

# MINUTES OF THE WHATFIELD PARISH COUNCIL MEETING HELD AT WHATFIELD VILLAGE HALL 27<sup>th</sup> November 2019

---

## **Present**

Mr. P. Whittle	Chairman
Mr. D. Cross	Vice Chairman
Mr. D. Dray	Parish Councillor
Mr. G. Smith	Parish Councillor
Mrs. Lynn King	Parish Clerk

## **1, Apologies for Absence**

Mr. R Lindsay	County Councillor
Mr. L. Jameson	District Councillor
Mr S Clifford	Parish Councillor
Mrs C. Curtis	Parish Councillor
Mrs J. Green	Tree Warden
Mrs. M Eastman	Conservation Warden

**2. Matters arising from Minutes of meeting held 9<sup>th</sup> October 2019** Minutes of 9<sup>th</sup> October 2019 meeting were accepted and signed. . It was noted that Kay Carter's name was incorrectly put onto the minutes, clerk to change. Prop Graham Smith Sec: David Dray Unanimous.

**3. Correspondence** - We have had a letter from Richard Mower thanking us for our donation. We have had an email from the PCC asking us to decorate as church window and an email from the Village Hall Committee asking for a contribution towards the new car parking. Clerk to email Trish Whittle to confirm Parish Council's church window. It was agreed to donate £1,000 to help with providing funds for new car park. Proposed David Dray sec: Paul Whittle unanimous.

## **4. County Councillor's Report - Cabinet reshuffle**

The cabinet member for finance Richard Smith has quit his post after what was reportedly a row over raising the council tax (he wanted a freeze). This triggered a reshuffle. Gordon Jones has moved over to take Cllr Smith's role at finance. That in turn meant Mary Evans has been moved to take Gordon Jones' role in charge of education. In turn Andrew Reid has been appointed cabinet member for highways and transport in place of Mary Evans. Cllr Reid was chair of the pension committee.

## **School bus travel to be reviewed**

Mary Evans in her new role in charge of children and young people, issued an apology over the way the change to the school travel policy had been handled and said it would be reviewed by the head of the county's fire service Nick Hardingham. It is not clear however, whether this is a review of the whole policy or just of the way it was implemented. You will recall there were hundreds of appeals – there is still a huge backlog - and many children left not knowing whether they had a bus to their school at the start of term last month. Our group joined Labour to support a motion which asked for the policy to be modified to ensure an end to "split villages" and to ensure siblings still got free bus to their siblings school. This was voted down by the administration.

## **Public buses**

My one allowed question at full council was to the new cabinet member of highways Andrew Reid to ask if he could meet passenger groups for the three bus routes (the 112, 461/462 and 120) in my division under threat from subsidy withdrawal. He has subsequently said he can not currently meet owing to the general election moratorium.

## **Impact of general election moratorium**

The election moratorium started on 6 November, and consequently a number of decisions and meetings at Suffolk County Council have been delayed.

Budget scrutiny has been delayed from December to January. The long-awaited children's centre consultation will need to wait until the new year. We still don't have any information about when exactly this consultation will be ready. Similarly, the council will not be able to publish the first draft of the Ipswich Northern Bypass business case until after the election.

Finally, the Council has made the decision to postpone any meetings of the Climate Emergency Policy Development Panel until the new year.

### **Health visitors**

Our political group has been approached by very concerned Suffolk health visitors who revealed that their numbers have been cut by 41 from 117 in the wake of a new in-house contract in the county which is £1m cheaper than the previous contract. Another of the change is that 3 of the 5 mandatory visits to parents of children are no longer done by a qualified health visitor. We proposed a motion asking them to change this policy and ensure all visits were done by the same health visitor. This was also rejected.

### **Plans for civil parking enforcement across Suffolk**

Civil parking enforcement is expected to be rolled out across Suffolk from 31 January 2020. Currently Ipswich Borough Council is already responsible for parking enforcement, however across the rest of the county it is the police who are responsible.

Under the new plans, West Suffolk Council and East Suffolk Council will take on the responsibility of parking enforcement in their own areas. IBC and WSC will also cover the Mid-Suffolk and Babergh area on an agreed operational split: WSC will operate in the northern two-thirds of Mid Suffolk and the western half of Babergh, and IBC will operate in the remaining areas.

A consistent approach is being planned, to ensure that fines are the same across the whole county

### **Rights of Way Improvement Plan published**

Suffolk County Council's Rights of Way Improvement Plan (2020-30) was agreed by the Cabinet on 6 November.

The delivery plan focuses on four key areas: managing green access infrastructure; improving green access infrastructure; promoting green access; and developing healthy and sustainable communities.

Measures proposed by the plan include creating a digital map of the county's footpaths and bridleways and a new system to prioritise maintenance of highly-used routes. The plan also focuses on sustainable travel choices and the health benefits of walking and cycling.

### **5. District Councillor's Report - Babergh Name Change**

The extraordinary council meeting planned for the 22<sup>nd</sup> October was cancelled at the request of Cabinet leader John Ward. Councillor Ward, who has been the main driver behind the name change, decided to withdraw the motion for now. It was felt that it was unlikely to get the 2/3 majority that would be required.

