

# MINUTES OF THE WHATFIELD PARISH COUNCIL MEETING HELD AT WHATFIELD VILLAGE HALL 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2020

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## **Present**

Mr. P. Whittle	Chairman
Mr. D. Cross	Vice Chairman
Mr. D. Dray	Parish Councillor
Mr. G. Smith	Parish Councillor
Mr S Clifford	Parish Councillor
Mr. L. Jameson	District Councillor
Mrs. Lynn King	Parish Clerk

## **1, Apologies for Absence**

Mr. R Lindsay	County Councillor
Mrs C. Curtis	Parish Councillor
Mrs J. Green	Tree Warden
Mrs. M Eastman	Conservation Warden

**2. To elect and nominate a new Parish Councillor** – We have two people interested in the position and it was agreed that both parties should send the Parish Council a brief letter/email detailing why they would like to join the Parish Council. Clerk to send email. Prop: David Cross Sec: David Dray Unanimous.

**3. Matters arising from Minutes of meeting held 27<sup>th</sup> November 2019** Minutes of 27<sup>th</sup> November 2019 meeting were accepted and signed. . Prop Graham Smith Sec: David Dray Unanimous.

**4. Correspondence** -. Babergh have confirmed our application for Precept and the first payment will be on the 1<sup>st</sup> April 2020. We have had an email from James Buckle asking if the village would like to have a tractor ride on the 25<sup>th</sup> June at 6.30pm.

**5 Presentation from James Lawson** a presentation by James Lawson from Lawson Planning Partnership Ltd on the proposed extended building line for the plot behind the old pub was given to the PC council, and around 50 members of the public. The PC once again stressed the need to liaise with Whatfield NPG

## **6. County Councillor's Report –**

### **County Budget 2020-21**

Council precept to rise by 4% (2% general and 2% social care)

This leaves slight surplus for “investment” of £3.5m – available this year only.

- £3.0m – Suffolk 2020 Fund - Investment available for projects related to carbon reduction, carbon offset, road safety, natural environment, built environment, innovation and use of technology. Must have a cabinet member sponsor.

- £0.5m – Highways Investment Fund - Improving road sign and marking visibility, Refreshing road markings along main routes through villages and those supporting sustainable transport options such as cycling in urban areas. Minor repairs and resetting of twisted signs

### **Citizens Advice – another stay of grace**

Rather than remove the Citizen's Advice grant (currently £0.184m) entirely in 2020-21, as last planned, the Council has committed to provide £0.12m each year for the next three years. Citizen's Advice will also receive a second year of funding from the CCGs, which equates to an additional £0.184m for 2020-21

## **Future bus project**

At a Scrutiny meeting in December, the deputy cabinet member for transport announced that the council was planning to bid for around £20 million from the Department for Transport for an electric bus pilot scheme. If the bid is successful, the council has said that it plans to launch the pilot scheme within 12-18 months in the Bury St Edmunds area.

## **First new SEND units announced**

In January 2019, Suffolk County Council agreed to provide an additional £45.1m to fund additional school and specialist units for children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities.

The first 10 specialist units, providing 168 spaces, are due to open in September 2020.

## **Buses under threat**

I have been corresponding with Andrew Reid about the three threatened buses in Cosford, including the 461/2 and the 120, suggesting that the only solution would be to restore the subsidy. At this stage he has said he wants to explore other solutions. A meeting with his deputy, myself and bus officers is being arranged.

## **7. District Councillor's Report 2020/21 Budget Summary**

Babergh Councillors are to review the 2020/21 budget in the coming weeks. Details can be found on the Council website (<https://www.babergh.gov.uk/news/babergh-councillors-consider-budget-for-202021/>), but the main headlines include –

- **A proposed increase of 3% to council tax** – equivalent to just 10p a week or £5 over the course of a year for a Band D property (increases range from £3.33 per annum for the smallest Band A property to £10 for the largest Band H property)
- **A change to empty property discount**, reducing the period that unoccupied and unfurnished properties pay discounted council tax from three months to 28 days.
- **An increase in long-stay car parking charges from £2 to £3**. However, short-stay parking for up to three hours will remain free at many of our town centre car parks.
- **Council house rents to increase by 2.7% meaning a £2.19 per week increase** for tenants although, even with this increase, rents are still lower than in 2015/6.
- **Sheltered housing tenants also face an increase of £2 a week** on their bills, but their utility payments remain static for another year.
- **No change in the Council Tax Reduction Scheme** that sees poorest residents pay just 5% of their bill
- **Councillors are also considering the introduction of penalties to tackle council tax fraud**, alongside the adoption of a new protocol produced by Citizens Advice and Local Government Association for the collection of council tax arrears, in order to help those in genuine need.

A payment of £1,055k will be received from the New Homes Bonus (NHB) compared with £683k in 2019/20, an increase of £372k. The NHB is due to be phased out by 2023/24. We are moving in right direction to remove reliance on NHB funding and generate a surplus to invest in the district.

Of this £1,055K, £513K is being used to balance the budget and £542K is being used to supplement the transformation fund.

The Housing Revenue account (HRA) is looking healthy with a strategic reserve of £12.7M.

The HRA Capital programme includes –

- Significant investment in new build and acquisition properties - £26.9m up to 2023/24
- Working with Icenl to identify development sites
- £24.3m proposed spend on maintenance and improvement programme to 2023/24

The Cabinet papers were in the public domain from 8th January. Cabinet Draft Budget report is due by 16th January. The budget will then go before Overview and Scrutiny and back to Cabinet before coming to Council on the 26th February.

## **Enforcement Service Update January/February 2020**

- The Council is currently undertaking a review of its enforcement processes and procedures. Whilst we're undertaking the review, we may take a little longer time than usual to respond to, acknowledge reports received and provide updates

**8**      **Reports –**

**i)      Footpaths**      Sorry nothing to report this time, haven't been round the walks but I guess they are all pretty boggy and flooded.

**ii)      Tree Warden** – It nice be writing this report on love frosty Suffolk morning, it's an improvement on the very wet weather and floods we been having, that makes all more important to plant trees.

Councillor David Dray has been encouraging local people to plant trees in their garden by offering a " free trees", I had some emails from local land owners, who are doing their best help with climate change by planting trees on their land, our conservation team have planted some buckthorn to help the wildlife, and councillor Simon Clifford has planted 30 trees, so far Whatfield has managed to plant about 100 trees in last three months, it may be small amount but every tree helps.

I must say we are lucky we don't have bush fires like they been having in Blue Haven in New South Wales Australia, my niece has been send me photos it very worrying.

"As promised, I was going tell councillor about ash dieback".

Unfortunately it has arrived in Whatfield and has killed several, older trees, one which I can see from my kitchen window, it belongs to a local farmer.

"Ash dieback is a fungus, woodland Trust suggest burying or burning the leaves to disrupt the life lifecycle of fungus as it take can several years for tree too die if it older tree.

Current advice is if tree dent pose a threat to health and safety, leave it standing as the wildlife will thrive on the dead wood.

"The tree wardens in Suffolk are holding a training session on recognizing tree diseases, this sounds a great idea."

"I let councillor know about some of the other tree diseases on next report".

**iii)      Conservation** – Not a lot to report, I've asked Colin if he will do Buckles when he does the Old Rectory but I've had no reply

**Questions from the Public – None.**

**9.      Action Updates**      None

**10.      Neighbourhood Plan**      No update

**11.      Planning -**      Objection sent with regard to Hadleigh Quarry. Re-application of 12a Wheatfields

**12.      Health & Safety** – None

**13.      Accounts and Payments**      As of the 10<sup>th</sup> January 2020 we have a balance of £13.033.92. An unbanked cheque of £416.17 from Compass Point with reference to the NP. As agreed a cheque for £1,000 as a donation to the Village Hall for the Car Park works and a cheque for £44.99 for the purchase of the new Cherry Tree on the Green. To be signed for. It was agreed that from the 1<sup>st</sup> February the Clerks hourly pay should be increased to £10.37 in accordance with NALC national guild lines. Prop: Paul Whittle Sec: David Cross unanimous

**Next Meeting**

18<sup>th</sup> March 2020 at 7.45 pm Village Hall

Meeting closed at 9.00pm

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