

EARL STONHAM PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting held at the Village Hall, Earl Stonham on
Wednesday, 29th March 2017 at 7.30pm.

Present:

Cllr C Woods (Chairperson)
Cllr D Turner (Vice-Chairperson)
Cllr J Henderson-Hamilton
Cllr S Challinor
Cllr S Budd
Cllr D Brenig-Jones
Cllr H Stanford

In Attendance:

Mrs J Blackburn (Clerk)
District Councillor S Morley
County Councillor M Hicks

PUBLIC FORUM

There were two members of the public present.

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr K Wilkinson and Cllr B Heard.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Cllr Turner – Village Hall
Cllr J Henderson-Hamilton - Footpaths
Cllr S Budd – Village Hall/Footpaths/Allotments
Cllr H Stanford – Church/Cricket Club

APPLICATIONS FOR DISPENSATIONS

There were none.

MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

It was AGREED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 18th January, 2017 be approved as a true record and signed by the Chair.

COUNTY COUNCILLOR'S REPORT

Cllr Hicks' report had been circulated prior to the meeting and he briefly made the following points:-

- Education – Schools in Suffolk with an Ofsted report of 'Good' or 'Outstanding' had increased from 66% to 89% demonstrating progress in the quality of education being provided across Suffolk.
- Mental Health – A report had been produced, 'Suffolk Minds Matter' which estimated that 1 in 100 people in Suffolk suffered with mental health issues. There had been a "big push" on what could be done locally and nationally to support people with mental health issues.
- Suffolk Highways - £10 million had been used from the County Council's reserves to spend on roads. During the winter months, there had been 100 gritting runs in the County with 12,000 tons of salt used.

Cllr Hicks confirmed he had allocated £1,000 of his locality budget towards the refurbishment of the village hall.

Cllr Hicks also confirmed that should he be re-elected in May, he would look into the request for a 30mph speed restriction on Blacksmiths Lane.

Cllr Brenig-Jones asked for an update on the Snoasis application to which Cllr Hicks stated that the owner of the site needed to carry out some of the planning conditions in order for the application to remain 'live'.

DISTRICT COUNCILLOR'S REPORT

Cllr Morley presented her report and reported upon the following points:-

- A TV show had been aired on BBC1 which highlighted the work of a District Council Housing Officer in Suffolk. The programme was still available for viewing on BBC i-player.
- The District Council had increased its proportion of Council Tax by 1.64%.
- Mid-Suffolk District Council would re-locate from Needham Market to Endeavour House, Ipswich later in the year (August/September). A local office would be opened in Stowmarket, which would be where members of the public could make payments, speak to planning officers and also have interactive links via large television screens to speak to Council officials at Endeavour House.
- A man had been charged and fined £2,000 for Fly Tipping in the Ipswich area.

CHOICE OF WEBSITE

Cllr Turner presented the report prepared by Chris Hamilton, which reviewed various websites used by Parish Councils which concluded that the website from Earl Stonham Parish Council was good in being "error" free.

Members felt the best course of action was to keep the existing village website and to enable the Clerk to be able to upload information so that the Parish Council could comply, in future, with the requirements of the Transparency Code for Smaller Parish Councils in terms of publishing agendas, minutes, special responsibilities, assets, annual returns etc.

It was AGREED: That Cllr Turner liaises with the web provider, Mr Sarsby, to ask if it were possible to have login details/access to the village website or to formulate another solution.

GRASS CUTTING ON THE RECREATION GROUND

Cllr Woods reported that the Cricket Club had requested the Parish Council provide a strimmer so the mound on the recreation ground could be maintained. Members felt the best way forward would be for the Parish Council to provide a grant towards half of the cost of a strimmer but to request the Trustees to fund the remaining half. Further details were required from the Cricket Club to establish what type of strimmer they required.

It was AGREED: That Cllr Woods contact the Cricket Club and Trustees to discuss arrangements for the purchase of a strimmer.

Cllr Woods also informed Members that the contract had been received from Vertas for grass cutting of the village green. The quote of £901.80 plus VAT had been received for a one year contract. The covering letter with the quote stated that other options would be available for a longer-term contract.

It was AGREED: That the Clerk contacts Vertas to seek quotes for longer term contracts.

PARKING ON THE VILLAGE GREEN

Following a discussion held at the previous meeting, the Clerk had prepared and circulated a briefing paper on management issues in respect of Village Greens. The consensus was that the parking of vehicles on the village green should continue to be monitored for a further period.

VILLAGE ALLOTMENTS UPDATE

Cllr Woods had started to clear one of the allotment sites in readiness for its rental but the ditch still needed to be cleared. A quote had been sought from Porch Farms of £300 to £400. Cllr Woods added that the hire of a skip would be necessary during the clearing out of the allotments and Cllr Budd stated that she would be able to arrange this.

Cllr Challinor stated that requests had been made for sheds to be permitted on the allotment plots along with running water. Cllr Woods informed Members that there was a water supply to the allotments which needed tapping in order for it to work.

It was AGREED:

- a. That the allotment tenants be permitted to erect temporary sheds on their plots; and
- b. That Cllr Budd arranges for a skip at the appropriate stage to help in clearing the site.

Cllr Woods reported that it had come to his attention that the village's field allotments were designated as 'Poor Allotments', a charity of which part of the funds raised from the rental should be given to the poor locally. Information held about the charity appeared to be out of date and the status of the charity was unknown. Cllr Woods felt that it was important the village allotments as a whole needed to be reviewed, including the Tenancy Agreements. The field allotment tenants needed to be charged a rental fee which should be reviewed annually in the future.

It was AGREED:

- a. That the Clerk investigates this matter further in terms of the charity status of the "Poor Allotments" and ensures that she is the point of contact for future communications;
- b. That the Clerk commences work on the updating of the Tenancy Agreement for the allotments; and
- c. That an item on allotments is placed on the agenda for the next meeting.

NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

Cllr Woods reported that the preparation of Neighbourhood Plans had been discussed at a SALC meeting that he had recently attended. This would be a significant task for all Members of the Parish Council and Clerk and could require the employment of another person, such as a consultant costing in the region of £15,000 and could take up to three years to complete. He felt the views of the villagers needed to be sought to decide the best way forward.

It was AGREED:

- a. That the preparation of a Neighbourhood Plan be included on the agenda for the next meeting;
- b. That the Clerk invites a representative of Mid-Suffolk District Council to the July meeting to provide further information; and
- c. That an article be placed in the next edition of the Recorder.

CHRISTMAS TREE

Cllr Turner referred to the death of Mr Baker from Creeting St Mary, who had in the past provided the Christmas Tree for the Village Green, and that it had been his wish that a donation should be made to Creeting St Mary Church of £30. A brief discussion took place about how to secure a new donor of a Christmas Tree for the Village Green.

It was AGREED:

- a. That a donation of £30 be made to Creeting St Mary Church and actioned by the Clerk; and

- b. That Cllr Turner places an article in the next edition of the Recorder to find out if anyone would be willing to donate a Christmas Tree for use on the Village Green.

PLANNING APPLICATIONS / DECISIONS

Ref: 0846/17 - Mollands Hall, Forward Green, Earl Stonham IP14 5HP - Erection of a single storey rear extension.

There was no objection to the planning application – **Clerk to Action.**

APPOINTMENT OF CLERK AND RESPONSIBLE FINANCIAL OFFICER

Following Jennie Blackburn's appointment as Parish Clerk from 1st January 2017, it was minuted as a matter of formal record and for audit purposes as follows:

It was AGREED: That Jennie Blackburn be appointed as Parish Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer of Earl Stonham Parish Council.

CLERK'S REPORT

There was a brief discussion about the quantity of paperwork produced for meetings.

It was AGREED: That the Clerk only prints agendas for the Parish Council meetings and Parish Councillors would print the remainder of the documentation once the Clerk had circulated the reports via email.

The Clerk had circulated a briefing paper prior to the meeting regarding research undertaken into light pollution following concerns expressed at the previous meeting about light levels from the Ichiban site. Following a brief discussion:-

It was AGREED: That photographs be taken of the lighting and forwarded to The Environment Agency and the Clerk seeks a site visit by the Environment Agency to investigate the problem more fully.

FINANCE REPORT

a) Banking Arrangements

The Clerk reported that she had liaised with TSB bank and been advised that the Parish Council's bank account was an old account that should be changed to enable features such as online banking and online authorisation of payments.

It was AGREED:

- a. That the Clerk seeks a newer TSB business account and makes arrangements to open such an account;
- b. That the Clerk make the necessary arrangements to commence online payments once the new bank account had been set up; and
- c. That the Clerk checks and updates the signatories on the account.

b) Authorisation of Payments

The Parish Clerk reported on the Council's current financial position and movements since the last meeting. It was reported that the balance in the current account on 15th March 2017 was £3,534.48. The Clerk reported the following payments be authorised:-

90.00	SALC	Planning for all Conference (Cllr Woods)
502.67	Suffolk County Council	Street Lighting

170.00	Tuddenham Press	Recorder printing
228.33	Jennie Blackburn	Clerk's Salary/Expenses (March)

Payments of £16.40 for expenses to Cllr Henderson-Hamilton and £32.85 mileage expenses to Cllr Woods and £120 for Porch Farms for Allotment maintenance were also agreed. Payments of £166.73 and £248.33 for Salary to J Blackburn (January and February) and £41.60 to HMRC for tax be ratified.

It was AGREED: That payments totalling £1,040.25 be authorised and actioned by the Clerk.

c) Review of Internal Audit Control and Risk Management Arrangements

The Clerk submitted a report on the Review of Internal Control and Risk Management Arrangements. The Parish Council was required to undertake these arrangements during the course of the financial year so that it could certify the Annual Governance Statement as part of the submission of the Annual Return. Members of the Parish Council considered the report and discussed the current position with regard to the retention of Parish Council records by the former Parish Clerk. It was noted that the prompt handover of these documents was necessary so that the Parish Council's affairs could be dealt with effectively.

It was AGREED:

- a. That the Parish Council will review its Internal Control Arrangements once relevant documentation has been retrieved and further steps be taken as agreed upon at the meeting; and
- b. That the Parish Council confirms that it has reviewed its Risk Assessment and it has been approved subject to minor amendment by the Clerk.

d) Review of Financial Regulations and Standing Orders

It was AGREED: That the updated versions of the Financial Regulations and Standing Orders be approved and adopted.

e) To appoint the Internal Auditor

It was AGREED: That Heelis & Lodge be appointed as auditors for the purposes of the 2016/17 internal audit.

BDO remained as the External Auditor.

MATTERS TO BE BROUGHT TO THE ATTENTION OF THE PARISH COUNCIL

Cllr Turner reported that a large amount of rubbish in black bin bags had been dumped just off the A1120 and that it needed to be reported to Mid-Suffolk District Council. – **Cllr Woods to action.**

Cllr Henderson-Hamilton reported that the Stonham Parva villagers who had copies of the Recorder delivered had not paid for them. She had raised the issue with one of their Parish Councillors.

She also reported that she had re-erected the temporary 'No HGV' sign on Blacksmiths Lane.

Cllr Stanford stated that he had church services over the Easter period with a walk from Creting St Mary to Earl Stonham church on Good Friday and a 6am service on Easter Sunday.

Cllr Challinor raised the Oil thefts that had taken place in the local area recently.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

It was AGREED: That the Annual Parish Council meeting and the Annual Parish Meeting of local Government Electors be held on Thursday, 18th May 2017 from 7pm and that the following ordinary meeting of the Parish Council be held on Thursday, 13th July at 7.30pm.

The meeting closed at 10.10pm.

Chairman Date