**GREAT ASHFIELD PARISH COUNCIL**

**Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on Thursday, 15th July 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\***

Suffolk County Councillor A. Mellen (left the meeting at 8.20pm)

MD of Portable Space, Mr M. Dolman (joined the meeting at 7.45pm and left at 8.20pm)

Mr S. Miles representing H.M. Lord-Lieutenant for Suffolk

2 Residents

Mrs C. White took the minutes.

Cllr Barker welcomed everyone to the meeting.

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

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Dewhirst and District Councillor Meyer.

**2. Declarations of interest**

None were recorded.

**3. Reports**

**i) Suffolk County County Councillor Andy Mellen**

A report for July had been received and circulated prior to the meeting. The following issues were highlighted: review of SEND provision, the report and any recommendations will be published on the SCC website; Highways with respect to overgrown paths, footways, repair of potholes, whilst there have been delays in this regard, staff & contractors are working to catch-up. Report any issues to <https://highwaysreporting.suffolk.gov.uk>; Boundary Commission Review, consultation is taking place June to August 2021; Bus Back Better – re-regulation of services is a government response to COVID-19 but may be of benefit to services in rural Suffolk.

In connection with issues recently raised by Great Ashfield Parish Council, Cllr Mellen confirmed that he had been in contact with the Planning Department regarding planning permissions in connection with Red House Farm & HGV traffic movements. Cllr Peake pointed out there was concern that it was not always obvious to planners what effect their decisions might have on the wider community.

In addition, following recent negative feedback from SCC Highways regarding potential traffic calming measures in the village, Cllr Mellen was asked if he could ascertain whether there was someone more senior who could help and possibly meet with the Parish Council to discuss this issue.

Problems and delays in the cutting of hedges and verges were raised by the Chairman.

It had been reported by a resident that an iron manhole/water main cover had been moved by contractors cutting verges at the bottom of Holland Hill and that this posed a hazard, the Clerk was asked to report this to Highways.

**iii) District Councillor**

District Cllr Meyer did not attend the meeting; however, a report had been received and circulated. The report highlighted the following issues: Council’s Joint Local Plan Examination is to be reconvened in September; the next steps relating to the Council’s Biodiversity Climate Change Plans have been agreed and Biodiversity mapping is already underway; how the new ‘virtual’ high street is supporting market towns recovery; Council’s providing a financial lifeline for local projects and the full Performance Report gives an insight into what each service areas have achieved during the pandemic.

**iii) Public Forum**

Mr Stephen Miles attended as he had been asked by H.M. Lord-Lieutenant for Suffolk to come and speak with the Parish Council about plans for a year long celebration of the Queen’s Jubilee and her historic 70 years as Monarch.

H.M. Lord-Lieutenant for Suffolk wants to make 2022 a year of celebration, not only for the Jubilee, but for the wider community, a Festival of Suffolk. The Lord-Lieutenant has written to all Parish Council Chairmen asking every village to plan a community event(s) or celebration with the aim of making Suffolk a better place and to make the Festival of Suffolk about not only the Jubiliee but also the wider community. Events can be held at any time throughout the year as it is hoped to make 2022 a year long Festival celebration.

Also in recognition of the Jubilee is the proposal to plant a ‘Green Canopy’, where each community or individual residents can make a commitment to plant something either in their gardens or in public spaces.

In order to share plans and ideas for Festival events and celebrations Parish Councils have each been asked to nominate someone from their community as a ‘Festival Champion’ by the end of July 2021. This ‘Champion’ will then take responsibility for keeping their community informed of plans and progress.

There is to be more information about the Festival and a formal launch of the Lord-Lieutenant’s plans over the forthcoming weeks.

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

The minutes of the meeting held on Thursday, 20th May 2021, had previously been circulated and were accepted as a true record of the meeting.

**5. Portable Space – Progress**

This item was brought forward in the meeting to allow members of the public in attendance to participate.

At 7.45pm the Chairman welcomed Mr Mark Dolman MD of Portable Space Ltd to the meeting, to discuss ongoing issues being experienced in relation to HGV’s operated by Portable Space & their subcontractors using the narrow lanes of the village, and with harvest approaching the opportunity for large agricultural vehicles and HGVs meeting on unclassified village roads is one to be avoided.

The Chairman confirmed that there had recently been a meeting between himself and Mr Dolman where the discussions were open and frank.

