

# MINUTES OF THE WHATFIELD PARISH COUNCIL MEETING HELD AT WHATFIELD VILLAGE HALL 6<sup>th</sup> December 2017

---

The meeting opened at 7.45pm.

## **Present**

Mr. P. Whittle	Chairman
Mr. D. Cross	Vice Chairman
Mr. D. Dray	Parish Councillor
Mr. G. Smith	Parish Councillor
Mrs. H. Landon	Parish Councillor
Mrs C. Curtis	Parish Councillor
Mr S Clifford	Parish Councillor
Mrs. Lynn King	Parish Clerk
Mr. R Lindsay	County Councillor
Mr. A. Ferguson	District Councillor

## **1. Apologies for Absence**

Mrs B. Smith	Footpath Warden
Mrs J. Green	Tree Warden
Mrs. M Eastman	Conservation Warden

**2. Matters arising from Minutes of meeting held 4th October 2017** Minutes of 4<sup>th</sup> October 2017 meeting were accepted and signed. Prop Charlotte Curtis: Sec: David Cross Unanimous.

**3. Correspondence** - I have received the 2018 Collection Calendar and the Christmas and New dates for Bin Collection. I have displayed this on the noticeboard and have a copy to put in the window of the village hall. As requested a letter was approved by the chair and sent to Mr. Chisnall with regard to the land behind the horseshoes. We have received no reply. Clerk to raise the issue with the environmental health service and find out who owns the land or executors of the will.

**4. County Councillor's Report - Care, Wellbeing and Health Cabinet Committee** - I have been appointed to this cabinet committee. We have met twice so far. My proposal to ask the cabinet for a commitment to funding cycle and walking networks across the county was well received and will be finalised at the next meeting in January.

**Cutting of free school buses and post 16 travel subsidy** - This proposal was temporarily blocked down by the scrutiny committee after myself and members of my group objected. However yesterday (5<sup>th</sup> Dec) the cabinet again put this proposal with a very few tweaks to consultation. The changes would see over 3000 children lose their free school transport, most in rural areas like ours. The evidence from Essex indicates that a change in policy would NOT deliver the necessary savings. The consultation period will run from 12 December 2017 to 28 February 2018 and I will update you with details on how to participate.

**Hadleigh Quarry** - The planning decision on this has been delayed from 12 December to 16<sup>th</sup> January when it will be heard by the development and Regulation committee, so submissions can still be made on the county council website.

**Plastic bottle deposit return Scheme** - I am sponsoring a motion to the next full council on December 7<sup>th</sup> asking the council to back Government plans for this and for Suffolk to be a pilot project.

## **Latest budget predictions and county precept rise**

**Current year** - A month ago we had sight of the latest predictions for this year. The county council is still on course for an "overspend" of £10.2m in the current financial year largely in the costs of taxi provision for children with Special Education Needs and provision of adult social care. Neither the social care precept nor a one off 3-year

social care grant are enough to offset the steady cuts in the Revenue Support Grant from Government. The option of raising council tax has been rejected by the administration for the past seven years.

**Next financial year** - The cabinet has now proposed they will increase council tax by 5% next year. But despite this, the Council will still be facing a forecast budget gap of £26.85m, and a cuts plan has been drawn up to provide £23.9m worth of savings. The majority of this will come from the Adult Social care budget, with a proposed £11m reduction in spending on care purchasing and a £1m saving achieved by cutting the Sheltered Housing Grant. I have a report from the finance department that shows a rise of 1% in previous years would have almost completely removed the need for these cuts now.

## **5. District Councillor's Report – Introduction**

There is a huge amount of business going on the Babergh that will impact on all of the towns and villages in this area

### **Public Access**

The move of Babergh/Mid Suffolk Council staff was planned to be completed by the end of September 17. However, changes to staff T&Cs (mainly parking in Ipswich) required further negotiation with the Unions. That has now been completed and, as I understand it, employees have been given an additional one off payment of £500pp to accept the new T&Cs. Corks Lane has now been vacated and all Council business will now be delivered from Ipswich, Stowmarket and Sudbury.

### **Boundary Commission**

The Boundary Commission has issued its initial findings and recommendations. In our case, if I run again for re-election in 2019, the Ward will be known as "**Whatfield Ward**". Whatfield Ward (not the biggest village!) will comprise **8 Parishes rather than the current 6** and will comprise Whatfield, Elmsett, Aldham, Nedging & Naughton, Semer, Chelsworth, Monks Eleigh and Wattisham. If I am re-elected, sadly, I will no longer represent Kersey.

You can access the proposed new structure on the BC website and you have until **11<sup>th</sup> December 17** to comment if you wish to do so.

### **Housing – Private Sector**

The Babergh Planning Committee has approved applications for some 2000+ houses in the last few months. Our target for **houses built** rather than just approved is 335 per annum. Some of these approvals have been as a direct result of Babergh no longer having a 5 supply of land bank of potential building sites and it's a concern to me that it might be a blunt instrument. At a meeting with 3 Chairmen of Parish Councils in South Cosford it was agreed with Tom Barker, a member of the Babergh Senior Management Team that a more frequent review than annually is required. The actual format and delivery of this requirement of this has yet to be decided. There appears to be just one significant development planned for Whatfield in the new draft Local Plan.

### **Merger of Babergh & MSDCs**

Thank you for your feedback on the merger proposals as they are currently known. As you will be aware, I am trying to ascertain the general level of support or otherwise for the merger of Babergh & Mid Suffolk District Councils in 2019. Three months ago this was not on the agenda, but the Leader and her Babergh Cabinet have now indicated that this is their preferred way ahead. Before going ahead with the proposal the Cabinet has proposed a public telephone consultation of 2000 Babergh residents ((70,000 electorate) to see what support there would be.

