

MINUTES OF THE WHATFIELD PARISH COUNCIL MEETING HELD AT WHATFIELD VILLAGE HALL 19th January 2022

Present

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

1. Apologies for Absence

Mrs C. Curtis	Parish Councillor
Mr. L. Jameson	District Councillor
Mrs J. Green	Tree Warden

2. Matters arising from Minutes of meeting held 1st December 2021 Minutes of 1st December 2021 meeting were accepted and signed. Prop Simon Clifford Sec: Graham Smith Unanimous

3. Correspondence . Laura from SALC contacted me with regard to my enquiry about grass cutting to our Playground and she said that they could not recommend anyone but she would put an advert asking other clerks if they knew of anyone to help us. I had two replies but neither were any good as they were just repairers and not grass maintenance. I have received an email today from Joy Green and there has been Fly Tipping on the conservation area of 2 chairs and a black sofa on the conservation area by the gateway in woodland area. As this is private land Babergh will not remove it. I have had to change 2 of the dates for this year as the hall was unavailable. AGM will now be on the 11th May and September's meeting will be on the 21st and not the 28th. I will resend dates to PC.

4. County Councillor's Report Platinum Jubilee Road Closures

The county council are waiving the fees for road closures this year for jubilee events and details of the procedure to use are posted on the SCC website.

Cabinet Meeting

The Cabinet met on the 7th December and voted unanimously to approve additional investment in highway drainage and footway infrastructure. £10m has been approved to replace broken pipes, as well as new installations, and £10m has been approved to increase the maintenance of selected footways. The Cabinet also voted to approve Suffolk County Council's new Housing Joint Venture. The Council wish to enter a contractual agreement with a private developer, aiming to deliver up to 3,000 new homes across Suffolk, using former county farm land near Mildenhall and Lowestoft.

Scrutiny Meeting on SEND Report

The Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Committee met to discuss the damning SEND report, which outlined the various failings of the local service in dealing with children with special needs and disabilities. A new report from the SEND services was presented, which included the progress of improving the service. This included extended training, newly appointed managerial posts, and new accountability structures to help deal with the issues outlined in the previous report.

Significant Investment in Firefighting Equipment

Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service has recently added to its lifesaving kit. A significant investment has enabled improved digital radios, smoke hoods and smoke curtains to be provided to every crew in the county.

This equipment can be used in a range of incidents, with it already proving invaluable in Lowestoft, when two occupants were rescued after a kitchen fire. Although crews are ready to attend emergencies with this new kit, it's important that every home has its own lifesaving equipment – smoke alarms, which should be fitted and tested regularly.

For more information, visit: <https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/council-and-democracy/council-news/show/significant-investment-in-firefighting-equipment-secures-safer-future-for-suffolk>

Free Bus and Taxi Services for All Travelling for a Vaccination

Stuart Keeble, the Director of Public Health at Suffolk County Council, expanded the 'Vaxi Taxi' service to all members of the public. The original campaign was for those who were strictly eligible for free public transport, but the Council has opened up the offer to anyone who needs it, in order to get to their appointment for a first, second or booster vaccination. Following request from GoStart, operator of the 112 bus, I have asked that community bus operators be included on the list of services that can be awarded these contracts. GoStart has been taking people for vaccinations for some time, without receiving anything from the county.

Suffolk budget proposals – 4% council precept rise, below the 5% cap

Suffolk County Council is proposing a 4% rise in council tax for next year. This is made up of the maximum 2% they are allowed on general budget and 2% rise for social care precept (below the 3% cap they are allowed). They had a similar rise last year. They are having to dip into reserves to meet a forecast budget deficit for the year. Savings they were hoping to make by implementing new ways of working particularly with Special Educational Needs and adult social care – have not happened as soon as they would like.

5. District Councillor's Report

Joint Local Plan

Concerns were raised by the inspector during the examination hearings, particularly in relation to the settlement hierarchy, spatial distribution of housing and the housing site selection process (in essence policies SP03, SP04 and the LS01 and the LA housing allocation policies). The inspector was also unhappy with the open space designations (policy LP30) and housing for gypsies, travellers and travelling show-people (policy LP09).

To ensure that the inspection process can continue the council have agreed to scrap SP04, LP09, LP30 and the LS01 and LA housing allocation policies and retain the settlement boundaries in the current (as opposed to proposed) policies map. The council will then review site allocations in all the settlement tiers to ensure an up-to-date, robust settlement hierarchy is provided including a spatial distribution for any housing allocations that will provide flexibility and ensure that the plan period housing requirement can be met.

The council will also need to provide robustly justified open space designations and a relevant development management policy, along with an up-to-date assessment of need for accommodation for Gypsies Travellers and Travelling show-people. As a full review of these policies will take some time to complete, the JLP will be split into two parts with the remaining policies in Part 1 of the JLP continuing through the examination process. This will allow the council to have a new local plan in place at the earliest opportunity.

