**GREAT ASHFIELD PARISH COUNCIL**

**Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on Thursday, 17th November at 7.30pm**

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

**Mr A. Peake (Chairman)\* Mr I. Sadler (Vice Chairman)**

**Mr R. Barker\* Mrs D. Stick**

**Mr. B. Fitch\* Mr. R. Dewhirst \***

**Mr. M. Taylor\***

**Present: All marked\***

Suffolk County Councillor A. Mellen

District Councillor R. Meyer

Five members of the public attended.

Mrs C White took the minutes.

Cllr Peake welcomed everyone to the meeting.

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

Apologies were received from Cllr Sadler and Cllr Stick.

**2. Declarations of interest**

Cllr Barker declared an interest in item 11(iii).

**3. Reports**

**i) Suffolk County Councillor Andy Mellen**

A report for November had been received and circulated and included details of; Cost of Living Budget Survey; Cost of Living Leaflet updated to show what support is available; the launch of ‘Winter Matters’ campaign; debating GLI Motion at Full Council meeting on 20th October; at a SCC Cabinet meeting on 11th October there was agreement to spending on care provision in Felixstowe, the provision of more SEND specialist units, concern expressed about Sizewell C and endorsement of Transport Easts new 2050 strategy.

Cllr Mellen reported that Suffolk was likely to be offered some sort of devolution deal, the details of which have yet to be worked out.

Cllr Mellen confirmed that he was happy to support the Parish Council with some funding from his locality highways budget towards a traffic survey and traffic calming.

The Clerk was asked to post details of the Cost Living Leaflet on the Parish Council website.

**ii) District Councillor Rick Meyer**

A report for November had been received and circulated and included details of help that is available with the cost of living; residents were advised to have their say over council tax reduction for those on low incomes; availability of winter warmth funding for community causes; Council’s commercial property arm continues to generate income for districts; residents competition to help name new environmentally friendly bin lorries; bird flu outbreak; World Homelessness Day; retail giant ‘The Range’ given the go ahead at Gateway 14 and would create 1,650 jobs; housing development in Elmswell on council owned land for the development of 50 environmentally friendly, low carbon homes and the expansion of the John Peel Centre in Stowmarket.

Cllr Meyer advised that the winter warmth fund had been over-subscribed, but Cllr Barker confirmed that a grant of £500 had been received to run some sessions in either the church or the village hall where residents could meet to keep warm, have a drink, something to eat and to socialise.

Cllr Meyer asked if tax base calculations had been received, the Clerk confirmed that they had and would be distributed to councillors.

**iii) Public Forum**

Five members of the public attended to express concern at the level of traffic travelling through the village, in particular HGV traffic. Two members of the public had canvassed residents on Elmswell Road as to the issues causing most concern and these were:

* Safety
* Road damage
* Disturbance

In addition, the issue of Portable Space/HGV’s using School Road/Daisy Green/Wetherden Road.

Cllrs responded to criticisms of the Quiet Lanes scheme acknowledging that, at present, the scheme is only advisory and there are no enforceable restrictions on use of the lanes. However, it was pointed out that the scheme was self-funded by grants, and it is hoped that once the rollout across the county has been completed there may be some enforceable restrictions put in place.

Residents were advised that members of the Parish Council and Cllr Mellen had met with the Community Engineer again in October to walk the length of Elmswell Road and consider what traffic calming measures could be implemented. To install permanent traffic calming measures would require streetlights, the cost of which would be prohibitive, therefore the options suggested were Village Gateways with signs, 300mm white lines, textured road surface, and associated increased signage or roundels. To carry out this work would require a permit from the Council, as well as employing contractors with the necessary affiliation. Any work on the carriageway would have to be carried out by Highways. The estimated cost for a scheme of this kind was given as £7,000-£10,000, and a source of funding would need to be found. The Chairman was in touch with Badwell Ash Parish Council as they are pursuing a similar scheme for Long Thurlow.

Cllrs were asked if it were possible to implement an ‘Environmental Weight Limit’ on Elmswell Road. This issue had been explored with Highways in July 2021. Any such limit would be the subject of a Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) and before this could be considered there would need to be an acceptable, alternative route available for HGV traffic. There would then be a process of consultation with residents, the wider public and businesses, and the implementation of new signage along other routes and junctions. Residents were advised that TRO’s are expensive, £10,000 or more and a source of funding would need to be identified before any progress could be made with this. The only sources of funding currently available are either via the Parish Council’s precept which would be levied across the whole village, or assistance from our County Councillor’s locality budget, which is very limited. TRO’s can take between 6 months and 2 years to implement. To start this process would require an official Traffic Survey which would need to be supported and requested by Cllr Mellen. The cost of this is likely to be in the region of £400-£500 and it was hoped Cllr Mellen would be able to fund this.

Regarding Portable Space using School Road/Daisy Green & Wetherden Road, residents were advised that much had been done to challenge this, with the recent Lawful Development Certificate applications being a direct result of queries raised with enforcement by the Parish Council. These were an attempt to make legal land currently used outside of their original planning consent. Letters from the Parish Council had been delivered to residents living along the route to ensure that they were given the opportunity to comment. The Parish Council had also submitted comments concerning working hours at the site, and strongly contradicted any suggestion that 24-hour deliveries had been taking place over the last 10 years, as well as communicating with other affected Parishes. The determination date for the LDC is 13th December 2022.

There are currently other planning and enforcement issues being considered in connection with this site.

Residents present were advised that the Parish Council had a separate Working Group looking into HGV and traffic issues affecting the village and were asked whether they would be willing to be part of that group. It was agreed that there should be an item in the next edition of the Newsletter about the Working Group and asking for volunteers to come forward and help develop a plan of action.