Mr Dolman introduced himself as MD of Portable Space Ltd and confirmed:

1. That he had first become aware of the problems pre-COVID.
2. That there are restrictions on the use of the Rectory Road entrance out of Red House Farm, requiring them at certain times to find alternative routes.
3. That they are governed by licences for wide loads and as such they must obey designated routes.
4. He had come to the meeting to prove that, as a company, Portable Space care about the community in which they operate and are committed to trying to resolve the current issues.

Mr Dolman outlined the following steps being taken by the company to mitigate the problems:

1. Investigating the possibility of using different entrances & exits to the Red House Farm site.
2. Driver training & workshops to make them aware of their impact on local communities.
3. He had written to all subcontractors advising them to use appropriate routes.
4. As all HGV’s employed by the company are fully tracked, an analysis of vehicle movements would be undertaken over the next 6 months to be able to report exact figures relating to the number of HGV’s using Great Ashfield lanes.
5. Feedback received from drivers had been that many local roads are at various times closed or obstructed which limited the choice of usable routes.
6. Residents should report any incidents involving Portable Space vehicles directly to the company and that they would be promptly investigated and dealt with.

When questioned by a resident in attendance, Mr Dolman confirmed that routes were generally decided by each individual driver, and no formal instructions were given to drivers by the company.

Concern was expressed that although recent planning statements generally advised that the Rectory Road entrance was the preferred option and the Earls Green entrance a secondary option, the route out through Great Ashfield had never been fully considered by the planners. In fact, there was a clear statement in a recent planning application that commercial vehicles should be using the Rectory Road entrance. Mr Dolman stated that restrictions on the Rectory Road entrance preceded his joining the company and recent planning applications referred to several businesses on the site and were a matter for others.

The Chairman thanked Mr Dolman for coming to the meeting and summarised the discussions. He asked Mr Dolman to continue to work on this issue and to keep the Parish Council informed of any progress. Mr Dolman was also asked to attend the next Parish Council meeting in September with an update and when it may be possible for more residents to attend.

Mr Dolman and Cllr Mellen then left the meeting at 8.20pm.

Following their departure, all Cllrs agreed that to keep residents informed a short message should be posted on the village WhatsApp group as soon as possible to outline what had occurred and asking for the message to be passed around. Cllr Sadler also suggested that an item should be posted in the Newsletter advising residents to contact Mr Dolman direct with any problems and/or incidents.

**6. Quiet Lanes Update**

Cllr Peake reported that the Highways consultation had closed, and he had not been advised of any comments in relation to this.

Signs for the lanes are due around the 24th of July, however, SCC Highways are potentially behind with this work, so an exact date is not known.

**7. Community Speed Watch (CSW) & Speeding**

Details and a quotation from Elan City had been circulated prior to the meeting in connection with Solar Powered Speed Indicator Devices. Cllr Stick stated that the village needed Solar Powered Devices because of ongoing manpower problems in managing the battery operated device.

Cllr Sadler advised that he objected to the purchase of speed devices at the present time because they do not solve the problem. Prior to the meeting the Clerk had circulated a report outlining the results of various enquiries to SCC Highways and the Safety & Speed Management Team with respect to potential traffic calming measures that could be implemented. Feedback, on the whole had been negative, however, Cllr Sadler felt that further investigation of potential traffic calming measures was justified, in particular whether narrowing of the road at either end of the village would be possible. The Chairman advised he would communicate with Cllr Mellen with a view to who to contact in this connection.

It was agreed that new Solar Powered Devices and the issue of traffic calming should be placed on the agenda for the next meeting.

Cllr Stick raised the issue of the equipment recently given to a Long Thurlow resident for use in Long Thurlow. Although this new equipment was insured etc, the cost of calibration of the gun would inevitably be the responsibility of Great Ashfield Parish Council, in the region of £120 every four years. However, Great Ashfield are already responsible for the cost of calibration of the gun they currently own, and it is hoped to shortly purchase a new gun which would also require calibrating.

It was therefore agreed that as this gun is to be used by team members who live in Long Thurlow and that part of this route comes within the Badwell Ash Parish boundary, that Badwell Ash Parish Council should be asked to contribute/pay for the calibration of this gun.

The Clerk was asked to write to Badwell Ash Parish Clerk asking for their help to fund this.

Cllrs confirmed that funding for the purchase of a new gun for the Speedwatch Team, previously specified, had been agreed at the meeting on 20th May 2021.

