



**MINUTES OF THE PARISH COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON
MONDAY 21st AUGUST 2023 at 7:00PM**

Present: Cllr J Bell, Cllr I Urwin, Cllr L Tacey, Cllr J Mew, Cllr S Alexander,
Clerk – J Challis, RFO – S Budd, CC Cllr Fleming, DC Cllr Warboys

Apologies: Cllr Tranter

1 Chair's welcome and to consider and approve apologies for absence

Cllr Bell welcomed everyone to the meeting, and apologies received from Cllr Tranter were approved unanimously. Councillors also noted that the RFO had advised she would be arriving at the meeting late.

2 To receive Declarations of Interest on Agenda items

None received.

3 To received Requests for Dispensations on Agenda items

None received.

4 To resolve the draft minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on Monday 17th July 2023 are a true and correct record

Cllr Bell proposed approval of the minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on 17th July 2023, including the 'IN CAMERA' discussion which was minuted separately due to the confidential nature of the items discussed, as a true and correct record; seconded by Cllr Mew and approved unanimously.

7:02pm Cllr Tacey and Cllr Alexander arrived and confirmed approval of the 17th July 2023 draft minutes including the 'IN CAMERA' section minuted separately. Cllr Tacey and Cllr Alexander also confirmed that they have no declarations of interest on agenda items and therefore no requests for dispensations.

5 Report from County Councillor

CC Cllr Fleming had no written report to present due to having just arrived back from annual leave. She advised that a pre planning application has been submitted for the redevelopment of Shepherd's Grove Industrial Estate in Stanton. This is in addition to planning application DC/22/2190HYB for a used car storage facility at Shepherds Grove.

CC Cllr Fleming also advised that she is due to attend a meeting in September with Jo Churchill MP to discuss the outcome of Sir Bernard Jenkin MP's meeting with Grant Shapps MP regarding National Grid's Norwich to Tilbury proposals.

Cllr Bell said that a resident has contacted the Clerk to request the Council consider installation of a zebra crossing near Westview Gardens, to make it safer for children walking to and from school.

7:06pm DC Cllr Warboys arrived.

CC Cllr Fleming said that she would need a plan detailing exactly where the crossing is needed, but that there is strict criteria from Highways that the proposal would need to meet, and it would also need to be supported by the school. CC Cllr Fleming said she will send the criteria threshold documents to the Clerk. Cllr Tacey said she would send a map to the Clerk to forward to CC Cllr Fleming, showing the exact location.

CC Cllr Fleming said she has seen the disappointing news that the 456 bus service from Gislingham to Diss is due to cease because of lack of support, and advised she will speak to County Council Officers to see if there is anything they can do to help the viability of this particular service. Following the meeting, the Parish Council were advised that the 456 bus service from Gislingham to Diss will now operate until March 2024.

Cllr Bell thanked CC Cllr Fleming for her verbal report.

6 Report from District Councillor

DC Cllr Warboys read highlights from his report, a copy of which can be found as an addendum at the end of the minutes.

7:18pm the RFO arrived.

Cllr Bell thanked DC Cllr Warboys for his report.

7:20pm CC Cllr Fleming and DC Cllr Warboys left the meeting.

7 Public Participation Session (15 minutes set aside)

No members of the public present.

8 Chair's Report

- Cllr Bell said that she attended parts 1 and 2 of SALC's (Suffolk Association of Local Councils) online new 'New Councillor' training sessions, reporting them to be very good with lots of helpful links for new councillors included within the delegate packs.
- Due to Cllr Tranter's absence as Chair of the Staffing Panel, agenda item 24 the 'IN CAMERA' section to report on the Clerk and RFO's recent appraisals, will be deferred to the September meeting. However following feedback during the appraisals, Cllr Bell is conducting an assessment of the review dates of the council's policies and reports, in order to prevent them coinciding with the financial year end. She will send her proposed amended review dates to councillors, Clerk and RFO for their comments.

9 Clerk's Report

- Planning application update: DC/23/03098 and DC/23/03099; both awaiting decision.
- MSDC have installed the new grit bins and the CCTV signage.
- War Memorial; the grant application process is ongoing.
- Verges opposite the Lovells Development: the issues with potholes and ruts where the verges have eroded, have been reported to Lovells and Suffolk Highways. Awaiting update.
- Mill Street Bridge report ref: CR416124, Suffolk Highways have provided the following update: *We have unfortunately had a spate of accident damage to bridges throughout the County in recent months and therefore have had to prioritise repairs accordingly. Our contractor has recently secured some additional resource to deal with the backlog of*

repairs required and I'm hopeful that the repairs at Gislingham will be completed within the next 6 weeks. As you are aware, there are temporary make-safe arrangements in place, which will be regularly checked/maintained until the permanent repairs can be undertaken.