To put it mildly, this has now become the hot topic of the day following a "Call In" to the Scrutiny Committee by opposition Members. The proposal had been signed off by the Babergh Cabinet to agree in principle to merge subject to consultation but a number of us felt uncomfortable about the Cabinet's decision in light of the "no" referendum of 6 years ago and the consultation process (i.e. the telephone poll). The Scrutiny Committee, of which I was a Member, voted to support the "Call In" by 6 votes to 1, saying that the Cabinet had not followed due process, and that there was insufficient financial information and insufficient information about the consultation to agree in principle a move to the next merger step. The decision has been referred back to the Cabinet who are provided additional information. Concerns remain about the consultation process.

However, it needs to be acknowledged that **the Cabinet, not the full Council**, has the authority to take the decision to **recommend** merger although legal advice has now been received to the effect that the **full Council** would need to be in favour of the option before the Secretary of State would approve the merger.

You may have seen my letter in the East Anglian (photo copy provided) expressing concern about the lack of suitable finance information and the process of consultation etc. which has resulted in a published letter from Cllr

John Ward (a Babergh Cabinet member) accusing me of “destructive actions” and threatening me (and others who have expressed similar concerns) with disciplinary action.

### **Disposal of Corks Lane Buildings**

The Babergh Cabinet will consider the recommendations for disposal of the Corks Lane site on **7<sup>th</sup> December 17**. Watch this space ....

## **6. Reports –**

i) **Footpaths** – Poor weather is on the way. So we will be keeping an eye on the footpaths. We have one path which may give us problems in the near future, it is the one from Elmsett Road to Whittons Alley, and if they do arrive we do know who to complain to. Happy Walking, Christmas and New Year.

ii) **Tree Warden** – just like to say Brian has put the bench together. Can you ask the councillors if they could speak to Richard and confirm the spot they would like it to go on conservation area? As Brian was told by Richard that he fix it when the councillors tell him were they like it. David Dray to speak with Richard about installing the bench in its original position.

iii) **Conservation – Buckles Meadow** - Colin Goodchild has agreed to harrow and cut the meadow when he does the old Rectory.

**Hunts Vale** - Richard has continued to cut the pathways. There has been some mouse damage round the bark of the latest tree to be planted so “heal and seal “ was put on. Hopefully this will solve the problem. If it proves to be a hard winter this might be an ongoing hazard.

**The Drift** - The trees continue to thrive and the path is walkable in dry weather.

Questions from the public:

Phil Branton from Wincers spoke to the Parish Council about future plans for the land south of Wheatfields. The original plans were rejected in 2015. It was agreed that they should prepare an outline for presentation as no plans have been drawn up at the present time. When these plans are drawn up but not submitted to the Planning Department the Chair suggested that a meeting be held with the village to success their views/objections. Phil left his contact details with the Chair and Clerk.

## **7. Action Updates**

**SID** We have completed the purchase of our SID and have had it in place for a month. It has now gone to Monks Eleigh and we will collect it at the end of December. David Dray has downloaded the data.

**Allotments** All the rent is now in and the money has been banked. Prizes were given out to Eric Hogger and Paul Ridge.

**Telephone Box** David has seen Elmsett’s telephone box and they have made it into a library. He thinks the cost will be in the region of £200.00 to convert ours. David and Helen to liaise re brackets.

**Speedwatch** A meeting was held at David Drays house with a talk about Speedwatch and it was agreed that we should go forward with this project. The estimated cost would be approximately £500.00 if we shared this with Nedging/Naughton villages. We will need between 8/10 volunteers to man the Speedwatch. PC to work out how to recruit volunteers.

**Standing Orders** – postponed to the next meeting

**8. Planning** A letter was sent to Babergh Council with regard to the Draft Local Plans and an email was received to confirm they had received our concerns.

**9. Babergh Merger** Whatfield feels that this would be the worst of all worlds and that we strongly believe that a new referendum is in order. Email to Alan Ferguson to be sent expressing our views. Prop: Simon Clifford Sec: Helen Landon unanimous

**10. Health & Safety** – None

**11. Dates for next year's Meetings** The dates for next year's meeting were emailed to the PC and only one change was made to the date in September to be moved to the 3<sup>rd</sup> October, when this has been confirmed by the village hall bookings manage the dates will be published.

**12. Precept** The PC agreed to keep the Precept at the same level as previous years and this was signed by the Chair and two members of the PC and will be sent to Babergh asap. Prop: David Dray Sec: Helen Landon

**13. Clerks Wages** This was discussed between the members of the PC and it was agreed that the Clerk should be paid at the SCP rate of £8.87 per hour for 2 hours per week starting in December and this will be reviewed in 2018. Prop: Paul Whittle Sec: Charlotte Curtis unanimous

**14. Accounts and Payments** - The Barclays bank account is now empty and our TSB account has as a balance of £13250.70 as of the bank statement ending 1<sup>st</sup> November, we have a number of cheques not cleared and a deposit from the Allotments giving a grand total of £9413.20 as of 5<sup>th</sup> December. We have one invoice to pay for £10.00 to Babergh for the rent of the Car Park and clerk's wages. Prop: Helen Landon Sec: Charlotte Curtis Unanimous

**15. School Federation Proposal** Two issues were raised concerning the proposal. That it was unclear what would happen if the Headmistress was to leave and that only one of schools was a Church of England School and that there would be only one member of the board of governors for each school. David Cross to draft and send a response from Whatfield PC. Unanimous

**Next Meeting**

24th January 2018, at 7.45 pm, Village Hall

Meeting closed at 9.30pm

Signed ..... Date.....