The initial ask is for the council to identify an upper and lower figure for housing need within the district.

Cabinet overturns Audit committee recommendation.

The leading councillors on Babergh and Mid Suffolk Council's joint cabinet have, in a private meeting, overturned a unanimous recommendation by their joint audit committee to look at divesting investments that contribute to carbon emissions.

Members of their joint audit committee voted unanimously back in May last year for a recommendation that cabinet "pushes its fund managers to filter investments", removing those that do not meet environmental, social and governance standards, and consider withdrawing funds from managers that don't tackle these standards.

When cabinet members were privately briefed about the recommendation by officers, they insisted on changing the recommendation to one that asks the cabinet to simply "monitor" the funds as standards "develop" and consider changing investments at an undefined "appropriate time".

Warmer Homes

Babergh has received funding from the Government's Sustainable Warmth Competition after a successful bid by district councils in Suffolk. The funding is designed to support improvements to low income, low energy efficiency rated homes and will allow the council to install measures include solar panels, air source heat pumps, as well as a variety of home insulation.

Neighbourhood Plan pilot

Babergh will be part of a pilot scheme to allow residents an easier way to shape and influence development in their area. The Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities announced that Babergh will be chosen as part of a pilot scheme to boost participation in neighbourhood planning. The councils will now receive an award of £45,000 in Government funding to go towards a new post, designed to encourage even more people in the districts to engage with the planning system.

Leisure Centres renewable energy drive

Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils are halfway through installing £2.8m worth of green energy measures at their leisure centres – providing the centres with renewable energy and slashing CO2 emissions.

Works have completed this week to install a mixture of both solar PV panels and an air source heat pump, at the councils' leisure centres and depot in Wenham, in line with their climate change ambitions.

Christmas Holiday schemes

During the Christmas holidays Babergh and partners worked with a range of partners to deliver the varied programme of activities to help families through the festive period as part of the Government's holiday activities and food programme.

Abbecroft Leisure and Explore Outdoor offered outdoor cooking masterclasses to families in need during the school break in several locations across the districts.

There were also sessions for budding magicians and circus performers, free swims, and lunch at a number of council leisure centres, football fun factories, arts and crafts sessions, sports days and even recording studio slots on offer for youngsters.

6. Reports

i) **Footpaths** as you would expect this time of year, are very wet and muddy but hopefully will improve as Spring draws nearer. JB has cut the hedges around some footpaths which is very helpful...

ii) **Tree Wardens** The Tree wardens are getting very professional now! We are being offered green fleeces with Tree warden's network embroidered on them. The fleece definitely looks better than the one I used for years with, a large deer printed on the front.

(Tree planting in Whatfield)

I have been talking to Councillor Roy Searl, who is in the process of choosing the type of tree's to plant. I have sent Roy some information from tree warden department about arranging the tree planting event.

I wish him well with the projects.

(Whatfield Tree warden on Facebook)

I have posted a wonderful photo of the crab-apple tree that Sarah has planted in memory of Molly, our old conservation manager in Hunty Vale.

(Health and safety)

I have no health and safety issues to report.

iii) **Conservation Report** . I have liaised with Richard and Roy as to where the suitable areas for tree planting are, should we qualify for the free tree planting scheme I think any activity in the meadows and drift area is mainly underground. So I have decided to count the varieties of tree we have and here is a list of as many as I could identify walking along the hedges, bearing in mind that most are leafless. Ash, Apple varieties, Beech, Buckthorn, Blackthorn, Cherry, Damson, Dogwood, Elder, Elm, Hazel, Hawthorn, Holly, Maple, Oak, Spindle, Sycamore, and probably more. There is also plenty of Ivy, Wild Rose, Old man's Beard, Bramble, and fungus this all helps provide an environment including food and shelter for many birds, mice, other mammals and insects.

Questions from the Public – None

6. Action Updates

Allotments All are in good condition and the final lot has been let. David thanked Sarah for taking over the allotments in May.

Playground .David Cross will be a written quote for grass cutting and maintenance.

7. **Neighbourhood Plan** .The Referendum will be held on the 24th February in the Village Hall. Copies of the plan are with Roy Searl and in the telephone box. Posters were approved for display in the village.

8. **Planning** - 8 The Street, Hollies, has been granted. A new planning application has been put in from Church Corner.

9. **Health & Safety** –None

10. **Accounts and Payments** . . . As of the 3rd January 2022 we have a bank balance of £9,925.78. We have one outstanding Invoice for £10 for the rental of the Car Park.

Next meeting 23rd March 2022 at 7.45pm

Meeting closed at 8.45pm

Signed Date.....