

MINUTES OF THE WHATFIELD PARISH COUNCIL MEETING HELD AT WHATFIELD VILLAGE HALL 30th June 2021

Present

Mr. P. Whittle	Chairman
Mr. D. Cross	Vice Chairman
Mr. G. Smith	Parish Councillor
Mrs C. Curtis	Parish Councillor
Mr. D. Dray	Parish Councillor
Mr S Clifford	Parish Councillor
Mr R, Searle	Parish Councillor
Mr. L. Jameson	District Councillor
Sarah Eastman	Conservation Warden
Mrs. L. King	Parish Clerk

1, Apologies for Absence

Mr. R Lindsay	County Councillor
Mrs J. Green	Tree Warden

2. Matters arising from Minutes of meeting held 24th March 2021 Minutes of 24th March 2021 meeting were accepted and signed. Prop David Cross Sec: Simon Clifford Unanimous

3. Correspondence I have had correspondence from James Buckle and the Tractor Ride is going ahead this evening with a large number of villagers wanting to take part. I will email him a thank you letter later this week. Trish has very kindly obtained the George Scott end of year accounts which I have put up on the noticeboard.

4. County Councillor's Report – New look County Council

I was re-elected last month along with eight other Green councillors across the county, making us the main opposition group to the ruling Conservatives and the only county in the UK that has Greens as opposition. Thanks to all those who supported me. The turnout in Cosford was the highest of the 75 divisions in the county at 49.5%. We have decided to again join forces with the 4 Lib Dems and 2 independent councillors to make a 15-strong group. I am deputy leader of the group for the first year. While Greens increased from 3 to 9 the Conservatives increased from 50 to 55, so they are still overwhelmingly in control. Our larger group size means our political group will have a seat on every major committee. The first council meeting at the end of May took place at Wherstead Park outside Ipswich as apparently the only venue large enough. The next meeting in July has been cancelled and an extra meeting will instead be held in September in the hope that restrictions will have lifted and a venue can be found by then.

New cabinet

The cabinet has been reshuffled and new roles created. **Matthew Hicks** is still the leader, his deputy is now **Richard Rout** who is also member for finance and environment, combining the two roles to hopefully ensure one does not hinder the other. Highways and young people's roles have both been split into two.

Rachel Hood is cabinet member for education, SEND and skills (schools and colleges).

Beccy Hopfenspurger is member for adult care;

James Reeder is member for children and young people's services – services provided to kids outside schools

Andrew Reid has been put in charge of public health and public protection, including the fire service and CABs

Richard Smith is economic development, transport strategy – including road safety and speeding, and waste.

Paul West is in charge of operational highways (including footpaths and pavements), flooding and Ipswich

School travel and split villages and split siblings

Having been approached residents of several villages (Cockfield, Thorpe Morieux, and Lavenham) over the issue of their sibling children having to go to different schools in order to get a free bus, I have written to Rachel Hood as the relevant new cabinet member about the issue of split villages, asking if the policy could be reviewed. She has said she will talk to the senior officer regarding this and get back to me. The other route is via the new education and health scrutiny committee, at which our group will be pushing to have a review of this policy on the agenda. It is something that the administration was

warned repeatedly about by members of our political group when they were considering introducing the new policy back in 2017. The cabinet member who introduced the policy, Gordon Jones, stood down from office in May.

Special educational needs (SEND) Review

Rachel Hood's first act as education and SEND cabinet member is to order an independent review into the way parents and carers are communicated with by Suffolk County Council. The review will not look at the actual provision of SEND services itself. A SEND team from Lincolnshire County Council has been appointed to do the job.

They started week beginning June 21 and will take six weeks. The report, with any recommendations, will be published on Suffolk County Council's website, shared with those who contributed to it and also scrutinised by the council's Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Committee.

Some parents and carers of children with SEND - known as the Campaign for Change (SEND Suffolk) – have called for a lawyer-led audit of the council's compliance with the legal requirements set out for the service. Suffolk County Council has refused since it says it is the role of Ofsted to inspect such aspects, as they have been doing. The SEND service has been criticised for failing or delaying to provide needs assessments for children that may have special needs, and then when they are drawn up, failure to provide the actual services that they need.

Bus Back Better

Government has given Suffolk county council a series of tight deadlines over the next few months if it wants to benefit from a pot for bus funding. It must agree "enhanced partnerships" with commercial bus operators by the autumn which detail how they will invest to improve services. However, this does not appear to affect large parts of rural areas like ours where bus services are already non-existent or minimal and largely dependent on dial a ride services.

5. District Councillor's Report Virtual High Street

Over 100 new businesses have signed up to the Virtual High Street as the site launches in Hadleigh and Stowmarket, joining over 130 already signed up to the platform in Sudbury. This allows shoppers to shop local at a range of high street stores, independent retailers, and market stalls, as well as cafes and restaurants. Customers will be able to visit their local shops online to browse stock, place orders and arrange click and collect or a delivery from home or on the move.

The aim of the Virtual High Street is to bring the local high street and market stalls into the homes of customers before they visit the high street in person, making shopping local and supporting local businesses even easier.

For residents in Hadleigh, over 55 businesses including Ferguson's Delicatessen, Cobbler Café and Wine Bar, Andrew's Quality Butchers and EriVica Cakes are all signed up as well as accommodation providers such as Holbeck House B&B and The Gables B&B.

Joint Local Plan Examination

It is anticipated that the Stage 1 hearings sessions scheduled for June and July will now take place over a concentrated period from September and it is envisaged that the Stage 2 hearing sessions will continue to be able to take place in mid-Autumn as originally planned.

Appropriate notice will be provided to all who made a representation to the Regulation 19 consultation, so they can participate in the hearings.

Further information for anyone who wishes to follow the proceedings will be published on the councils' dedicated Joint Local Plan examination webpage nearer the time.

The change of dates does not alter the status of the Joint Local Plan regarding weight in the planning decision making process.

CIFCO

This summer the Council will review the CIFCO annual business plan. While the property investment company have brought in more than £5.4m to help fund services and projects for residents in Babergh and Mid Suffolk, the strategy of borrowing to generate income is still controversial and does not garner unanimous approval. Both Babergh and Mid Suffolk Greens have been particularly outspoken on this topic.

Putting the Councils in to debt to get a return may be seen to be working, but it is not without risk. CIFCO have already had to wipe off £240,000 in debt from unpaid rent. This concern is shared by the Government who have now banned this type of income generation for Local Authorities.

Locality Award Fund

Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils' have again made money available for Locality Awards funding – enabling communities to improve facilities, learn new skills and work towards becoming environmentally sustainable.

Babergh have provided each Councillor with £2000 to support the villages in their wards.

The Locality Awards grants can be used towards combating loneliness in communities by installing hearing loops, providing Wi-Fi in rural areas, or hosting coffee mornings or lunch clubs.

Groups can also apply for funding for sports and play equipment, exercise classes, walking festivals and other initiatives which support the councils' aim for communities to lead active lives and manage their own health and wellbeing.

Applications are also welcome for providing medical skills such as first aid to communities, as well as supporting them in other training including safeguarding, fire safety and anti-social behaviour prevention.

6. Reports

i) **Footpaths** Sorry can't compete against that cracking Tree Wardens report. Haven't been around the footpaths as often as I would have liked this year, have cut them a couple of times but need to do more, I think they're all in fairly good order. Must thank J B for cutting back the hedges that are over growing the footpaths, I think not, too busy making money I guess

ii) **Tree Wardens** (Pruning courses)

I have received a message from the tree warden's coordinator, inviting tree warden's to attend pruning courses unfortunately I am unable to go, so asked Sarah if she would like to attend, as some pruning is required in Huntys meadow. Unfortunately I found out it's not free it costs £50! Think Sarah said! "She can manage with some help from Richard."

(Cello in Huntys meadow)

It's wonderful to see a BBC Look East program with a young lady playing a cello in our village meadow, it certainly promoted our conservation area.

(Free Tree's and hedgerow saplings)

The woodland trust and Suffolk County Council are giving away free trees and hedging. Anyone in Whatfield village that is interested, please contact secretary of Whatfield parish council, so I can order them for the autumn planting.