It was suggested that neighbouring Parish Councils could be contacted and invited to join discussions, however, any proposed environmental weight limit on Elmswell Road is unlikely to be popular with other parishes as it would mean re-routing traffic through other villages.

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

The minutes of the scheduled meeting held on Tuesday, 27th September 2022, had previously been circulated and were accepted as a true record of the meeting.

The minutes of the planning meeting held on Thursday, 20th October 2022, had previously been circulated and were accepted as a true record of the meeting.

**5. To consider Councillor Vacancy**

Due to the resignation of Cllr Barker, there was now a vacancy for a Parish Councillor. The Clerk was asked to advise the necessary authorities.

A huge ‘thank you’ to Cllr Barker for all his dedicated service over the years.

**6. Report of a Working Group Meeting**

A working group meeting had been held in response to the latest LDC application by Portable Space at Red House Farm. Cllrs had agreed to send out letters to all residents living along the affected route, explaining what was happening, and encouraging them to submit their views to the planning authorities.

**7. Traffic Issues**

**i) Portable Space – LDC Update**

See report of Working Group Meeting above. Determination date for LDC is 13th December 2022.

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

See item 3(iii), Public Forum, above.

**iii) Community Speedwatch / ANPR**

Three speedwatch sessions have been held in Long Thurlow and 21 vehicles have been reported to the Police at Community Speed watch as a result.

No speedwatch sessions were held in Great Ashfield due to a lack of volunteers.

The Parish Council continued to engage with the Suffolk ANPR scheme and hoped that the camera would be deployed in the village again soon.

**8. Planning**

i) No applications had been received since the last meeting.

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

**9. Finance**

i) A short finance report had been circulated prior to the meeting:

**Bank balances at 16th November 2022**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Current Account | Balance at 17th September 2022 | **£8,722.21** |
| Less payments | AC White Expenses  AC White Salary  Zurich Town & Parish Insurance  Village Hall Hire  CAS – website hosting | -£28.30  -£350.00  -413.08  29.30  -£60.00 |
| Receipts | None |  |
| **Balance at 16th Nov 2022** |  | **£7,840.73** |
|  |  |  |
| **Deposit Account Balance** |  | **£1,002.42** |
|  |  |  |
| **Total** |  | **£8,843.15** |
|  |  |  |

**Receipts Outstanding**

None.

**Payments to be agreed:**

None.

**Notes: Current Account Balance**

The current account balance includes the following:

Locality Grant Awards of £720.00 and £920.00 for the signs and poles in connection with the Quiet Lanes.

Locality Grant Award of £332.00 towards the village sign refurbishment cost.

CIL Grant in the sum of £1,689.65.

**iii) TSB Bank Mandate Alterations** – the Clerk confirmed that these had been posted on 31st October 2022 but had heard nothing since.

**iv) To consider provisional budget for 2023-24**

A provisional budget had been prepared and circulated prior to the meeting. Due to a significant increase in the cost of streetlighting (electricity & maintenance) and insurance costs, it was likely that a precept increase would be necessary. As tax base calculations had only just been received and as the precept request does not need to be submitted until 31st January 2023, the budget will be considered in further detail at the next Parish Council meeting in January.

**10. To consider Printing, Sale & Marketing of WWII Village Publication “Here We Are Again”**

A quotation of £420 for the printing of 50 copies of this as an A4 booklet had been received. Cllrs agreed that if printing were to go ahead the cost needed to be covered by the sale of the booklet. This would mean selling 50 copies at a price of £10.00 per copy. Prior to committing to print this, it was agreed to put an item in the Newsletter asking residents to confirm that they would be interested in purchasing a copy. Feedback from this would inform whether printing was feasible. This item to be on the agenda for further consideration at the next meeting.

**11. Correspondence received:**

i) Email, 28th September 2022: Notification of CIL Funding Bid Window, October 2022, and another round opens in May 2023. Circulated for information.

ii) Email, 29th September 2022: Notification of increase in election costs for next year’s local elections. Circulated for information and included in budget.

iii) Email, 29th September 2022: BMSDC Draft Five Year Housing & Land Supply Position Statements – Consultation running from 30th September 2022 to 31st October 2022. Circulated for information.

Iv) Email, 17th October 2022: Notification of SCC News Release – Cost of Living to impact Council’s Budget and online survey open throughout October and November – circulated for information.

v) Email, 31st October 2022: Advance notification of increase in energy costs and maintenance in connection with streetlighting. Circulated and included in the draft budget.

vi)

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

i) Email, 16th November 2022: Rural England Prosperity Fund Survey / Consultation, deadline for completion 28th November 2022. This had been circulated prior to the meeting, it was agreed that the Parish Council wished to contribute to this, and Cllr Peake undertook to complete the online form.

ii) It was reported that there is a bump in the middle of the road in Daisy Green which is potentially damaging for vehicles. Cllr Peake agreed to report this via the Highways reporting tool.

iii) Meeting dates for scheduled meetings for 2023 had been circulated, as follows:

* Thursday, 19th January 2023
* Thursday, 16th March 2023
* Thursday, 18th May 2023 – Annual Parish Meeting at 7pm and Annual Parish Council Meeting at 7.30pm
* Thursday, 20th July 2023
* Thursday, 21st September 2023
* Thursday, 16th November 2023

Planning Meetings & Working Group Meetings to be convened as and when required.

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

The next meeting is scheduled to be held at 7.30pm on Thursday, 19th January 2023 in the Lord Thurlow Village Hall

There being no further business, the Chairman thanked everyone for attending and the meeting closed at 9.00pm