By withdrawing the motion the idea can be kicked into the long grass and resurrected at a later date. Councillor Ward is still keen on the idea and feels that the name change would be beneficial for the district, bringing it into line with the other districts in Suffolk. Cllr Ward said: "We have received valuable feedback both for and against the proposals over recent weeks that will help in our future discussions and we are extremely grateful for the free publicity we have received in the meantime, both nationally and internationally, that has helped people understand exactly where Babergh is located, and how to pronounce it!"

### ***Paperless council***

The environmental task force that was set up after the July Climate Emergency motion has now sat for the first time. The first decision that has been made was to ensure we are digital first. Senior staff and councillors are being challenged to go paperless for council and committee papers. Distributing hard copies of these papers' costs more than £50,000 a year.

Having a digital first approach is an expectation that will also be an ask for all staff in their day to day roles and the council will continue to encourage residents to self-serve via the 24/7 resources available online. Our public council and committee meetings provide a great platform to set an example about how we work in a digital way.

The task force is a joint committee between Babergh and Mid Suffolk and is due to sit monthly until March.

### ***Parking Motion***

During the last council meeting a motion was put on notice to review the parking in the district. With continued housing growth planned for the area it was felt that a review of capacity will be needed and where any additional capacity should be placed. This is an important issue for the area and had already been raised with me by an Elmsett resident. As such all options should be looked at while working with our partners Suffolk County Council and the Town/Parish Councils.

However, concerns were raised by the Green Party that extra capacity should not be the default setting and it is the level of capacity that should be considered. Before increasing the parking and ultimately the cars on the road we should be looking

at what options are available to provide residents with a serious alternative to driving. This will include public transport and cycling, particularly for residents of the towns, who may not need to drive every time. With the backing of all the other parties, including the Conservatives, we amended the motion slightly to bring these alternatives to the forefront. This motion will now go before Cabinet for consideration.

#### *Community Infrastructure Levy funds handed out*

Communities across Babergh and Mid Suffolk have received a £791,000 funding boost for local projects including a community gallery at Gainsborough's House in Sudbury, as well as a new car park and bus shelter. Neighbourhood Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funding totalling £492,425 was collected between April and September this year and has now been handed over to 51 town and parish councils across the districts to support local community projects. Two parish areas that are governed by a parish meeting also received funds to spend in their areas. This year, both councils also approved bids to give a further £299,160 to seven local infrastructure projects funded through District CIL.

#### *Free Swimming – Hadleigh, Sudbury & Stowmarket*

Both councils extended their free swims offer during the October half term and plan to do this again during the Christmas holidays. This follows a successful summer take up, which saw thousands of under 17s take part, equating to more than 14,000 swims across the two districts.

Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils are extending their free swims offer for under 17s to help promote healthier and active lifestyles in the districts.

Free swimming will now be available during the Christmas holidays from 20 December to 5 January 2020 inclusive at the following centres:

- Kingfisher Leisure Centre, Sudbury
- Hadleigh Pool and Leisure
- Mid Suffolk Leisure Centre, Stowmarket
- Stradbroke Swimming Pool and Fitness Centre

New users in Babergh will need to sign up for an Abbeycroft Leisure Free Swimming Membership in order to claim their free swim.

## **6. Reports –**

**i) Footpaths** Footpaths as good as can be for the time of year, footpath 3, as last year, impassable on foot, no attempt whatsoever by the farmer, Buckle, to leave space for walkers, pheasants more important.

**ii) Tree Warden** – Just like to say national tree week from 23rd to 1st. It is a celebration of the start of the tree planting season, a great chance for us all to do something very positive about climate change. Planting a tree in your garden can actually lower blood pressure, help with stress, muscle tension and help with your mental health, not mention the wild life it brings. All these things can be very uplifting and life changing. Just a few things about our tree warden's AGM forum. Discussion was, climate change, planting of trees, tree biosecurity, summaries of new research into ash die back and other problems like Processionary moth were covered, I will inform Whatfield parish council in New Year's 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.

**Questions from the Public** – None.

## **7. Action Updates**

**Allotments** All paid but we lost one full plot holder and one half making a total of 2 full and 2 half plots available.

**Village Sign** Needs cleaning. Graham and David Cross to look at it.

**Trees for Village** Replacement Flowering Cherry Tree to be planted by former Girl Guides. PC to pay David Dray prop: David Cross Sec: unanimous. Graham to speak to Simon re trees for village.

8. **Neighbourhood Plan** No update

9. **Planning** - Clerk to send response with reference to the development of Hadleigh Quarry. State our concerns over the increase in traffic through the village of large heavy Lorries with no footpaths.

10. **Health & Safety** – None

11. **Accounts and Payments** As of the 10<sup>th</sup> November we have a balance of £13383.00 plus I have banked the cheques for the allotments for £282.50 making a grand total of £13,665.50 We have two invoices to pay one from CAS for our annual insurance for £397.88 and also our annual subscription to the website for £60.00.

12. Precept agreed and signed by Chair, Clerk and two members of Parish Council.

**Next Meeting**

22<sup>nd</sup> January 2020 at 7.45 pm Village Hall

Meeting closed at 9.10pm

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