- Cllr Alexander has received spam emails to her PC email address, purporting to be from other councillors, however the email address they have been sent from is not a council email address. CAS (Community Action Suffolk), the council's email provider, have advised to delete any such emails and block the sender's address.
- An email has been received from a resident regarding difficulties crossing the road near Westview Gardens when walking to school; addressed within agenda item 5 CC Cllr's Report.
- An email has been received from a resident regarding misuse of a sonic nausea electronic disruption device. The Clerk advised the resident to report it to the Police, and Stefan Henriksen Community Support Engagement Officer, has confirmed that he is now dealing with the complaint. Reports can be made to the Police on 101 or online at www.suffolk.police.uk/contact-us.
- Further to the 17th July 2023 meeting, the request regarding extension of the 30mph limit on Thornham Road by the Lovells Development, has been forwarded to CC Cllr Fleming to ascertain whether the County Council and Highways would support it.
- Play equipment/surfacing CIL Bid Application – a Teams meeting was held on 24th July 2023 with Christine Thurlow MSDC Professional Lead – Key Sites and Infrastructure, and Jo Moye MSDC Infrastructure. Cllr Bell was also in attendance. It was confirmed that unfortunately the funds from the Lovells Development which the council is trying to access, do need to be dealt with as District CIL rather than Neighbourhood CIL, also meaning that only 75% funding can be applied for. The Occupation Licence, for the Playground on Charity Meadow, between the PC and GUC needs to be extended because it is due to expire in 2030 and needs to have at least 25 years left on it for a District CIL Bid to be considered. A lawful Development Certificate is required to satisfy the question mark over whether planning permission was needed when the play equipment was originally installed in 2006. There is also an issue because the CIL Bid is now retrospective. Christine Thurlow will meet with Richard Kendrew who has been progressing the bid with the Clerk, and report further once they have given the Bid further consideration. In the meantime the council needs to address the Occupation Licence and Lawful Development Certificate.
- S106 Application for new VAS devices; no update as yet.
- Street Furniture Licence for a bench by the bus stop – ongoing; the Clerk will obtain quotations for a wooden bench.
- Walsham le Willows PC have sent an e newsletter with details on a 20s plenty campaign which they are requesting nearby councils to consider participating in. This is due to the higher volume of traffic expected from the Shepherds Grove development. The e newsletter was circulated to councillors.
- The presentation slides from MSDC's recent CIL online training sessions have been received and shared with councillors.
- Fixing of fares for Hackney Carriages under Section 65 of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976; MSDC is reviewing the table of fares for Hackney Carriages and has invited comments by 28th August 2023. Councillors confirmed they have no comments.
- MSDC have forwarded details of their 'Free Trees, Hedgerows and Wildflowers Scheme' which they are continuing for 2024 to help deliver on their Biodiversity Action Plan, support wildlife at a time when it is under great pressure, and make the district a better place for all. The details were shared with councillors and the Tree Warden for Gislingham.
- The ESO (Electricity System Operator) is conducting a study into electricity network infrastructure in East Anglia. Full details of the assessment are available on their website: [East Anglia study | ESO \(nationalgrideso.com\)](http://EastAngliastudy|ESO(nationalgrideso.com))
- The Clerk has been advised that the bolt to one side of the churchyard gates was damaged by someone trying to fit a grass cutter through without opening both gates. The PCC believe this was caused by the PC's grass cutting contractor. The contractor has

said that he will speak to his grass cutters but is unable to so at the moment due to annual leave. In the meantime the PCC have had the bolt repaired at a cost of £20.00 for which they are seeking reimbursement.

ACTION

- **Clerk to pursue report to Lovells Development and Highways regarding verges**
- **Play Equipment/surfacing CIL Bid application - Clerk to contact GUC to request the lease be extended for a minimum of 25 years.**
- **Clerk to obtain quotations for a wooden bench to be installed by the bus stop**
- **Clerk to advise PCC that the grass cutting contractor will respond to their grievance regarding the damaged gate bolt, once he has spoken to all his grass cutters**

10 RFO's Report

- The accounts to 31st July 2023 were prepared by the RFO and sent to councillors prior to the meeting.
- The External Auditor has said that the Asset Register needs to show separate columns for the purchase price and insurance price, including any items that were gifted to the council. It then needs to be minuted as reviewed and approved at the next parish council meeting. Cllr Bell said that this would incur approximately an extra 2 hours of work for the RFO, which councillors approved unanimously.
- The RFO reported that she attended MSDC's online CIL training sessions.
- The standing order has now been successfully set up for IHT (InnHouse Technology), the first payment will be collected on 21st September 2023, and the outstanding payments paid by cheque.

ACTION – RFO to update the Asset Register as per the External Auditor's instructions, for approval at the September 2023 meeting.

11 Budget 2023/24 Review

The RFO presented a review of the Budget and Reserves 2023/24, which was also shared with councillors prior to the meeting.

Cllr Bell proposed approval of the Budget and Reserves 2023/24 review; seconded by Cllr Urwin and approved unanimously.

ACTION – RFO to update the Budget and Reserves 2023/24, and forward to the Clerk to publish

12 Neighbourhood Watch Report (Clerk)

The Neighbourhood Watch Report can be found as an addendum at the end of the minutes.

13 Footpath Warden's Report (Martyn Bryant)

The Footpath Warden's Report can be found as an addendum at the end of the minutes. During the meeting the Clerk received an email from a resident regarding loose dogs on a footpath in the village, which appear to access the footpath directly from a neighbouring property. The Clerk will clarify the footpath number and speak to the Footpath Warden before advising the resident further. Cllr Tacey also reported that she is aware of the issue with the dogs on this particular footpath, and that in addition, the hedge/undergrowth causes an obstruction for walkers and needs cutting back.

ACTION – Clerk to confirm number of the footpath and speak to the Footpath Warden as above

14 SID (Speed Indicator Device) Report

The SID report can be found as an addendum at the end of the minutes.

15 Approval of Speed Watch Team as Parish Council Volunteers, and quotation for repairs to Speed Watch Gun

Deferred.

16 To consider and approve expenditure for planting of Village Triangle

Request received from the volunteer who looks after this area to spend up to £50.00 to purchase lavender and spring bulbs. The RFO confirmed that £30.00 was allocated for the triangle area in the budget 2023/24 which runs from 1st April 2023 to 31st March 2024. Therefore, after discussing, councillors approved expenditure up to £30.00 within this period, to be reimbursed via an expenses claim presented at the next available meeting with supporting receipts. Councillors also expressed their thanks to the volunteer for looking after this area.

ACTION – Clerk to advise the volunteer as above.

17 Churchyard Grass Cutting

Due to the Parish Council's current grass cutting contract expiring on 31st October 2023, the Clerk has been looking at the areas to be included on the cutting list for new tender requests. The current contractor has confirmed that they currently cut areas inside the churchyard which is an open churchyard. However, the Local Government Act 1894 prohibits Councils from paying for the maintenance of open churchyards, which includes grass cutting. The later Local Government Act 1972 contradicts this, but NALC's (National Association of Local Councils) view is that the LGA 1972 does not override the LGA 1894. The Clerk has consulted SALC (Suffolk Association of Local Councils) who have advised that there may be an amendment to this included in the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill currently going through Parliament, but that at the moment, as per NALC's advise, any such payments by a Local Council are unlawful.

After discussing, Councillors agreed unanimously that now they are aware that maintenance of the churchyard is unlawful, and to ensure the Council acts within its authority, further cutting of the churchyard cannot go ahead and the contractor must be instructed to cease the grass cutting with immediate effect. It was agreed to extend an invitation to all members of the PCC to attend the next Parish Council meeting, to discuss this further.

ACTION – Clerk to write to PCC as above, inviting them to attend the next meeting on 18th September 2023, and instruct the contractor to cease grass cutting in the churchyard

18 Approval of GAGA Allotment Agreement Annual Management Assessment, and confirmation of Allotment Manager

The Clerk prepared a draft GAGA Allotment Agreement Annual Management Assessment document which was shared with councillors prior to the meeting. The Chairman of GAGA has indicated that he is happy to act as the Allotment Manager in order to complete the Annual Assessment on behalf of the Council, suggesting that July would be the best time to conduct it.

After discussing, approval of the draft assessment document, and the Chairman of GAGA as Allotment Manager were agreed unanimously. Cllr Urwin said that he would like to visit the allotment with the Allotment Manager if it could be arranged.

ACTION – Clerk to advise Chairman of GAGA as above, and request he conducts an initial assessment now, and annually each July thereafter. Clerk to organise for Cllr Urwin to conduct a site visit with the Allotment Manager if possible

19 Village Signage

Cllr Bell previously conducted an audit of the signage in the village, providing a report of all signs in need of repair or replacing which were reported to Suffolk Highways by the Clerk. However many of the signs are still in need of repair/replacing, and an email has been received from a resident asking if it can be looked in to in order to keep the village looking well kept. The Clerk will raise the reports again and speak to Suffolk Highways to obtain a lead time for their works schedule. In addition to the signs already reported, there are two signs within the play area which need addressing and are the responsibility of the Parish Council, not Highways. Cllr Urwin has already inspected the signs and removed broken pieces of a Perspex cover from one. The Clerk will obtain pricing for new signs to be presented at the next meeting, and conduct a new audit of signage in the village in case there are any additions/amendments to the previous audit.

ACTION – Clerk as above

20 Charity Meadow update, including

- **Lawful Development Certificate for the play equipment** – the Clerk said that MSDC Planning Department have advised that whilst planning permission was most likely not needed when the equipment was originally installed in 2006, to satisfy the CIL Bid requirements and any possible future concerns, a Lawful Development Certificate should be applied for, the charge for which is £179.50 - £234.00. After discussing Cllr Bell proposed approval of expenditure up to £250 to enable the Clerk to proceed with an application for a Lawful Development Certificate. Seconded by Cllr Urwin and approved unanimously.
- **Quotations for zip wire surfacing** – the Clerk obtained 3 quotations for four m3 of play grade wood chipping to be delivered to Charity Meadow to top up the zip wire surfacing to the required level. Councillors discussed the quotations and agreed their preferred supplier, MSDC (Mid Suffolk District Council), whose quotation is £275.56 plus vat for the chippings, and a maximum of £90.00 plus vat to deliver and spread the wood chipping under the zip wire. Cllr Bell proposed proceeding with the quotation from MSDC, seconded by Cllr Urwin and approved unanimously.

ACTION

- **Clerk to apply for a Lawful Development Certificate as above**
- **Clerk to request a pro forma invoice from the chosen supplier for the wood chips as above**

21 Finance

Payment	Amount	Proposed by	Seconded by	Approval
Admin Payment for August 2023 (Clerk & RFO)	£737.10	Cllr Tacey	Cllr Alexander	Unanimous
Clerk mileage expenses (Aug 2023 PC meeting & appraisal meeting)	£17.10	Cllr Alexander	Cllr Urwin	Unanimous
Hire of Village Hall (July PC meeting)	£20.00	Cllr Tacey	Cllr Urwin	Unanimous
IHT (InnHouse Technology – monthly sim charge for CCTV) x 3 invoices (May, June, July) @ £25 each	£75.00	Cllr Bell	Cllr Urwin	Unanimous
IHT (InnHouse Technology – monthly sim charge for CCTV) x 1 invoice STANDING ORDER initial payment taken 4th August 2023	£25.00	Cllr Urwin	Cllr Mew	Unanimous
SALC inv. 27498 (New Cllr Training) Cllr Bell	£72.00	Cllr Mew	Cllr Tacey	Unanimous with 1 abstention
SALC inv. 27581 (New Cllr Training) Cllrs Alexander & Tacey	£144.00	Cllr Urwin	Cllr Mew	Unanimous with 2 abstentions

Microsoft (Annual Subscription) – TAKEN DIRECTLY FROM PC DEBIT CARD	£59.99	Cllr Bell	Cllr Urwin	Unanimous
Top Garden – inv 1787 @ £360.00 & 1788 @ £540.00	£900.00	Cllr Alexander	Cllr Urwin	Unanimous

Councillors noted that Top Garden’s invoice number 1788 includes a cut due to take place on 29th August 2023, which as per agenda item 17, would not be going ahead. However the full amount of the invoice was approved for payment because the Council has entered into a financial contract with Top Garden for a specified total annual amount.

The RFO raised cheques for all payments, except HMRC which is paid online, the IHT standing order initial amount, and the Microsoft debit card payment, which were signed by Cllr Urwin and Cllr Bell as all cheques need to be signed by two signatories.

22 Training

Cllr Tacey and Cllr Alexander have now booked New Councillor training dates of 29th November and 6th December 2023, due to all earlier dates being fully booked.

23 Policies and Reports

- **Audit Plan**

Forwarded to councillors prior to the meeting. Cllr Bell had circulated some amendments which were noted by councillors. After discussing the Audit Plan was approved unanimously to include the amendments from Cllr Bell.

- **Health & Safety Policy**

Cllr Bell asked for the refresher check which is included as an agenda item every 3 months, to be included, and raised concern that lone working is not included within the policy. There was a discussion on whether a risk assessment needs to be carried out for lone workers, with Cllr Bell asking the Clerk to seek advice from SALC on this.

ACTION – Clerk to update and publish Audit Plan as above, and seek advice from SALC regarding the inclusion on lone working within the Health & Safety Policy.

24 IN CAMERA

Deferred to the next meeting.

25 Date of next meeting

The next meeting is due to be held on Monday 18th September 2023 at 7pm in Gislingham Village Hall.

Meeting Closed at 9:05pm