

MINUTES OF THE WHATFIELD PARISH COUNCIL MEETING HELD AT WHATFIELD VILLAGE HALL 29th November 2023

Present

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

1, Apologies for Absence

Mr. P. Whittle	Chairman
Mrs Jilly. Harris	Parish Councillor
Mr. R Lindsay	County Councillor
Mrs J. Green	Tree Warden

2. Matters arising from Minutes of meeting held 20th September 2023 Minutes of 20th September 2023 meeting were accepted and signed. . Prop Roy Searl Sec: David Dray Unanimous

3. Correspondence . The Clerk has written to the Payne family saying that they have permission to plant only one tree. The Clerk has received and put up on the noticeboard Dr Franey Charity letter.

4. County Councillor's Report Suffolk communities being asked to bid for new bus services

The county council have some new money from central Government they have to use for new or extra bus services within a short time frame. They are asking communities (parish councils) or organisations to make expressions of interest.

Katherine Davies, sustainable transport officer for Babergh, is attempting to coordinate the various bids by parish councils. Contact her if you have any thoughts. katherine.davies@baberghmidsuffolk.gov.uk.

I have been encouraging parishes in my division to look at some of the options below:

112 Bildeston to Sudbury, twice a week. Bildeston and Brent Eleigh PCs are liaising with GoStart to see if a fortnightly route could be run from Sudbury to Bury and back, via Bildeston.

The 379 Hadleigh to Bury bus (once a week on Weds) via Bildeston. I have asked operators GoAhead (Hedenhams) if it can be expanded to a daily service with changed timings to meet 9 to 5 working day and West Suffolk college start and finish times. It is important to evidence demand so if you know of people locally that might use such a service, do let me know. GoAhead interested but awaiting meeting date.

753 Sudbury to Bury – Lavenham PC are planning to bid to improve this service with more capacity at rush hour to meet demand from college students, an evening and Sunday service and better service to Sudbury Health Centre.

The 461 Hadleigh to Stowmarket via Bildeston. Potential to bid with operator HCT to expand this from twice a week to five days a week with timings to meet the West Suffolk college Kura bus service from Stowmarket. West Suffolk College are v interested and are gathering data for potential pupil demand for me for this or the 379 route. .

111 Hitcham to Ipswich via Bildeston – daily but only three services – frequency could be double with an extra bus and it may be possible to persuade Mulleys or another operator to start this from Stowmarket rather than Hitcham. Cllr Brearley investigating.

Deadline for bids is 20th December. Details and online form here <https://www.suffolkonboard.com/news/bus-service-improvement-plan-where-should-the-money-be-spent/>

Foodbank and community support

Bildeston food bank is now supporting 39 families from several different villages in the area including Monks Eleigh, Nedging and Hitcham. Together with the district council, we are exploring ways to help roll out the Bildeston model out across the district, because it is clear that existing food banks and CAB are only reaching about 30% of those in need.

Lower speed limits A1141 Hadleigh to Semer

My application on behalf of Semer and Kersey PCs to reduce speed limit on this road between Stone Street and Letts swimming pool from 60mph to 40mph has been approved. However funding must be found and it will be some time before it comes into effect.

5. District Councillor's Report

The big talking point locally has been the flooding caused by storm Babet. The storm which hit the county on the 20th cut off many villages across both Mid Suffolk and Babergh leaving homes, and businesses counting the cost. With another storm due this week, we need to do what we can to ensure everyone remains safe. The strength of the storms we are getting is further demonstration of the effects of our changing climate. We have always had extreme weather, but the frequency is now the problem.

James Lawson Development

Following Roy's email last night I discussed the delay of this application with the planning officer. It seems the problem was completion of the S106 legal agreement that the developer/land owner was entering into with BDC. The planning department were waiting for this to be signed by all parties and sealed by Legal although they have not committed on who was causing the delay. This agreement relates to how much the applicant will pay BDC because they are not building any affordable homes.

Listed Building consultation

One of the lovely things about our district is the old buildings that give our area character. Unfortunately, a lot of these buildings have terrible energy performance that can leave residents freezing during the winter. While we must conserve this rich heritage, we also need to allow energy efficiency upgrades which are balanced and sensitively designed. The current system creates a barrier for homeowners to do this. Led by Green Party councillors Babergh & Mid Suffolk have opened a consultation until the 29th of Dec. It is something that we want to encourage as it would help reduce energy bills, protect buildings from climate change, cut carbon emissions and help preserve aging properties.

Housing Repairs

Babergh's new Green Councillors have discovered that there are significant issues with the state of Council housing stock across the district. The group have made this matter a priority and will be pushing the council to improve on the situation as soon as is possible. To help with this the council have released £943,000 from reserves to help clear the repair backlog. The money would also support wider improvements to the council housing service in the district.

Storm Babet: Flooding

Following the storm that caused extensive flooding across the county Babergh were able to provide emergency contact numbers and worked through the weekend and subsequent days to help people in the most need. Fortunately, a small number of our tenants were affected by flooding. Where needed, Building Services have supported with some dehumidifiers to help dry out our council properties and welfare checks were made on tenants too.

