

MINUTES OF THE WHATFIELD PARISH COUNCIL MEETING HELD AT WHATFIELD VILLAGE HALL 28th November 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 C. Curtis	Parish Councillor
Mrs. Lynn King	Parish Clerk
Mr. R Lindsay	County Councillor

1, Apologies for Absence

Mr. A. Ferguson	District Councillor
Mrs. M Eastman	Conservation Warden
Mrs J. Green	Tree Warden

2. Matters arising from Minutes of meeting held 3rd October 2018 Minutes of 3rd October 2018 meeting were accepted and signed. Prop Graham Smith: Sec: Charlotte Curtis Unanimous.

3. Correspondence – We have received a request from Whatfield PCC asking us if we could help by contributing towards the gate to the field on Glebe Land. Prop: David Cross Sec: Helen Landon

4. County Councillor's Report - Latest £11m cuts proposed from next year's budget,

Reduce training in Trading Standards, cut the entire £400k core budget for Citizens Advice, stop printing roadside bus timetables and cut rural bus subsidy, stop roadside sign cleaning, cut winter support fleet for highways, review arrangements for grass cutting, review street lighting. Council tax to go up by maximum allowed 4% (incl 1% for social care). A predicted overspend of £8.6m for the current financial year has dropped to £7.5m thanks to some savings but the council will probably still have to dip into reserves at the end of the year to cover the funding gap.

Newish pothole policy

In August Highways considered the prioritization process it uses to repair potholes. Its current approach is to fix the most unsafe potholes first. "The unfortunate consequence of this is that we have to return to a particular area at a later date to repair the less severe potholes. "This is not an efficient use of resources, and is frustrating to the public."

They are therefore going to pilot a different prioritization approach over this coming winter, for services for West Suffolk (including our area). They say they will still take a risk based approach, but will seek to repair more defects in a single visit. If successful, it will roll out to the rest of the county.

Road closures signage and diversions

They are also looking see if they can improve the co-ordination of road closures to stop over-runs and improve signage. A new head of highways is due to be hired v shortly. I have specifically asked that notices of closures such as the recent one in Bildeston which was ten miles from the actual roadworks in Stowmarket, mention the location of the roadworks, so that people are not diverted needlessly. I am told this has been fed back to the traffic management company which the utility uses.

Abandoned and unremoved signs

They are urging you to please report signs that are abandoned on networkassurance@suffolk.gov.uk and if at all possible with photos because utilities can be fined for these.

Period poverty

A Labour motion to ask the council to spend £15k to provide free tampons and towels in all maintained schools was rejected by the administration, however they did agree to the other half of the motion which was to write to the Chancellor to take VAT off sanitary products.

Renewables

Similarly a motion proposed by my political group (LibDem, Green and Independent) asking for the council to draw up a report into running a “smart grid” in Suffolk, which would allow energy from renewables to be stored in batteries, and to ensure at least 50% of all the council’s energy use will come from renewables by 2025 was also watered down, with the target taken out.

Traffic calming in the village

I think we had a constructive meeting with highways officers and members of the parish council in the village regarding traffic calming measures. I will do all I can to push things along with Highways with regard to getting a quote for the work, so that you can proceed with seeking funding, as agreed on a 50:50 - parish council: my locality budget – basis.

5. District Councillor’s Report - Boundary Commission

I can now give you my final report on the Boundary Commission. The number of District Councillors will come down from 43 to 32 in May 19 and the new Ward (SE Cosford) will comprise the parishes of – Aldham, Elmsett, Whatfield, Nedging & Naughton, Kersey, Semer, Chelsworth and Lindsey – two more than the present arrangement.

As regards my position, I have re-joined the main Babergh Conservatives and having offered myself for reselection, I have been adopted as the Conservative candidate for the new SE Cosford Ward.

Private Sector Housing

You will be pleased to know that following a recalculation using the gov’t formula, Babergh DC now **has a 5 year land supply** for the private sector housing. This will allow the Planning Committee more flexibility when assessing planning applications than has been the case over the last two years or so.

FYI - I am now back on the Planning Committee.

Merger of Babergh & MSDCs

You may be aware that the proposal to merge MS with Babergh was put on hold until Suffolk CC had the results of a study initiated by Colin Noble (the then Leader) into a Unitary Authority solution for Suffolk. The new Leader (Matthew Hicks) is less enthusiastic about the concept and he has pressed the “pause” button with the study.

My expectation is that merger Babergh/MS will be back on the Agenda in the not too far distant future but when I raised this at a recent Council Meeting I was assured that it would not be on the agenda before May 2019 when we have the next local elections.

Car Parking in Babergh

You may have seen articles in the local papers suggesting that car parking charges are about to be introduced into Babergh. To resolve any uncertainty, I email John Ward, the Leader of Babergh DC, and asked him directly for his position on this one. He has assured me (in writing) that he does not see a case for bringing in car parking charges in Babergh.

Disposal of Corks Lane Buildings

The recommendation for redevelopment of the old Babergh Council offices (about 56 houses/flats) will go before the Planning Committee next month. I will keep you advised.

Other Good News Headlines

- Following the move to Ipswich, Babergh has now (at last) agreed to provide “pop up points” i.e. support facilities in the Hadleigh library (one half day a week – Thursday afternoons 1 pm to 5 pm) for ward members who need advice and don’t want/can’t get to Sudbury. Start date was Thursday 18th October 18, and as a trial it will run for 3 months.
 - Please try to get this around the Parish
 - Please advise me if you find it’s not working

The 100% business rate retention trial for Suffolk in 2018/19 has been a valuable tool for important projects but will not continue in its present format. Instead, we expect another trial to be implemented for 2019/20 with a 75% retention.

- Budget pressure is manageable currently with a requirement to find approximately £2M over the next 4-year period. This can be achieved without cutting back on services. The next budget brief is in Jan 19. I will keep you advised.
- A major redevelopment plan for Sudbury has been launched by Babergh DC. Details can be found on the website.

6. Reports –

i) **Footpaths** - Footpaths are, for the time of year, in very good condition, we have just one issue with footpath No 3, alongside sewer bed, being that the farm traffic has completely destroyed it, unusable as a footpath, Lynn has been in touch with Dairy Farm regarding this, they have acknowledged receiving email, and have passed messages onto those concerned, has had little effect, shooting parties still using the whole width of clear way, Unfortunately there is not an alternative apart

from grassed area Whatfield side of the sewer, through to the steps, not sure who owns the middle field, I suppose it's Buckle, seems to own everything else, Unless we're given permission to use it there is no way through,. As far as I know we haven't been given an alternative whilst it's impassable. Still working on replacing footpath posts and signs .

ii) **Tree Warden** – No Report

iii) **Conservation** - The weather has not been very conducive for walking and there is a great deal of mud. Buckles meadow is very walkable and Richard has kept Huntys in good condition. The footpath on the Drift will be walkable when the weather improves. The seat opposite Joys has been put in place which provides a perfect view into the valley. Joy has been seeing a couple of barn owls but is unsure whether they are a pair. Further down by the river rubbish is often dumped, not all of it pleasant.

7. Action Updates

Neighbourhood Plan	Helen informed the Council that she has over 30 villagers on the committee and they are having regular meetings. Information available on website.
Village Camera	David placed the camera on Richard Mowers land for 48 hours. Thrilled that we captured 494 pictures of gently falling leaves, a couple of crows but no Owls. Owls are back so we will install it again.
Allotments	All the rent is now in and we have only 2 full plots and 1 half plot vacant. No competition this year.
Telephone Box	Is now empty, A plywood back has been installed. Awaiting shelving. Helen to supply.
Standing Orders	Charlotte has now got a draft for the PC to look at.

8. Dates for next Year **Agreed** Prop: Helen Landon Sec: Charlotte Curtis unanimous

9. Precept **Agreed** and signed by Chair and two council members Prop: David Dray Sec: David Cross

10. Planning - **No new planning applications.**

11. Health & Safety – None

12. Accounts and Payments As of our last statement from TSB we have a balance of £9885.00

Next Meeting

20th March 2019 at 7.45 pm Village Hall

Meeting closed at 9.15pm

Signed Date.....