

MINUTES OF THE WHATFIELD PARISH COUNCIL MEETING HELD AT WHATFIELD VILLAGE HALL 20th September 2023

Present

Mr. P. Whittle	Chairman
Mr. D. Cross	Vice Chairman
Mr. G. Smith	Parish Councillor
Mr. D. Dray	Parish Councillor
Mr R, Searl	Parish Councillor
Mr. R Lindsay	County Councillor
Mr. L. Jameson	District Councillor
Mrs. L. King	Parish Clerk

1, Apologies for Absence

Mr S Clifford	Parish Councillor
Mrs Jilly. Harris	Parish Councillor
Sarah Eastman	Conservation Warden
Mrs J. Green	Tree Warden

2. Matters arising from Minutes of meeting held 13th March 2023 Minutes of 13th March 2023 meeting were accepted and signed. Prop Roy Searl Sec: David Dray Unanimous

3. Correspondence . I have had another enquiry from Marilyn's family asking for an update on permission for memorial trees, it was agreed that only one tree would be suitable and the Clerk to let the family know. I have been in contact Salc's with regard to us using on-line banking this is now legal but all signatory on the account must apply and the clerk must hold the codes and any security information. It was agreed that both signatory for the Bank Account apply for internet banking. David Cross to draft a letter for approval to be sent to the Rural Dean expressing concerns about our Church St.Margarets.

4. County Councillor's Report

Lower speed limits A1141 Hadleigh to Semer

Earlier this year I commissioned an officer report on reducing the speed limit on the road between Stone Street and Letts swimming pool from 60mph to 40mph. The officer's report says the issue is "finely balanced" but allows that it could be possible. It will be submitted for decision by end of September. Coincidentally, a separate request to change the speed limit on Stone Street, at the Hadleigh end of the A1141, from 40mph to 30mph has recently been approved.

20mph limit Bildeston being installed

As I write, 20mph signs are being installed in Bildeston, the result of a campaign I began back in 2010. There will be an extended 30mph buffer zone a few hundred metres out of the built up part of the village at the north and south ends. A 20mph limit for Lavenham is still awaiting design work. Disappointingly, Police have objected to 30mph extensions on Brent Eleigh Road and Melford Road to help act as buffer zones. I am asking Highways to over-ride these objections.

Footpath between Nedging and Chelsworth

On 14th September I'm pleased to say that the county council's footpath committee agreed with me that public access to a footpath that runs from Nedging Mill to Parsonage Lane, Chelsworth, be protected. The officer had been recommending refusal of an application to put it on the Definitive Map for rights of way which legally protects public access. This should ensure that is signposted as a footpath.

Council warns over £30 million deficit predicted for current financial year

The latest prediction, based on the first quarter of the year is for a 4% deficit on the £688m budget the council set itself in February. This is not unexpected but the council has chosen to press release this now and state that their current answer of seeking more cuts and dipping into reserves to finance shortfalls is not sustainable. All the cost pressures, inflation and interest rates were known about when the council set its budget in February and raised council tax by 4% rather than the full 5% allowed, as the Green and LibDem opposition had proposed. Our amendment was voted down by the Conservatives.

The overspend comes largely in costs for children in care with complex needs and for taxi transport to special needs schools, also the growing costs of elderly care.

5. District Councillor's Report

Church Farm Place

I contacted the public realm team regarding the state of the open space and as you know John Buckingham met me on site last week. He was extremely surprised at the state of the area and has agreed to get the area cut w/c 25th. He is also planning to get the cuttings removed from site. He assures me that a schedule will be developed for the whole district, during the winter as none is currently in place.

Hadleigh quarry

I have been contacted by SCC this week to advise me that that two applications for the discharge of conditions for Hadleigh Quarry, Planning Application have been submitted to Suffolk County Council. These relate to the submission for approval of a Lorry Management Plan and the details of the Liaison Committee for the quarry.

Elmsett Post Office.

I have raised the closure of the post office with James Cartlidge, the chair of the APPG for Post Offices and Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department of Business and Trade. I highlighted this because it appears to be affecting a number of post offices in the area. I have received no reply from any of them as of yet.

District Council Priorities

The new administration at Babergh finally agreed a number of priorities that will be the basis of all plans for the next 4 years. Increased climate change action, close collaboration with communities, and a focus on good housing will be priorities for the new Council.

Collaboration and partnership with communities, the voluntary sector, business, and neighbouring councils are at the heart of the coalition vision. The administration will take the lead in responding to climate change, while protecting and enhancing the district's natural and historic environments. This will include encouraging the building of energy efficient homes and commercial buildings with high insulation standards and low carbon heating systems – while ensuring council housing reaches these standards too. It will also look at ways it can support community energy projects.

Supporting market towns and villages to flourish will also be an area of focus, alongside business support, promoting inward investment, and ensuring people can learn new skills and secure good jobs.

The administration is now looking at some short-term ambitions including ways of improving the energy efficiency of listed buildings; relaunch of neighbourhood plans; identifying more land for community housing and improving planning enforcement using the considerate constructor's scheme.

Temporary Leadership Change

Unfortunately, Council Leader Dave Busby has had to step back temporarily from his leadership duties due to illness. Following a cancer diagnosis councillor John Ward will take over as acting leader while councillor Busby has treatment. There will also be some changes in portfolio ownership in the short term.

New Funding

As well as the capital funding that I've mentioned the council is also set to benefit from a new round of funding thanks to the Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF). Small businesses and community organisations across the districts will have access to three grants under the fund: the Rural Business Growth Fund, the Rural Culture & Creativity Fund, and the Rural Communities Fund with grants available between £5,000 - £10,000 per application and will fund a maximum of 50% of total project costs.

Eligible projects include net-zero developments, agriculture and farm diversification, visitor economy business expansion as well as SME investment and diversification or investment in community facilities in our rural areas.

Other news

- CIFCO, the council's commercial property arm, is still generating decent income for the council and is currently generating 11% of Babergh's income. However, I, and other Green councillors, are concerned at the value of the properties which have lost £10m since last year and are worth c£1.5m less than when they were purchased. The current business plan is being reviewed by the council.
- The council's Cost of Living strategy is currently being reviewed by the council. The report highlights the work completed so far and details the next phase of work that is due to be completed.
- More than £705,000 collected from developers in Babergh and Mid Suffolk is set to be injected back into communities through the Community Infrastructure Levy – funding projects including play areas, cycle paths and village hall improvements.
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6. Reports

I) Footpaths All footpaths good. Will have to pay some attention to the footbridge on the footpath behind the church, a fallen tree a few years ago is still growing and causing the sleepers, that are forming the bridge, to distort and could become dangerous, so I think with help we should remove it

ii) **Tree Wardens** The Woodland Trust is giving away free trees to local tree warden, we are allowed to have 2 pack of 50 saplings in each packet with a choice of species depending on type of land being planted.

(Weather conditions)

Unfortunately due to weather conditions of the last two years, it has stress out our overhanging roadside trees. A few large branch have fall down and has led to a few blockage on our Whatfield roads, in the last few weeks. The fallen trees have been dealt with very quickly by the relevant authorities or owners.

(Buckle's meadow)

Sarah our conservation manager has given me a list of moth's that have been found in 'Buckle's meadow' by 'Natural England'.

Sarah was not able to take any photos due to time restrictions, so I am looking them up on Google to find out how unusual they are.

They definitely have some wonderful posh names to!

Natural England found 48 species in total.

This is wonderful news for the biodiversity of the meadow.

(Complaints)

I have no complaints from any local residents.

iii) **Conservation Report** . Buckles meadow

This is the report written by Graham Hart on behalf of Suffolk wildlife.

He also sent an email with a list of plant species which I will send.

I also have a list of moth species which I will send.

Adam Gretton who lives locally and has a moth trap and offered to do a moth survey before the meadow was cut. Which we did last Saturday (9th September)

The Harts kindly provided electric to plug in.

The meadow has now been cut and Colin Goodchild will bail and clear.

Questions from the Public – None

7. **Action Updates**

Allotments All allotments are fine.

Playground Annual Inspection has been booked for June

Hedge at Entrance to Wheatfields Paul has spoken to the owner of the property and a small amount of the hedge was cut back.

8. **Planning** - We have had several applications since our last meeting which have all been sent to the Councillors with no objection for development/tree works within the village. A close eye is being made for the Quarry Application.

9. **Health & Safety** –None

10. **Accounts and Payments** As of the 1st September 2023 we have a bank balance of £8,953.35 with no outstanding cheques.

11. **Daffodils** It has been asked if the Council could purchase some bulbs for Church Farm Place green area. Roy Searl to find out cost and let the PC know before purchasing.

Next meeting 21st November 2023 at 7.45pm

Meeting closed at 9.15pm

Signed Date.....