The team also collected information about any businesses affected by flooding, making sure support and advice was given where possible.

Joint Local Plan

Part one of the joint local plan has now been fully approved by the Council. At Full Council last week Babergh voted unanimously in favour of both part 1 of the JLP and the local development. The decision, which has been long in coming will provide the council with up-to-date policies to direct planning decisions. Part 2 will be developed over the next two years.

Young people wellbeing

Babergh & Mid Suffolk District Councils have introduced a new scheme to improve the wellbeing of young people in schools and connect them with their communities.

The purpose of the project is to act as an early intervention for students, addressing vulnerabilities such as low self-esteem while helping them develop important skills and forge new relationships.

This is being achieved through the implementation of a 'youth link worker' in the schools and will complement existing work that already takes place. These workers have been embedded in time for the start of the new term and will work with young people and their families to identify and access community activities that suit their interests.

They will also work to overcome any barriers that are in the way of individuals participating in the activity in which they are interested. This might involve setting up new after-school clubs, securing new equipment, improving facilities and beyond.

New Website

The council has launched a new website that it hopes will be more user friendly and easier to use for people across the district. The first step, which you can now see the results of, was to refresh all our content – ensuring our information is easy to read and up to date. Upgrading report forms is part of the next phase. Once complete, you will be able to login to your account and track any reports you make to us step by step.

Silver Sunday support

Babergh and Mid Suffolk councils are once again supporting the Silver Sunday campaign. The councils are joining forces with local groups to help tackle loneliness for older residents, by bringing generations together for free sing-alongs, games, and fun. The Silver Sunday campaign is designed to help tackle the issue of social isolation, particularly for older residents in rural communities.

Local events include the Sporting Memories group at the Kingfisher Leisure Centre, and a rock and roll themed party hosted by the Ansell Memories Café at the Ansell Centre in Hadleigh.

6. Reports

i) Footpaths As you would expect all very wet and muddy. No other issues apart from the fallen tree behind the church is being dealt with and the footbridge should be fully open soon. Concern was raised regarding the state of footpath No. 3 which has been churned up by farm vehicles (presumed a shooting party). Clerk to contact farmer.

ii) Tree Wardens Suffolk Tree warden Network)
At the AGM meeting 2023, the membership of (STWN) voted unanimously to make an application to the charity commission to become a charitable incorporated organisation. This application has now been accepted.
The Charity number is (1205573)... the general public will be able to donate money to the 'Suffolk Tree Warden Network charity' when purchasing goods on line, I will mention some of the organisation names on my next report.
Apparently there will be a few changes with the 'Suffolk Tree Warden Network', which will includes 'Whatfield Tree Warden 'having a printed identity card, this all sounds very exciting.
(Social Media)

I been encouraging local people to take a walk in Whitfield's Countyside, it's national tree week from 25th of November till the 3rd of December , the tree's in 'Whatfield' are really wonderful shades of autumn colours at the moment.

I have also posted some photos of the moths found in a survey carried out in 'Buckle's meadow' this September on Whatfield noticeboard Facebook group.

My favourite moth found was the 'sycamore tree' moth.

'Mrs Lucas' commented... that she pleased the conservation work is being carried on by 'Sarah Eastman' our parish council's conservation manager.

(Health and safety Issues)

I haven't received any tree issue or complaints from any parishioners in Whatfield

iii) Conservation Report . There is not a great deal to report. All the conservation areas are extremely wet Richard will cut some paths when it is dryer and more suitable to take machinery onto the meadows He intends to tidy up the hedgerows in the meadows in the next three months but allow the hedges to spread to the ground as Graham Hart suggested.

Richard wants to do some work in the area that runs alongside Joy's wood behind the telegraph poles in the dippers area. He would like to remove some of the sycamore trees and replant with a wider variety of small trees he has collected locally.

In the late spring a request was made to plant four fruit trees in Huntys and I wondered if a decision had been made as this would be an ideal planting time.

Questions from the Public – None

7. Action Updates

Allotments All allotments are fine.

Playground The playground is fine and there is going to be planted more grass seed in the spring. Concern was again raised over the need to regularly empty the litter bin. Parish Clerk suggested that BDC could undertake this.

8. Planning - Our district Councillor intimated that we may need to consider revising our Neighbourhood Plan every five years. Roy Searl will check with Andrea.

9. Health & Safety –None

10. Accounts and Payments As of the 1st November 2023 we have a bank balance of £8722.37 with £956.50 due from The Village Hall and £52.50 cheques for allotments/ The cost of this year's Christmas Tree was £72.00

11. Precept Does the Council want to increase the Precept or keep it at the same costs as the previous year of £3231.00 Prop: Simon Clifford Sec David Dray

12. Dates for next year's meetings. I have sent the dates out just need approval#

Next meeting 17th January 2024 at 7.45pm

Meeting closed at 8.255pm

Signed Date.....