees and bushes we could find growing. This was completed in 2010 and all the information was placed in a large folder, which is available to look at from the Whatfield History Records, kept in our village.

The second was when I was asked by Mandy Squirrell and Marilyn Payne if I could relocate some snow drops, which were going to be dug up by the builder on the new Church Farm development. They have been planted down Rectory Road, in the conservation area, by my husband, they made a lovely show this spring.

My most recent project has been to purchase a new bench for Rectory Road, which overlooks the very beautiful River Brett valley. The bench was installed by Richard Mower, and I must say thank you to the Craske family for letting the Parish Council put a public bench on their land.

The Bench is in memory of Gwen Dunn, our Whatfield School headmistress for more than 30 years. She loved this area. As a child I remember nature walks down to the River Brett, and I shall be planting some wildflowers around the bench that she liked.

Unfortunately I have developed an incurable complaint called Lymphedema, and I have not been able to get out, so I hope to purchase a mobile scooter soon, and you may see me in the village this summer.

The Lymphedema has made me think how important it is for disabled members of our village to access the conservation area; I shall be thinking of new ideas. We are very lucky to have such a beautiful conservation area for everyone to enjoy.

**13. Village Hall Report**

Another year gone but where too, I don't know the car park is now going ahead all being well, we are now waiting for a Survey from the firm we have chosen, John has done a long and drawn out task but we at last see the light of the tunnel, we know not everyone is in favour of our final choice, but you cannot please everybody all the time. There is going to a walk way marked out in front of the village hall for safety reasons for children, wheelchairs and people. fres

We also doing the glass washer in the hall, moving it from on the shelf to under the sink for safety ,there will in the not too distant future be new hand dryers in the toilets ,and last not least we hope to decorate the hall to give it a freshen up. The year has been good for us, what with the Friday night bar and our different foods we have had, Burns Night, St. Patrick's Day, and St Georges and of course the usual Jacket Potatoes and Fish and Chips all very well attended. The School, Carpet Bowls, Keep Fit, Gardening Club and Friday Mornings under Fives are still with us, plus the hirers who are very happy with our hall, I must not forget to say about the screen and projector which has been used to help with our Friday nights food.

Thank you everyone who helps with the hall without them we could not keep going, we do need a treasurer as our Alison is giving up to go on to her teaching thank you so much for all her good work.

**14. Allotment Report** - The year has seen all allotment plots except for one employed by local people, and, by May, many are looking very productive. Plot holders had to endure a very long, dry period last summer, which did impact on several vegetable crops, especially because there is no water supply at our Candy Green allotments.

There has been a growth in chicken rearing across several plots, with many very impressive birds, and therefore more plots have wire screens surrounding them than in the recent past. Issues with foxes etc. have not been reported so far.

A minor issue has been access during wet conditions at the start of this year. I have advised plot holders not to take cars onto the site if the access route is muddy. Some appear to have ignored the request, and an additional padlock (which only I can open) will be used in future if necessary, to preserve the driveway in useable state. This will only be employed for short periods, with plot holders notified.

There has been some damage to a shed, and theft of children's toys, earlier this year. I ensured that this was known both by the local police and across the village community. The culprits were almost certainly 2-3 local boys. The visits appear to have stopped, and I will deploy the village video camera in future if there are further reports of damage or theft.

An issue which does require the attention of the Parish Council is the situation regarding the installation of large scale children's play equipment on, at present, two plots. These include a swing, slide, and climbing frame. Although no PC members have expressed concerns about this, there is a health and safety issue which does need to be examined. At least one plot holder has made it clear that they are unhappy at large scale play equipment being placed on plots, and I am not aware of our legal situation if any child were to be hurt when using such equipment on land which the PC is responsible for managing. I have informed the relevant plot holders that we do need to examine this situation in order to

be fair to them and to all other plot holders, and have informed them by e mail that they must take full responsibility for the equipment they have set up for their children. This is almost certainly not sufficient to legally protect the PC from all responsibility, so we will need to consider the best way forward, including the use of a formal letter. This matter does need to be acted on by the PC as quickly as we can.

**15. Community Council Report**

Looking back over the past year the committee has once again been able to keep us financially in a good place, enough to give to community projects such as  
 Whatfield Playgroup – Summer Outing  
 Richard Mower – Bird Boxes for Church Grounds  
 Whatfield School – Development of early year’s area.

