**GREAT ASHFIELD PARISH COUNCIL**

**Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on Thursday, 18th November 2021 at 7.30pm**

**In the Lord Thurlow Village Hall, Great Ashfield**

**Mr R. Barker (Chairman)\* Mr I. Sadler\***

**Mrs. N. Calderbank\* Mrs D. Stick**

**Mr. B. Fitch\* Mr A. Peake\***

**Mr. R. Dewhirst \***

**Present: All marked\***

District Councillor Rick Meyer

Suffolk County Councillor Andy Mellen

Three members of the public

Mrs C. White took the minutes (minutes for item 3(iii) by Cllr Peake)

Cllr Barker welcomed everyone to the meeting.

**1. Record Councillors’ apologies for absence**

Apologies for absence had been received from Cllr Stick.

**2. Declarations of interest**

Cllr Barker in respect of item 10(i) and item 11(vii).

**3. Reports**

**i) Suffolk County Councillor Andy Mellen**

A report for November had been received from County Councillor Mellen and circulated prior to the meeting, this included details of the following: COVID-19, Suffolk has been declared an “Enhanced Response Area” (ERA) due to high rates of COVID; a full Council meeting was held on 21st October; a Council Cabinet meeting was held on 12th October to discuss Suffolk Local Access Forum Annual Report 2020/21 and to vote on the Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) which was approved; it has been announced that Suffolk schools are to reintroduce face coverings; Sizewell C the government has announced support and a new funding strategy for this project.

**ii) District Councillor Rick Meyer**

A report for November had been received from District Cllr Meyer and circulated prior to the meeting this included details of the following: work continues on the blueprint for the Districts’ future development as public examination of the JLP is paused for the DC to review its evidence; £1.5m CIL funding boost announced for Babergh & Mid Suffolk communities; greenlight has been given for improvements to some Mid Suffolk community centres and sports facilities; the tree for life scheme is open for applications from new parents for 2021; working towards a greener future B&MSDC have committed to reducing artificial lighting across their districts and to working with others to help reduce wider light pollution; a new ipad lending scheme to be piloted across a number of libraries within Mid Suffolk.

**iii) Public Forum**

Three members of the public attended and were invited by the Chairman to speak.

The issues raised were all connected with excessive speeding through the village, particularly along Elmswell Road, and the level of HGV traffic through the centre of the village and use of single-track lanes, such as School Road and Daisy Green. Some residents felt that current measures, such as Community Speedwatch and police monitoring were insufficient and requested that more permanent traffic calming measures be considered. The Parish Council’s response is dealt with in more detail under item 5(ii) below.

The issue of the number of sugar beet lorries using School Road in recent days was raised and Cllr Barker advised that he had been in contact with the farm manager and that a one-way system was in place and that it was working reasonably well. Traffic movements such as this were unavoidable at this time of year.

**4. To Sign the Minutes of the Previous Meeting as a True Record**

The minutes of the meeting held on Thursday, 16th September 2021, had previously been circulated and were accepted as a true record of the meeting.

**5. Traffic Issues**

**i) Portable Space Update**

A report had been received from the MD of Portable Space and circulated prior to the meeting. Progress is being made on the issues identified but we do not expect to be able to confirm timescales until the New Year.

Councillors acknowledged the work being done but expressed their continuing concern at the wide loads using narrow lanes.

Following discussions with the planning department, Cllr Mellen advised that the best way to establish whether the use of Great Ashfield lanes was a breach of planning would be to launch an enforcement investigation. The Clerk was asked to complete the necessary online forms.

**ii) Speeding/Traffic Calming/Solar Powered SID**

It was confirmed that following the PC meeting in September an application had been made to the pilot ANPR scheme being run in Suffolk. This ANPR project is in essence like an automated Community Speed Watch. The ANPR device records registration numbers, these are downloaded by SCC and sent to the Police to obtain the relevant data of the keeper, and this is sent back to SCC (under an official data sharing agreement) for them to send the letters. This ANPR project is a Suffolk County Council initiative and has nothing to do with the Police, they just provide the keepers details. The SCC will send up to 2 letters and on a 3rd occasion, they can choose the top 15 highest speeds/repeat offenders each month and send these to the police who will then allocate an officer to visit that person to be given words of advice about their conduct.

In relation, to CSW, exactly the same thing happens from the data provided to the police, who will do the checks and issue a letter on no more than 2 occasions. On a 3rd occasion or if the speed exceeds 50mph in a 30mph limit, it will be referred to a local SNT or Community Engagement Officer for them to visit and give some advice.

If someone continues to be problematic, the Safer Neighbourhood Team, Roads Policing Team or Community Engagement officer may decide that they need to position themselves in the right place at the right time (if there is a pattern) and try to officially deal with someone who can then be prosecuted for their actions.

Whilst there is no “punishment” for CSW or the SCC ANPR project, it is a visual deterrent seeing people on the roadside and is often enough to persuade motorists to amend their conduct, or if not, they get a polite reminder in the post about their speeding. These are educational schemes and are not there to punish as legislation does not permit this.

Regarding permanent traffic calming measures for Elmswell Road and the possibility of extending the 40mph speed limit on Norton Road, Cllr Barker confirmed that a meeting had taken place between the Community Liaison Engineer, himself, Cllr Peake & the Clerk. An email from the Engineer had been circulated prior to the meeting outlining the criteria to be met for the speed limit extension and the process for producing details of a traffic calming scheme. Whilst the outcome of the meeting was reasonably positive, the final decision for the type of permanent traffic calming measures that could be introduced lay with Highways Speed and Safety Team and that there would need to be a consultation with village residents to establish support for any proposals.

Implementation of any traffic calming proposals and extension of the 40mph speed limit would require a survey, the cost of which would need to be met by the Parish Council irrespective of the outcome, in addition the Parish Council would be required to fund the cost of any proposed works.

If the speed limit extension progresses to the official application stage there would need to be a Traffic Regulation Order to make this enforceable, Cllr Mellen advised that the cost of a TRO would be in the region of £3,500. This cost would need to be met by the Parish Council regardless of the outcome.

Potential funding streams for all the above were discussed. Cllr Mellen said that he may possibly be able to offer some help via his highways budget, and Cllr Meyer advised that there was a central CIL fund that could be applied to for specific projects, the Clerk to investigate this.

Cllr Mellen stated that the bridge on the A1088 at Stowlangtoft was in danger of collapse, a 7.5 tonne limit had been imposed on traffic using this bridge and it was anticipated that work to fix it would take in the region of 18 months. Consequently, it was expected that this would have a knock-on effect on traffic through Great Ashfield.

Purchase of an Evolis Solar Powered Radar Speed Sign was discussed, a quotation had previously been circulated and Cllr Mellen had offered a grant of £750 towards the cost of this, and Cllr Meyer had offered a grant of £1000. Cllr Meyer advised that such devices in neighbouring villages were working well and acting as a deterrent. It was therefore proposed by Cllr Peake that the Parish Council should progress with the purchase, seconded by Cllr Calderbank. All councillors voted in favour of this. The Clerk was instructed to apply for the necessary grants and to place an order. A new, appropriately positioned pole would also be required.

**iii) Community Speedwatch**

Cllr Stick although unable to be present, had previously circulated figures for CSW during the months of September and October, and a total of 123 letters had been sent out to speeding motorists. The use of the new speedgun funded by the Parish Council and a locality grant from Cllr Meyer, meant that more motorists were being caught speeding, but that there was a need for more volunteers.

Cllr Fitch queried whether the signs used by the CSW group were properly placed. Cllr Peake advised that the signs were there purely as a safety measure to warn that there were people in the road. It was the responsibility of motorists to observe the 30mph speed limit signs at the entrance to the village.

**6. Quiet Lanes – progress**

Cllr Peake confirmed that the requisite poles had now been erected, but that the signs were the subject of a separate work order and he had yet to be informed when these would be put in place.

**7. Planning Applications**

i) No planning applications had been received since the previous meeting.

ii) DC/21/02068 – Planning Application for Erection of Replacement Livestock Unit with associated infrastructure at Red House Farm, Rectory Road, Bacton.

This application has been granted with condition 16 - Traffic Management stated as ‘Access via Rectory Road’ only. Cllr Barker queried whether this condition genuinely covers all traffic, including construction traffic, livestock movements, feed & waste traffic movements into and out of the site, whilst under construction and once up and running. The Clerk was asked to write to the Planning Officer asking him to confirm in writing that no such traffic movements were to be permitted through the single-track lanes of Great Ashfield.

**8. Review of Internal Controls Report & Internal Controls Statement**

An up-to-date copy of these had been circulated to all councillors prior to the meeting, and no revisions were required. The Chairman signed the Report & Statement as accepted.

**9. Finance Matters**

i) An update of the Parish Council’s bank balances had been circulated prior to the meeting, as follows:

**Bank balances at 12th November 2021**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Current Account | Balance at 16th September 2021 | **£6,083.61** |
| Less payments | Parish Clerk (salary)  Parish Clerk (expenses)  CAS – Website Hosting | -£350.00  -£28.35  -£60.00 |
| Receipts | MSDC – CIL Payment  TSB (compensation) | £1,689.65  £50.00 |
| Balance at 12/11/21 |  | **£7,384.91** |
|  |  |  |
| Deposit Account |  | **£1,000.99** |
|  |  |  |
| Total |  | **£8,385.90** |

**Note:** The current account balance includes Locality Grant Awards of £720.00 and £920.00 for the signs and poles in connection with the Quiet Lanes.

**To Consider Payments:**  The Clerk presented an invoice from PBS in the sum of £35.00 for printing of the latest edition of the Newsletter, all councillors agreed payment of this invoice via online banking. Sponsorship of £15.00 to cover colour printing had been received from a resident. An email thanking him for his support had been sent.

ii) **Budget for 2022-23**

Apreliminary budget had been prepared and circulated to all councillors prior to the meeting. Cllr Sadler queried whether an increase in the precept should be considered towards the cost of the proposed traffic calming measures. However, it was felt that more information as to the cost of such measures was needed before any such decisions could be made. The Clerk advised that setting the precept could be delayed until the January meeting when hopefully there would be a clearer picture of how much such measures would cost and whether there were any other sources of funding available.

**10. Village Sign Repairs**

Cllr Barker advised that he had organised the removal of the village sign for repair and refurbishment. He had managed to source the oak for repair of the rotten woodwork, donated free of charge by a generous resident, although he was struggling to find someone to repaint the sign as it was badly faded, he had the details of a couple of companies to contact to obtain a quote. At this stage he believed that the work would cost in the region of £800.

**11. Correspondence received**

i) Email 21/09/21: Came & Co, the Parish Council’s insurance company had written to notify details of their rebranding as Gallagher, although it was a new name, no action was required.

ii) Email 23/09/21: Queen’s Platinum Jubliee, Lighting of Beacons. This was to invite organisations to register their intention to light a beacon. The Parish Council felt this was something they would like to organise and asked the Clerk to obtain more information for the next meeting.

iii) Letter 05/09/21: Parish Council Neighbourhood CIL Payment for October 2021. This has been received and noted under ‘Finance’.

iv) Email 15/10/21: from Badwell Ash PC, confirming that they did not wish to contribute financially to the calibration of the speedgun. No further action required.

v) Email 02/11/21: From SALC, giving details of the Lorry Route Review and inviting submissions by the 17th December 2021. Cllr Peake advised that the PC was permitted to make 3 separate submissions, it was proposed that the following routes should be proposed for review: School Road, Elmswell Road and Daisy Green. Cllr Mellen confirmed his support for these submissions. Cllr Peake was asked to complete and submit the necessary forms with copies to the Clerk.

vi) Email 02/11/21: Public Engagement Notice, West Suffolk Hospital; details of this had been posted on the village WhatsApp group.

vii) Email 04/11/21: Draft Babergh & Mid Suffolk District Councils Housing Land Supply Position Statement Consultation, November 2021. After discussion Cllrs agreed that they had no comments to make.

viii) Various emails from residents regarding speeding and traffic issues; the issues raised had been addressed in the discussions under item 5, above.

**12. Councillors Reports, Matters Arising and Any New Issues**

i) Cllr Barker advised that the new defibrillator for the village hall was due to be installed on Monday, 22nd November, and that this was a semi-automatic rather than automatic machine. It was hoped that some training sessions could be arranged for those interested in learning how to use it before Christmas.

ii) The Clerk had received an email concerning the alteration of streetlight timings over the Christmas/New Year period. Cllrs confirmed no alterations were required.

iii) The Clerk advised that tax base calculations had been received and asked whether Cllrs wished to receive a copy. It was agreed that the Clerk should circulate to all Cllrs for information.

**17. Time and Date of the Next Meeting**

The next meeting is scheduled to be held on Thursday, 20th January at 7.30pm in the Lord Thurlow Village Hall.

There being no further business, the Chairman thanked everyone for attending and the meeting closed at 8.50pm.