

MINUTES OF THE WHATFIELD PARISH COUNCIL MEETING HELD AT WHATFIELD VILLAGE HALL 25th January 2017

The meeting opened at 7.45pm.

Present

Mr. P. Whittle	Chairman
Mr. D. Cross	Parish Councillor
Mr. D. Dray	Parish Councillor
Mr. A. Ferguson	District Councillor
Mr. G. Smith	Co-opted Councillor
Mrs. Lynn King	Parish Clerk
Mrs. M Eastman	Conservation Warden
Mrs. B. Smith	Footpath Warden

1. Apologies for Absence

Mrs. H. Landon	Parish Councillor
Mrs C. Curtis	Co-opted Parish Councillor
Mrs. J. Antill	County Councillor
Mrs J. Green	Tree Warden

2. Matters arising from Minutes of meeting held 6th December 2016

Minutes of 6th December 2016 meeting were accepted and signed with an alteration to be made to include Prop: David Cross Sec :David Dray Mr. Unanimous.

3 Co-opting new Parish Councillor The Chair welcome Mr Simon Clifford as the new co-opted member of the council.

4. Correspondence. None

5. County Councillor's Report - There has been little news from the County Council over the Christmas period, and in any event things are quiet as we move towards the moratorium period which starts on 23rd March, six weeks before the election of a new Council on 4th May.

The Budget a first attempt at setting the budget for 2017/18 was made before Christmas, and, following further announcements from the Government with regard to funding, has been recently finalised.

The gross budget has fallen from £1,104m to £934m, a reduction of £170m. This is largely due to the conversion of maintained schools to academies and the impact of the reduction in government grant that has been ongoing since 2011/12.

For 2017/18 There is a forecast budget gap of some £40m and savings of around £31 m have been identified. In accordance with the pledge made by the administration of the council ahead of the last election, core council tax will not increase for 2017/18. However, recently, the Government has announced that it is to allow Councils to raise a specific levy in 2017/18 of 3% to help to fund social care. This is 1% more than previously announced. If we decide to apply this additional 1% it will reduce the deficit by a further £2m. But the shortfall could still amount to as much as £7m.

It has not been possible ahead of the elections in May to identify further places to save money and as a result it is likely that any shortfall will be made up by transferring money from the contingency reserve.

6. District Councillor's Report - Key updates – With Christmas and New Year, this has been a quiet period but there are significant changes to Babergh that are planned for implementation and/or decision in 2017.

A summary is as follows:

Devolution

- The devolution debate has in some respects come full circle. We originally started with a simple Suffolk option for consideration that was expanded to include Norfolk, Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. With lukewarm support from our western district potential partners, it was decided to split the proposals into 2 parts with Norfolk and Suffolk bidding separately from, Cambs and Peterborough. However 4 Norfolk Councils voted against the partnership and the decision was taken to bid for devolution as Suffolk alone. The “full circle” option now sits on the Minster’s desk in London and we have no news regarding the nature/numbers that this smaller version of devolution will generate if the Government eventually decides to approve it for Suffolk alone.

Appointment of New Chief Executive

- Arthur Charvonia, the new joint Babergh/Mid Suffolk started Jan 2017 after his other Suffolk District Council employer agreed to release him early. He joins the Council at a time of huge change but he know the territory and the significant challenges that 2017 will bring. First impressions remain very positive.

Future of Babergh accommodation Corks Lane

- The decision to move both Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils to Ipswich (Suffolk C Endeavour House) was taken late last year. Babergh ^”& Mid Suffolk will remain independent Councils with shared co-located back office support.
- The move to Ipswich (Suffolk CC Endeavour House) will take place in May/June 2017 and will require a phased approach to maintain services to Ward members.
- Two “lading sires” have yet to be agreed. One in Sudbury and one in Stowmarket (detail of retained levels of staffing have yet to be agreed) where support will be provided to Ward members who cannot or do not wish to travel to Ipswich to meet District Council members and/or Officers.
- Disposal of current accommodation subject of on-going studies. There is very strong pressure to ensure that Corks Lane will not be left empty any longer than is absolutely necessary. The options will be discussed in the first half of 2017 and are likely to range from disposal to developments.

Boundary Commission

- Babergh called I the Boundary Commission last year to assess the structure of the District and the allocation of Councilors to geographical areas. The report is expected to be delivered early in 2017 with any changes implemented in 2019. It is entirely possible that the Commission will recommend a reduction in District Councilors numbers but this is entirely speculative.

Government

- Babergh & Mid Suffolk District Councils have decided to adopt “Cabinet” governance rather than the current “Committee” arrangement. This should lead to more speedy decision making but a will also lead to greater responsibility for District Councilors who hold a portfolio e.g. housing growth etc.

Finance

- With the reduction in Revenue Support Grants (RSG) from Central Government, without action on Babergh's part the Council would face a deficit in 3 year period 2018-2020. This would not be acceptable as the Council is required by law to deliver a balanced budget.
- For the Council and the Ward members, it means that hard decisions lie ahead if current levels of service are to be maintained.

Summary

We should not underestimate the degree of turbulence that 2017 will bring. However, Babergh District Councillors remain confident that new procedures and processes will eventually bring tangible benefits to all the voters in Hadleigh.

7. Anglian Water - The Chairman brought to the attention of the meeting, that he had been contacted by Jonathan Rolfe that there are due to be considerable disruption in Elmsett, Whatfield and Aldham due to water pipe replacement. A meeting is being held at Elmsett Village Hall on the 22nd February 2017 where Anglian Water will explain what is happening and answering questions from the public. Notice to be put on website.

8. Reports –

- i) **Footpaths** – Foot paths are fine, just waiting for hedges to be trimmed up
- ii) **Tree Warden** – There is a tree which has a bad split in it by the fallen ash tree which Rupert Bentley is going to removed when he has time. Joy would like to use the brush wood from the ash tree to make tepees etc. and leave the rest for children to build with. This maybe this summer or even the next.
- iii) **Conservation** - We are entering a cold spell so very little work needs to be done at the moment.

Buckles Meadow - Looking to the future we need to see there if there is an opportunity to have Buckles meadow cut when the old rectory meadow is cut. Next year we could consider trimming the long hedge.

Hunty's vale - Plans are going ahead to choose and plant two more trees as agreed. The barn owl has been seen around the nest boxes but it is too early to see if they are going to lay Richard's work during the year has paid off and it is pleasant to walk through and use the public footpath. All the trees seem to be flourishing.

The Drift Pathway - On dry days this very pleasant to walk along

Questions from the public:

Concerns were expressed about the lack of footpath near the school and through the village.

Concerns were raised as to the visibility at the junction of Wheatfields as the hedge to now obstructing a clear view. Mr. Graham Smith is going to talk to owners about this matter.

An email will be sent to Babergh to remind them that the tree outside the bungalows still needs to be removed.

Concerns were raised about the lack of police information received to the Parish Council and the amount of crime in the area. David Cross is to draft a letter to send to the Police.

9. Action Updates

- SID Monks Eleigh are due to have their posts installed by the end of the month and I have queried the funding from Jenny and she has promised to let me know the situation asap. Jenny has confirmed that the funding is still available as far as she is aware.
- Precept Babergh Council have approved the precept and the first payment will be made on the 1st April 2017.
- Welcome Pack David has completed a draft copy of the welcome pack and has had several comments/feedback. He is now going to finalise this and David Cross is to source costings for publication. Paul suggested that every house in the village should be given one.
- Allotments David confirmed that all the allotment contracts were now signed and all monies have been collected. We have one full size plot and two half size plots available. The advertising will be continued and hopefully all will be rented by the Spring.

10. Planning - No outstanding plans.

11. Health & Safety – None

12. Accounts and Payments Due to the problems with Barclays we still have no signatures on our account and therefore no money has been spent from account since our last statement in October. I have used some of the cash from the allotment money to pay the overdue invoices from CAS for the website and Babergh for the rent on the Car Park. I still have two outstanding invoices and Clarke and Simpson are now pressing us for payment of £150.00 I can use the rest of the cash to pay £75 not sure what we do about the rest!! Barclays have sent yet another form to be signed and state that Charlotte hasn't produced proof of ID yet. That still leaves the invoice for the lock on the allotment gate outstanding and my wages for the last 4 months. Balance of £10504.36. It was agreed to get signatures from Mrs. Ruth Lucas and Mr Ray Parker so we can pay the outstanding invoices. Prop: David Dray Sec: David Cross. It was proposed that we open a new bank account with the TBS and this should be done as soon as possible with as many signatures on the account as possible. Pro: Paul Whittle Sec: Simon Clifford,

Next Meeting

Wednesday 29th March 2017, at 7.45 pm, Village Hall

Meeting closed at 9.05pm

Signed Date.....