We should endeavour to continue doing this and if anybody has any ideas please tell the committee. Also being in the What’s on in Whatfield would also spread the word.  
 Also we will of course support to maintain the Village Hall and its grounds if needed, although this seems little or not out for some time. Most hall projects undertaken seem self-funded or freebies!! Must think on though, that it will not always be like this I’m sure!

This year has also seen the sad loss of Jane and Mary from the committee. Both of these have sat around the table for many years and helped make important decisions. Mary was one of the group who started the whole idea of there being a Village Hall at all and is a trustee as well. So we really do have a lot to thank her for. Successful events like:  
 Violets Time for Tea  
 Over 60’s Christmas Lunch and entertainment  
 Quiz night – are amongst some of the annual usual functions run very well by committee members.

Also a new and I think a positive thing we decided to do was finance for a year the “What’s on in Whatfield” a snapshot into things from the village. Helpful volunteers have delivered to every household in the village. We will though not interfere with the Grapevine and when that comes out we will not issue one that month.

**16. George Scott Charity Report**

Receipts	Share Div.	£670.02	
	Interest	£ 0.32	
	<b>Total</b>		<b><u>£670.34</u></b>
Expenses	New baby grant (1)	£ 40.00	
	Sickness/distress grant (3)	£ 30.00	
	Christmas grants (31)	£ 280.00	
	Funerals (2)	£ 50.00	
	Clerks fee	£100.00	
	Donations	£ 50.00	
	Other Misc. exps	£ 12.25	
	Grant Returned (1)	£ 10.00	
	<b>Total</b>		<b><u>£390.00</u></b>

**Balance brought forward £2118.44**

Meeting closed at 8.40pm

Signed ..... (Chairman) Date .....

**SUMMARY RECEIPTS & PAYMENTS ACCOUNT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31<sup>st</sup> MARCH 2019**

31 <sup>st</sup> March 2018	<u>RECEIPTS</u>	31 <sup>st</sup> March 2019
3231	Precept	3231
	Agency services reimbursed	
	Loans taken out	
	Capital receipts	
	Interest on investments	
	Burial ground fees	
288.50	Allotment rents	290.00
	Recreation ground lettings	
	VAT repayments (SALC)	
15111.38 *1)	Miscellaneous (Donations)	3788.69 *1)
<b>18630.88</b>	<b><u>TOTAL RECEIPTS</u></b>	<b>7309.69</b>

<u>PAYMENTS</u>		
824.48	<u>General administration</u>	922.44
	<u>Agency services (B.D.Store charges)</u>	
488.99	<u>Insurance</u>	477.06
	<u>S137 payments</u>	
	<u>Capital spending</u>	
	<u>Loan interest and Loan repayments</u>	
	<u>Loans made</u>	
	<u>Running costs:dog/litter/grit bins</u>	742.80
160	<u>Land lease/rental</u>	160
320	<u>Allotments, burial ground, recreation ground, land conservation</u>	320
	<u>VAT on payments</u>	
17248.88	<u>Miscellaneous (Donations)</u>	1463.47
<b>19042.35</b>	<b><u>TOTAL PAYMENTS</u></b>	<b>4085.77</b>

<u>RECEIPTS AND PAYMENTS SUMMARY</u>		
9851.88	<u>Balance as at 1<sup>st</sup> April 2018/1<sup>st</sup> April 2019</u>	<b>9440.41</b>
18630.88	<u>Total receipts</u>	7309.69
19042.35	<u>Less total payments</u>	4085.77
<b>9440.41</b>	<b><u>BALANCE 31 MARCH 2018/31 MARCH 2019</u></b>	<b>12664.33</b>

<u>These cumulative funds are represented by:</u>		
<b>9440.41</b>	<u>Current Account</u>	<b>12664.33</b>
	<u>Deposit Account</u>	
	<u>Other Accounts/Investments</u>	
<b>9440.41</b>		<b>12664.33</b>

The above statement represents fairly the financial position of the authority as at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2019 and reflects its receipts and payments during the year.

Signed:  
*Responsible Financial*

Signed:  
**Chairman**

*Officer*

Date: