

MINUTES OF THE WHATFIELD PARISH COUNCIL MEETING HELD AT WHATFIELD VILLAGE HALL 21st March 2018

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
Mr S Clifford	Parish Councillor
Mrs. Lynn King	Parish Clerk
Mr. A. Ferguson	District Councillor
Mrs. M Eastman	Conservation Warden

1, Apologies for Absence

Mrs C. Curtis	Parish Councillor
Mr. R Lindsay	County Councillor
Mrs B. Smith	Footpath Warden
Mrs J. Green	Tree Warden

2. Matters arising from Minutes of meeting held 24th January 2018 Minutes of 24th January 2018 meeting were accepted and signed. Prop Helen Landon: Sec: David Cross Unanimous.

3. Correspondence - I have reported to Babergh on the litter situation on the road between Hadleigh and Whatfield but have not received a reply. I also wrote to Hadleigh Quarry on the request of the Chairman to express our concerns about the Lorries coming through our village. I have received a booklet promoting the Suffolk Walking Festival 2018 and will put the poster up in the noticeboard but also have a booklet if anyone is interested.

4. County Councillor's Report - Budget for 2018-19 confirmed

On Thursday 8 February, the Council met to debate the budget proposals for 2018-19. The Liberal Democrat, Green and Independent Group were concerned by a number of the proposed cuts. These included a £12m cut to adult care, funding reductions for Citizens Advice and Trading Standards, and cuts to rural bus services. Therefore, we were unable to support the budget.

An amendment by the Labour group, which focused on reversing minor cuts, was voted down by the Conservative administration. The budget proposals were subsequently passed in full, but were not supported by any opposition councillors.

The budget for 2018-19 includes a 4.99% increase in council tax.

Suffolk Public Sector Leaders to review the way they operate - The Suffolk Public Sector Leaders (SPSL) is made up of council leaders and chief executives from across Suffolk, as well as the PCC, chief fire officer and representatives from Suffolk's Clinical Commissioning Groups. This group controls a large pot of money, made up of £7.447m from the Suffolk business rates pool and £3.23m of central government funding received as part of the Transformation Challenge Award.

This group have been meeting and making decisions on spending in private. As a result of a number of questions I made to the chief executive of Suffolk County council, the leader and to the media, the group invited the media to their last meetings and have said they will review the way the group is governed in future. I will keep you informed of any further updates.

Next phase of “Raising the Bar” strategy announced - The Cabinet has approved the Raising the Bar 2018-20 strategy. This is the third phase of the programme, which began in 2012 and is focused on improving educational standards throughout Suffolk.

The strategy includes the very ambitious goal to place the education system in Suffolk among the top 25% nationally. No other “shire” authority has achieved this, and the report acknowledges that it would likely take several years to reach this goal.

I am concerned that no new funding has been allocated to this phase of the Raising the Bar programme. The goals of the strategy are ambitious and will not be achievable without adequate investment, and so I question whether the Cabinet are fully committed to improving educational outcomes in Suffolk.

Suffolk to tender for contract to support adolescents on the edge of care - Suffolk’s Cabinet has agreed to set up a new outcomes-based contract, to provide intensive therapeutic support for adolescents at the edge of care via a private service provider. The idea is to reduce the need for and costs of adolescents coming into the care of Suffolk County Council, by providing intervention services that seek to keep children safely with their families. Payments will only be made if children are not taken into care, or are returned to their families.

The contract will be funded by a Social Impact Bond: this means that private investors will provide the start-up capital and running costs for the service, and will receive a return on investment if the service is successful at keeping children out of care. A similar contract and service exists in Essex, and a small number of local authorities across the UK are beginning to implement similar contracts

I am concerned about the use of a payment by results contract when vulnerable children are involved, given the risk of putting profit ahead of the wellbeing of these children. Suffolk County Council have assured me that the authority’s team of social workers will oversee the service and prevent this from happening, but the administrative costs of doing this properly could be substantial.

The contract is due to be awarded in Summer 2018 with an autumn start date.

Site meeting re Traffic calming in Whatfield - The community warden has agreed to meet me and members of the parish council at the village hall car park at 10am on Thursday April 12 to discuss what measures can be taken to slow vehicles at the junction by the Green and the school.

5. District Councillor’s Report Mainly updates on current issues. Under Cllr John Ward’s leadership Babergh DC approved the 2018/2019 budget at the full council meeting on 20th Feb 18. Council tax will increase next year (FY 18/19) by an average of 3.5% (equivalent to £5 for a band D house). We are under no illusion about the financial challenges that we face and unless services are cut, council tax will continue to rise (your bill comprises 3 parts namely Suffolk CC with care provision + Police & Crime Commissioner + Babergh in the case of Babergh DC, this has been required primarily to fill the gap left by the cuts in direct revenue support grants from Central Govt plus the fact that we still need to deliver more houses in the District.

Public Access – There are some moves to have an additional location provided in Hadleigh to meet with Council Officers and this was discussed at the Council meeting. A motion was moved by a Labour member at that Council Meeting demanding this additional facility. I supported the motion. It’s early days and it would be wrong to offer any assurances that this will happen, but I am still keen (and optimistic) to see some form of public access support provided in Hadleigh even if it’s not 5 days a week.

Leisure – Some good news! I am pleased to report that the Council Meeting on 20th February approved in principle the expenditure of £3.5 million to replace the Hadleigh Leisure Centre Pool and to redevelop the Kingfisher Leisure Centre in Sudbury. Tenders will be sent out shortly with target completion dates of Sept 19 for the Sudbury facility and Jan 20 for the Hadleigh Pool.

Boundary Commission - The Boundary Commission for restructuring the current Babergh Ward pattern was due to produce its final recommendations on 6th February 18. However this was delayed to 20th February 18. As expected the Boundary Commission has now produced another set of recommendations for further consultation that will end 30th April 18. Their final recommendations are now expected on the 7th August 18 for presentation to

the Sec of State for implementation at the next local elections in May 2019 – getting time critical. The Boundary Commission website explains how to make comment on the proposals should you wish to do so. I still expect the number of District Councillors to come down from 43 to 32. PS if the initially proposed Ward structure goes ahead. I expect the new Ward to be renamed South East Cosford and will comprise the parishes of – Aldham, Elmsett, Whatfield, Nedging & Naughton, Kersey, Semer, Chelsworth and Monks Eleigh.

Public Sector Housing – Correction – Further to the information that I provided previously. It has now become clear that the number of Council owned affordable flats that will be provided in Hadleigh following the refurbishment of Angel Court will be closer to 20 rather than the 34, a number that was previously suggested by the new Leader of Babergh DC. Frustratingly I am currently not able to provide any further detail but it is evident that work on this project will not start in the timeframe that was originally anticipated and it could be 2021 before we see a result – from my perspective this is a highly undesirable delay and the residents of Hadleigh deserve a clear explanation why the project has been subject to such delay. Finally Babergh also continues to buy suitable properties on the open market to increase the supply of Council owned houses.

Private Sector Housing - The Sec of State has issued new guidance to help facilitate the building of more private sector houses. The challenge for Babergh DC has been seriously complicated by the absence of a 5 year land supply and I suspect that the introduction of new regulations will only slow/complicate the process. Teresa May appears to believe that we're at fault for not approving applications and has threatened to send in government agents if we don't meet our targets. What we actually need is to ensure that the approvals are turned into completions and suitable infrastructure funds are provided to support developments – that's where the Government could drive meaningful change. Worryingly we were informed in a Members briefing on 9th Feb 18, that Babergh's target for completions (currently 355 per annum) is likely to increase to about 440 per annum under new government planning criteria. **Personally, I would far rather the government legislate to make developers start building (eg graduated Council Tax implementation) rather than allow them to sit on approved developments for commercial benefits that are driven by the market.** NB I have heard recently that the PM has set up a cross party committee to address this question. It's already a major issue for Babergh & other Councils- my expectation is that it will get worse before it gets better.

