

**WHATFIELD PARISH COUNCIL
MINUTES OF ANNUAL PARISH MEETING
HELD AT WHATFIELD VILLAGE HALL ON 2nd MAY 2018**

The meeting opened at 745pm.

Present

Mr. P. Whittle	Chairman
Mr David Cross	Vice Chairman
Mr. D. Dray	Parish Councillor
Mrs C Curtis	Parish Councillor
Mr G Smith	Parish Councillor
Mr S Clifford	Parish Councillor
Mr R Lindsey	County Councillor
Mr. A. Ferguson	District 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 Joy Green and Bobby Smith

3. Matters Arising and Confirmation of Minutes of meeting 3rd May 2017

No matters arising. The Minutes were approved as a true record of the meeting and signed by the Chairman. Prop Mr D Dray; Sec. Mr. D Cross 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 review and final agreement of a contract between us and Monks Eleigh Parish Council and the installation of the speed indicator device (SID) itself. 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. We are pleased to report that it does appear to slow traffic down as it enters the 30mph zone.

SID statistics for January 2018 showed that about 48,000 vehicles travelled through 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 speed 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 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 been 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. In 2017 we officially adopted the red telephone box in The Street in order to prevent its removal by BT; we are still open to suggestions as to its future use. Other month to month items include the emptying of the Dog Poo bins around the village and the 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.

Our parish finances are healthy, so 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 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 volunteer jobs hazardous. Signs are being erected around the village to simply ask people to be more considerate.

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, management of the village allotments etc. All of which are going from strength to strength as villagers and councillors work hard to improve them.

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 2017, and January and April 2018. We have had a good attendance from the Parish Councillors and no meetings have had to be moved.

6. Playground report Our Playground is 6 years old now. It remains extremely popular with all children - including families from the village, visitors and the School also makes good use of it too. Sadly I never hear it referred to as the 'new playground' any more.

We are due our annual inspection next month, I will check/fix any minor things prior to this where I can.

People continue to use the equipment respectfully & safely, no issues this year.

Grass cutting & strimming is due for the growing season, our volunteer, Karl from Sheckie Meadow has done a great job - hopefully about to start continuing this season - I gave him £50 towards fuel at the end of last year.

We do need to sort the hedge trimming - it wasn't! done on the inside over the winter and it would be helpful if we can tag along with the village hall to save costs if possible? i.e. when their hedge is done.

The rent is due & our maintenance funds remain healthy.

Also, we could do with more help from other volunteers... e.g. some bird spikes need replacing - thought I'd ask School to add it to the newsletter plus there's Grapevine too.

Still of concern is road safety to/from the Playground though...

7. Annual Accounts for YE 31.3.18 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 approved and signed. Prop Mr. Cross; sec. Mrs. Landon Unanimous.

8. County Councillor's Report When elected, one of my key goals was to hold the Conservative administration to account. My ability to do this was helped by forming part of a larger group of 12 councillors – Greens, Liberal Democrats and Independents.

School bus cuts

This plan first emerged in August and a decision has not yet been made. By delaying consultation, our group gave time for parents and school heads to voice their concerns. Cabinet are due to make a decision in June and I hope they will have listened to the many representations from parents, teachers and councillors like myself. The consultation results showed overwhelming opposition to the cuts plan.

Highways reshuffle, potholes,

Shortly after I was elected, Highways was completely restructured. The idea was to integrate staff at Kier, the company with the contract to repair our roads, with county staff. Under the new structure, rather than contacting individual officers for an area, parish councils and individuals and councillors must contact a central service centre. Though this is in some ways frustrating it does mean that they have a proper record of reports and jobs and can monitor them better. The reshuffle however, cannot disguise the fact that highways do not have enough money to do all the work that they have done in the past. For example Highways are only repairing holes above a certain size that they know could result in damage to a vehicle and hence a claim. Smaller ones, even if nearby, are being left. This would not seem to be a cost effective use of tax payer's money and I have raised this with the cabinet member for highways. It is important to report potholes on the website. If someone's vehicle is damaged from a pothole then a claim can still be made if it has been reported and the pothole has not been repaired. If you do not get a response to online reports, please do take them up with me to escalate.

Addressing a culture of secrecy

Four cabinet committees were set up in September. These committees are "advisory" to cabinet only. At the meeting at which they were set up I pushed hard for them to be held in public rather than in secret as was the plan. Although this was resisted by the administration, the cabinet has promised to review this after 12 months. Later in the New Year, it emerged that there is a Public Sector Leaders group which also meets in private and makes spending decisions over millions of pounds. I'm pleased to say that after public pressure from me, they invited the media to their last meeting this month and the districts and Suffolk are now reviewing the way it is governed.