(Education)

I have been learning about hawthorn trees this month, we have a very ancient variety in Buckles meadow hedgerows, its Latin name is *Crataegus laevigata* or midland hawthorn.

The berries are very nutritious for the wildlife.

The good thing is berries are not poisonous to humans. Also sometimes used in complementary medicines.

Usually flowers in May, sometimes flowers are pink with white tint.

Apparently ours has two pips in the berries, when it fruits in autumn time, instead of one pip which other English varieties have.

(Health and safety)

I have not received any complaints from Whatfield parishioners.

iii) **Conservation Report** Buckles Meadow. Having had two very wet spells this summer the meadow is looking very lush, pyramid orchids have been on flower for a couple of weeks and I counted over 150 mainly on the right hand side of the bottom half of the meadow. They are well disguised in the long grass but spectacular when you spot them. Wild rose and elderflower are also abundant in the hedgerows. Colin Goodchild has agreed to cut the meadow again and will time it with when he does Janes at the old Rectory. Huntys Vale Richard has been waiting for the delivery of a new tractor which has been delayed for several weeks, it has finally come so he can resume cutting pathways in various areas. Meanwhile Brian has kindly cut the path in the drift making it easier to walk along. There are some orchids in Huntys this year which apparently isn't the first time but I haven't seen them there before. All trees in the conservation areas seem to be growing well and benefiting from the extra rainfall. I would like to scrub clean the two benches in Huntys as they have become very green and dirty. It would be easier to do this if I could have them here at Baytree cottage, for a short while. They really need some repairs which I wonder if the parish council would consider. I think Des Payne might have repaired one in Buckles meadow before. Once clean and strengthened I would like to protect them with a couple of coats of oil.

Questions from the Public – None

6. Action Updates

Allotments The allotments are being fully used except for one half a site. David is keeping an eye on it as to whether they can continue to rent it as no work is being done there and left full of weeds. The other plots are very active full of planting.

Playground The safety inspection has been carried out and has passed. There are a few issue that need rectifying i.e. the grass needs cutting and the edges need to be strimmed. David Cross suggested that we ask the village if anyone would be prepared to take this job on and David Dray offered to advertise this in the newsheet. The dog grid needs lifting and mud and weeds cleared away. Rabbit holes need filling and the mat at the end of the slide needs checking. David Cross has repaired the lock on the gate.

Bench The Bench has bow arrived and is in David Dray's garage waiting for installation. David is going to check with Sarah Eastman and Richard Mower re siting of the bench and this should be done and fitted within the next two weeks. Costs to date for installation are £112.31 Prop: David Dray Sec: Simon Clifford unanimous

7. **Neighbourhood Plan** The Plan is now with Babergh and is being put before the Cabinet on Monday 4th July if approved we should hear when the referendum is being held mostly likely August/September. We have one more invoice from Angela but the cost of the referendum will be covered by Babergh District Council.

8. **Planning - None**

9. **Health & Safety** –None

10. **Accounts and Payments** . As of the 10th June 2021 we have a bank balance of £10905.60 we have an invoice from Babergh for the dog bins and litter bins contract and an invoice for the inspection of the Playground. Proposed Mr. D. Dray Sec: Charlotte Curtis unanimous the final accounts were sent to the external auditor on the 8th June and we haven't heard yet if they have been accepted. Roy Plumbly did our internal audit and I sent him a thank you care and a bottle of wine. The playground now owes the PC £1556.73 Clerk to sort out in August.

11. **Quiet Lanes** There was a meeting in Semer which several of the villagers attended. At tonight's Parish Council Meeting it was agreed that Whatfield Parish Council would be happy to cover the cost of Quiet Lane Signs for Rectory Road Proposed by Paul Whittle Seconded: Charlotte Curtis unanimous. Paul also suggested that we might purchase a couple more signs and he would find out the cost for this.

12. **Litter Picking** It was suggested that we could have a litter picking day and David would advertise this in the News sheet in January and February so have the litter pick in March or April to be call the Spring Clean. David suggested that the School should be involved and would contact the headmistress. Leigh is going to send the Clerk information on how to get litter picking kits.

Next meeting 6th October 2021 at 7.45pm

Meeting closed at 9.10pm

Signed Date.....