Brett Works – McCarthy Stone - The McCarthy Stone development for over 55s located behind the High Street is well underway. The cottages will now to build first and sold off plan in August 18 for occupation on Nov 18. Local people will be invited to a presentation by the developer in April 18. Details tbc. Phase 2 will now be for the flats in the replica "Maltings" development.

Merger of Babergh & MSDCs - The telephone poll on the merger option was completed on 5th February 18. No announcements have been made re the outcome but a Members briefing will now take place this evening. 20th March 18 – slipped due to recent weather. I will report "hot off the press". As I have reported previously my concern centred on the questions that were asked of voters, which from my perspective failed to provide an objective and balanced picture and led people towards approval of a merger without a full understanding of the issues. The absence of a full business case to support the merger is a prime example of this The Chief Executive and his staff are now working on the business case that will be shared with Babergh electorate before the merger referendum takes place. This is now expected to be in the summer of 2018, possibly in June. If the vote is in favour of merger the decision must then be supported by a majority of Babergh Councillors and Mid Suffolk before it can be submitted to the Secretary of State as a recommendation. Only he can take the final decision and I would not now expect this to happen before 2020/21.

Disposal of Corks Lane Buildings – Members were briefed on the disposal recommendation for the Corks Lane facility on Friday 12th January 18 in a nutshell there is no appetite/interest for an office or hotel commercial solution for the Corks Lane site. This leaves the single option of a housing development. Assuming that it happens the listed buildings will be retained and some of the 1980s extension (including the Council Chamber) will probably be recommended for demolition. If the current outline plan is approved (lot of water to go under the bridge before that happens) we are likely to have 50+ flats/houses built there. As part of that process the Council will have to decide if it is prepared to take the risk and develop the site itself with the expectation of profit, or whether it should just be sold off. The key is to ensure that whatever solution is finally approved, it is viable in terms of a suitable return for Babergh DC. That is our responsibility to Babergh residents.

6. Reports –

- i) **Footpaths** - There is nothing to report on at the parish council meeting and I send my regrets that I will not be attending the above meeting.
- ii) **Tree Warden** – Joy is going to contact the PCC to discuss new trees within the Church Grounds and will let us know what her findings are.
- iii) **Conservation** - Buckles meadow - Colin Goodchild has agreed to harrow and cut the meadow when he does the Old Rectory. Hopefully we will have a good display of orchids later in the year.

Hunty's Vale - The buckthorn plants were delivered and planted by Richard the same afternoon. Richard made a very thorough job as the picture shows. They are quite small so I think we shall be some time before we see any brimstone butterflies. I have promised to let Kevin know our progress. Otherwise the meadow is looking good.

The Drift - Both the path and the trees look very good and continue to grow. Brian has planted lots of snowdrops further down. All in all the conservation area is fulfilling all expectations thanks to the work of Richard and to Brian and Joy in the lower area. –

Questions from the public:

Concerns were raised with regard to the water on Naughton Road. It was reported that Landex will take no responsibility for this and that we have reported this to the Highway agency who told us that this area was not there responsibility. Concerns were raised about the amount of Dog Poo on the footpaths and within the village itself. Clerk to create a new letter to be posted through doors in the village. David Dray to create and distribute new signs with the help of Mandy Squirrel. Also we will look into the cost of a camera.

The bollards outside the bungalows in The Street are damaged and laying on the ground. Clerk to report to the highways agency, also to be brought to the attention of the Highways agent at the speed/safety meeting.

7. Action Updates

Telephone Box	No progress due to bad weather
Standing Orders	Postponed
Speed Watch	David Dray has now had the meeting and been told that it would be difficult to justify the cost as only one position is available at the end of Naughton Road and should not go ahead.

8. Planning - External Boiler on Naughton Road is the only planning put forward.

9. Health & Safety – None

10. Accounts and Payments - – As of our last statement from TSB we have a balance of £9,517.28 with no outstanding cheques. I have received an invoice from Babergh for the Dog Bin Service which is the same as last year for £371.40

Next Meeting

11th July 2018 at 7.45 pm, Village Hall
Meeting closed at 9.05pm

Signed Date.....