Budget

Sadly the removal of revenue support grant for the county council has left a hole in its budget for the 2018/19 year, even after it has raised its precept by the 5% maximum it is allowed. This is being met by a host of cuts across various services and a small amount from reserves.

Unitary and leadership

The issue of creating Unitaries has again raised its head after Colin Noble, county council leader, announced he has hired consultants to look at it. He has said that he prefers one unitary across Suffolk but has said that they will look at options of several smaller Unitaries. Following that, but probably not directly related, a challenge for the leadership of the Conservative group and hence the council, has emerged from Cllr Matthew Hicks.

Whatfield

I applauded the efforts of the parish council so far to slow traffic in the village and I hope something can come out our planned meeting with the highways warden about the Green end of the village.

May I wish the parish council and Whatfield residents well for the remainder of 2018 and I look forward to continue working with you.

9. District Councillor's Report Introduction

It would be an understatement to say that the last year has been a turbulent time for Babergh District Council and since the last Annual Meeting, seven Conservative District Councillors have formed an Independent Conservative Group. They are still loyal to the principles and policies of a Conservative administration, but a number have deep concerns about the way business is being conducted by the current Babergh Conservative leader(s).

Speaking personally, I remain concerned about the move to Ipswich and the loss of access to residents; the decision to press for merger with Mid Suffolk without proper consultation (this cost Cllr Jennie Jenkins her role as Leader) was damaging to the Conservative cause; the Babergh/MS merger discussion has been shelved until further notice because the leader of Suffolk County Council is now pressing for a Unitary Authority (study initiated without consultation with District Leaders). From my perspective, there is an on-going failure to communicate with Members although I can see that the Leader is making some efforts to resolve this failure. As part of that process, there is a clear need to think through options before ill-considered solutions reach a point of no return.

Updates

Against that background, and because I give the Parish Council updates regularly, this will be a short report that refers to the last 12 months, this report will provide updates on Babergh DC activity since I last reported to The Parish in February 18.

Public Access

As I have indicated previously, there are some moves to provide a "landing point" location in Hadleigh to meet with Council Officers. This was proposed at a recent Council meeting when a Motion was moved by a Labour Member to

demand this additional facility. I supported the Motion. It's early days and from the papers that I have seen, the Cabinet reject the Motion. For this reason alone, it would be wrong to offer any assurances that it will succeed, however, a recently appointed Independent Cabinet member is sympathetic to the requirement. I remain keen to see some form of public access support provided in Hadleigh (with people to advise (& not just an unmanned computer terminal) even if it's not for 5 days a week. Either way, the Motion will be considered by the full Babergh Council for a decision. Watch this space

Leisure

The expenditure of £3.8 million to replace the Hadleigh Leisure Centre Pool and to redevelop the Kingfisher Leisure Centre in Sudbury is proceeding apace. Tenders will be sent out shortly with target completion dates of Sept 19 for the Sudbury facility and Jan 20 for the Hadleigh Pool.

Boundary Commission

The Boundary Commission is still expected to submit their final recommendations in August 18 for presentation to the Sec of State and for implementation at the next local elections in May 2019 – getting time critical. The number of District Councillors will almost certainly come down from 43 to 32, and in our case, it will probably comprise the parishes of – Aldham, Elmsett, Whatfield, Nedging & Naughton, Kersey, Semer, Chelsworth and Lindsey under the title of South East Cosford. I am pleased to report that Kersey is now back in the Cosford Ward group!

You may wish to know that I have submitted an application to stand as a Conservative candidate for the new District in May 2019, but there is now an interview/selection procedure that filters to ensure best representation. That said, at the end of the day ... the electorate will decide...

Public Sector Housing

Babergh DC has recently agreed to fund the provision of additional council housing (27 new build units at Holbrook), but frustratingly, I am currently not able to provide any further detail in the case of Angel Court in Hadleigh. It is evident that work on this project will not start in the timeframe that was originally anticipated, and it could be 2021 before we see a result – from my perspective this is a highly undesirable delay and the residents of Hadleigh deserve a clear explanation why the project has been subject to such delay. Returning to the positive, Babergh continues to buy suitable properties on the open market to increase the supply of Council owned houses – seven 2 or 3 bedroom properties were acquired between April & November 17 and only this week it was announced that Babergh DC has bought 6 new affordable rented properties on a new development (Bulmer Road) in Sudbury.