**8. Streetlighting**

Following the item in the last edition of the Newsletter, the Clerk advised that only one response had been received in favour of not replacing the streetlights and the Chairman confirmed he had received one communication asking for an extra streetlight.

After discussion it was agreed that a further item should be put in the next Newsletter to the effect that “due to the lack of response and the substantial cost of replacement, the Parish Council did not plan to replace the current streetlights when they expire” and ask if anyone disagrees to contact the Parish Council.

All Cllrs were in favour of this course of action.

**9. Planning Applications**

i) No new planning applications had been received.

ii) No planning applications had been decided since the last meeting.

iii) Enforcement Action at The Thurlow Arms. The Chairman confirmed that appropriate action and work had now taken place.

**10. Finance**

The following update of the Parish Council’s bank balances had been circulated prior to the meeting.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Current Account | Balance at 15th May 2021 | **£5,683.35** |
| Less payments | Online MSDC Dog/Litter bin  000400 M Saunders  Online Profile Business Supplies | -208.75  -85.00  -35.00 |
| Receipts | Newsletter sponsorship | **15.00** |
| Balance at 07/07/21 |  | **£5,369.60** |
|  |  |  |
| Deposit Account | Election reserves | **£1,000.74** |
|  |  |  |
| Total |  | **£6,370.34** |
|  |  |  |

Cllr Peake asked that it be noted that the current account balance includes grants of £920 and £720 respectively for the posts and signs in connection with the Quiet Lanes project.

**ii) To consider payment of invoices received.**

No further invoices had been received.

However, all Councillors were in favour of a payment of £50 to J. Mulley for grass cutting around the village sign and footpath. Cheque no. 401 was raised for this.

**11. Correspondence received:**

**Festival of Suffolk 2022, Celebrations & Community Champion.** The Chairman was in receipt of a letter from H.M. Lord-Lieutenant of Suffolk outlining details of the proposed Festival of Suffolk together with other literature. Mr Stephen Miles, representing H.M. Lord-Lieutenant, had already addressed the meeting in this regard during the Public Form (above). However, in connection with the nomination of a ‘community champion’ it was suggested that a WhatsApp message should be circulated asking for nominations/volunteers to fulfil this role, and that an item should be placed in the next edition of the Village Newsletter.

**12. COVID-19 End of Lockdown / Village Social Event**

Cllr Barker confirmed that it was the intention of the Lord Thurlow Village Hall committee to hold the annual BBQ on Friday, 6th August 2021, this would be a ticket only event to control numbers.

Whilst other activities were beginning to take place in the Hall, it was considered too early to plan any more significant village celebration or event, however, it was felt that any such event or celebration could be co-ordinated with the proposed Festival of Suffolk planned for 2022.

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

i) Cllr Fitch requested that it be noted in the minutes that Oliver Reynolds of ‘The Country Life’, was doing a particularly good job of cutting and tidying up some of the village verges and footpaths and that his efforts were very much appreciated.

The Clerk was asked to write to him to thank him and to ask if he & his company would consider tidying up around the village sign, in return he could erect a small advertising board, saying ‘maintained by The Country Life’ or something to that effect.

ii) The Chairman stated that the area around the village sign was in urgent need of clearing/tidying up and suggested a date be chosen and a request for volunteers to help put on WhatsApp, this could also be mentioned in the forthcoming edition of the Newsletter. Repairs to the village sign would be carried out after the harvest.

iii) Cllr Calderbank stated that there was a need for hedge cutting and the tidying of pavements and grass verges along Elmswell Road. It was considered that an item in the forthcoming Newsletter would be appropriate reminding residents and landowners to tidy up and trim their hedges, trees, and the areas they are responsible for.

iv) The Chairman advised the meeting that the Village Hall had been offered a defibrillator for the village. Whilst the Village Hall Committee would fund the installation of the defibrillator, it was requested that the Parish Council should take responsibility for the annual maintenance of this, probably in the region of £120. It was agreed that this should be on the agenda for the next meeting when more details will be known.

Cllr Peake suggested that it might be beneficial for the village to run a CPR course in the Village Hall for residents. It was decided this should be placed on the agenda for the next meeting.

v) As this meeting had given rise to several issues that residents needed to be informed about it was proposed that a shorter interim issue of the Village Newsletter be prepared and circulated immediately. Cllr Peake agreed to contact the Newsletter Editor, Mandie Beckley to ask whether she would be happy to do this.

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

The next meeting is scheduled to be held on Thursday, 16th September 2021 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 9.12pm.