Private Sector Housing

The Sec of State (Javid) has issued new guidance to help facilitate the building of more private sector houses. As you know, we are now required to build 440 houses a year rather than the 335 that was already a serious challenge. The issue for Babergh DC remains seriously complicated by the absence of a 5-year land supply and I suspect that the introduction of new regulations will only slow/complicate the process. For what it's worth, in the last year the Babergh Planning Committee approved 74% of the applications considered and a new issue of the draft new Local Plan is expected to go before the Cabinet shortly with a further public consultation in the summer of 2018. Last time there were 13,960 comments submitted and I strongly recommend that you encourage individuals and Parish Councils to remain engaged in this important exercise. In theory, it will inform the number of planning applications that go to the Planning Committee and I will be pressing strongly for more account to be taken of Parish Council views in future. They claim that your views are important, but I don't always see the evidence to support the claim. Not all Parish Councils are "Nimbys". Sometimes, they do know what's best for the village!

Merger of Babergh & MSDCs

As you know, a small group of Conservative Councillors sided with the Opposition to prevent the merger of Babergh & Ms going ahead without another referendum of Babergh voters who had rejected the option seven years ago by a 60% to 40% margin. A failure to listen to the concerns of Ward Members out in the field cost Cllr Jenkins her position as Leader of Babergh DC. The new Leader Cllr John Ward subsequently agreed to a referendum but the Motion that required a referendum also required that no public funds to be spent on the project - Catch 22. Fortunately (or unfortunately depending on your view), the Leader of Suffolk CC (Colin Noble) has resolved that particular issue when he **informed the Districts** that he had contracted with an external agency to examine and report on a Unitary Council option for the whole of Suffolk. **He did not consult with the Districts** before initiating the study and the Leaders of both Babergh & Mid Suffolk called for the exercise to be stopped until the option had been discussed between Suffolk CC and the Districts. That call was rejected so any consideration of merger between Babergh & MS is now on the back burner for the foreseeable future as the Babergh/MS merger solution could become irrelevant if the unitary option is adopted. **These exercises are all about saving money.**

Disposal of Corks Lane Buildings

A public "drop in" presentations were arranged for 11th April and 18th April 18 in Hadleigh to get local views on the proposals for redevelopment of the Corks Lane Babergh DC former HQ. Essentially, and as previously briefed, the proposal is for additional private sector housing. I attended the first one but frankly was disappointed at the minimum amount of information that was provided. Better than nothing!

The Future

Finally, just a reminder that it's only one year to the next local elections in Babergh with a reduced number of District Councillors and a restructured Ward arrangement. With business effectively being "frozen" for the 3 months leading up to the elections in May 19 we need to get closure on key issues quickly in the remaining half of this year. I have enjoyed my time as your elected Member and I hope you feel that I have given you the support that you might reasonably expect from your elected representative.

10. Conservation Report –After what seems to have been a long cold wet winter we have had a welcome week of warm sunshine. Everything in the conservation area is doing well. Colin has agreed to cut Buckles Meadow when he cuts The Old Rectory.

Huntys is looking very good and Richard has continued to cut the areas in rotation. The buckthorn are planted and hopefully will thrive. Brimstone butterflies are about, I've seen two in my garden. The trees are about to come into blossom. Cowslips are beginning to increase. There is a great deal of bird activity and nest building. The Richardson family have bought a new greengage tree to replace the one gnawed through by an animal. This is perhaps not the best time to plant it will need carefully watering during the summer.

The trees in the Drift are growing well and the path is accessible. Richard has put post to limit the access to vehicles

Mandy has put a variety of "do not let your dog foul clear up after them" together with a camera perhaps we shall win the battle. If not how about a picture of a child affected by the disease which can result from leaving dog faeces about. Hopefully the proposed camera might produce some evidence and be a deterrent as well as useful as a wild life monitor if needed. I have heard that tracking devices can be fitted to help in the case of theft. This might be an avenue worth exploring.

11. Suffolk Tree Warden's Report = It's that time of year to review what has been going on in the tree department.

I am pleased to report I have not received any complaints this year.

The tree Wardens are now not under supervision of Babergh council, we have an independent chairman and training is done by way of invitation to other tree wardens villages.

We have just had our AGM we have new name which is (Suffolk Tree Wardens).

Back to what is going on in whatfield, I am trying to encourage young people to take walk in Whatfield's conservation area, by way of a competition and photograph what they see, there is £50 prize.

The memorial Mrs Dunn bench is finally going to get fitted next to the lime tree outside the Beacon bungalow.

I would like to thank Michael Craske for letting the council install the bench on his land, it has! , most lovely view.

Also Richard and David for their help with this project.

(Lastly) it is most important that we encourage people into country side, as there not going to be much left, by time all the new homes have been built in South Suffolk, Whatfield is very lucky, to of had people that purchased land in 80s and 90s for the villagers and visitors, which can't be built on, it under preservation and management of Whatfield councillor.

12. Footpath Warden's Report I know I am footpath warden but where would I be without my other half Graham he is the main eyes for this last year. What with cutting the paths and keeping an eye on things there would not be anything to say. The problem is and always will be is dog poo, when we can get their owners to do what they are supposed to do we come up against a brick wall.

Thank you for putting up with me for I don't know how many years and I hope my follow on person enjoys the foot paths as I have done.

13. Village Hall Report The hall is doing fine thank you, yes we have not had so many booking of late but the weather has not been kind to people for them to do family parties and things.

The Friday night bar is going strong and doing well some Friday's better than others but that's life, the private bookings have put quite a bit of cash in the bank so during the summer we can get jobs done, we have a request for a screen and projector to be installed which we are looking in to, another request is for the car park to be made bigger, that will be a huge job but nothing is impossible.

The hall also needs to be redecorated in the near future but we have to find the right non hire spot to do this job, Sorry this is short but all is well as far as I know

14. Allotment Report - Our allotments at Candy Green have improved over the last 12 months, with new users from both within and outside the village making great strides to improve their plots. A wide range of fruit and vegetables was grown last summer, and the harvest was outstanding across several plots, including giant carrots, swedes and pumpkins. Several new fruit trees have been planted. Plot holders have assisted one another, with some very experienced advice and practical assistance given to those new to Suffolk agricultural techniques!

The allotments are returning profits, and a small amount of this was successfully used in a competition last autumn to let plot holders nominate the most improved plot and best maintained plot, with the relevant plot holders each receiving a voucher for the purchase of gardening equipment.

We have one full plot, and one half plot, available for rent at present.

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15. **Community Council Report** Over the last year the Community Council has managed to sustain a reasonable bank balance due to several fund raising events like Sounds of Summer to name just one. All events are well attended due to good advertising and putting it out early enough for people to put into their diaries. Also there is always positive feedback from the functions. We maintain a good committee but are always open for new members. We have also been able to help the village hall when requested and aided a community project by donating £2000 for the restoration of the Church gate, fence and kissing gate. On discussion at our last meeting we feel we may aid more village projects that come up as we are supposed to do this and not necessarily just the Village Hall. Having just had our AGM the committee stands as;

Chairperson. Marilyn
Vice Chairperson. Anne
Secretary. Christina
Treasurer. Lynn
And 7 on the steering committee

With new families moving into the village let's hope they come and get involved in some of the committees.

16. George Scott Charity Report

Receipts	Share Div.	£670.02	
	Interest	£ 0.32	
	Total		<u>£670.34</u>
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	
	Total		<u>£390.00</u>

Balance brought forward £2118.44

Meeting closed at 9.10pm

Signed (Chairman) Date

SUMMARY RECEIPTS & PAYMENTS ACCOUNT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH 2018

31 st March 2017	<u>RECEIPTS</u>	31 st March 2018
3291.92	Precept	3231
	Agency services reimbursed	
	Loans taken out	
	Capital receipts	
	Interest on investments	
	Burial ground fees	
297.92	Allotment rents	288.50
	Recreation ground lettings	
366.64	VAT repayments (SALC)	
475.89 *1)	Miscellaneous (Donations)	15111.38 *1)
4065.73	<u>TOTAL RECEIPTS</u>	18630.88

<u>PAYMENTS</u>		
881.66	<u>General administration</u>	824.48
	<u>Agency services (B.D.Store charges)</u>	
612.29	<u>Insurance</u>	488.99
	<u>S137 payments</u>	
1.294.90	<u>Capital spending</u>	
	<u>Loan interest and Loan repayments</u>	
	<u>Loans made</u>	
371.40	<u>Running costs:dog/litter/grit bins</u>	
160	<u>Land lease/rental</u>	160
320	<u>Allotments, burial ground, recreation</u>	320
294.83	<u>ground, land conservation</u>	
	<u>VAT on payments</u>	
701.74	<u>Miscellaneous (Donations)</u>	17248.88
3097.09	<u>TOTAL PAYMENTS</u>	19042.35

<u>RECEIPTS AND PAYMENTS SUMMARY</u>		
8883.24	<u>Balance as at 1st April 2017/1st April 2018</u>	9851.88
4065.73	<u>Total receipts</u>	18630.88
3042.09	<u>Lss total payments</u>	19042.35
9851.88	<u>BALANCE 31 MARCH 2017/31 MARCH 2018</u>	9440.41

<u>These cumulative funds are represented by:</u>		
9851.88	<u>Current Account</u>	9440.41
	<u>Deposit Account</u>	
	<u>Other Accounts/Investments</u>	
9851.88		9440.41

The above statement represents fairly the financial position of the authority as at 31st March 2018 and reflects its receipts and payments during the year.

111Signed:
Responsible Financial Officer

Signed:
Chairman

Date: