**GREAT ASHFIELD PARISH COUNCIL**

**Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on Wednesday, 11th January at 7.45pm**

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

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

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

**Mr. B. Fitch\* Mr. M. Taylor\***

**Present: All marked\***

Suffolk County Councillor A. Mellen (part of meeting)

District Councillor R. Meyer (part of meeting)

Six members of the public attended.

Mrs C White took the minutes.

Cllr Peake welcomed everyone to the meeting.

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

No apologies were received.

**2. Declarations of interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

**3. Reports**

**i) Suffolk County Councillor Andy Mellen**

A report for January had been received and circulated and included details of: SCC Budget for 2023/24 a planned increase of 3.99%; County Deal update; new SCC website; the issue of modern slavery in Suffolk; Suffolk looking for more hosts for Ukrainian refugees.

**ii) District Councillor Rick Meyer**

A report for January had been received and circulated and included details of: landmark devolution deal for Suffolk; winning names for environmentally friendly bin lorries; completion of £2.8m carbon-cutting solar investment to reduce leisure centres’ reliance on the Grid; new tenancy policy recognising “A Home is not just a House”; successful bid for Housing Fund Pot; first tree planted at Gateway 14; Town and Parish Liaison Meetings.

**iii) Public Forum**

Members of the public attending the meeting expressed continuing concern at the volume and speed of traffic travelling through the village, in particular HGV traffic and at the invitation of the Chairman confirmed that they wished to join the separate Parish Council ‘Traffic Working Group’ looking into HGV and traffic issues affecting the whole village (see item 6 below).

The new Chairman of the Village Hall Committee addressed the meeting to outline modernisation / upgrade plans for the village hall over the next couple of years. Proposed works to include making sure that fire exits, electrical systems etc comply with current fire and health and safety regulations; plans to upgrade and modernise the kitchen and some internal layout redesign to make the hall a more welcoming and user-friendly space, and to hopefully attract a wider and more diverse group of users.

To assist with funding of these works the Village Hall Committee are seeking grants from various sources including the Platinum Jubilee fund for village halls and requested the support of the Parish Council in their endeavours. Although the Parish Council was unable to offer financial support, Cllrs were keen to give their full backing to any fund-raising efforts and were happy to include a feature in the next Newsletter, as a means of engaging with residents and seeking fund raising ideas. It was agreed that the VH Committee Chairman would write something for the Newsletter.

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

The minutes of the scheduled meeting held on Thursday, 17th November 2022, had previously been circulated and were accepted as a true record of the meeting.

**5. To consider Councillor Vacancy**

It was confirmed that the statutory vacancy notice period had expired, and the Parish Council were free to co-opt a new member to the Council.

All Councillors were in favour of Stephen Miles’ offer to join the Council. The Clerk to forward the necessary forms to him for completion.

**6. Traffic Issues**

**i) Portable Space – LDC Update**

It was reported that this was still awaiting a decision, but that enforcement had advised they were imminently planning to issue a letter in connection with breaches of conditions.

**ii) Speeding/Traffic Calming**

Residents at the meeting were invited to join the Parish Council’s separate ‘Traffic Working Group’ to consider all traffic issues causing concern in the village and to report back to the Council with proposals. It was agreed that the next meeting of this Working Group would be arranged for a convenient date in February.

**iii) Community Speedwatch / ANPR / Solar Powered SID**

Due to a lack of volunteers and poor weather conditions, no speedwatch sessions had been held on Elmswell Road.

Reports from Suffolk Police and ANPR data continued to demonstrate the seriousness of the problem on Elmswell Road, and our Neighbourhood Policeman had offered to join a speedwatch session in January, however, this was unlikely to happen because there were insufficient volunteers available.

It was noted that collection of SID data was very reliant on one person changing batteries and downloading the information, more volunteers to help in this regard would be appreciated.

It was agreed that speedwatch and SID management and monitoring would be included in the remit of the ‘Traffic Working Group’.

**7. Planning**

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

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

**8. Finance**

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

**Balances at 4th January 2023**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Current Account | Balance at 17th November 2022 | **£7,840.73** |
| Less payments | Village Hall Hire  PBS (Newsletter printing)  SCC – SID Post | -£24.00  -£63.00  -£190.00 |
| Receipts | Newsletter sponsorship | £21.00 |
| **Balance at 16th Nov 2022** |  | **£7,584.73** |
|  |  |  |
| **Deposit Account Balance** |  | **£1,002.81** |
|  |  |  |
| **Total** |  | **£8,587.54** |
|  |  |  |

1. **Receipts Outstanding**

None.

1. **Payments to be agreed:**

None.

**3. 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 advised that nothing further had been heard from TSB and agreed to contact them to confirm alterations to the Mandate had been made.

As Stephen Miles had now joined the Council, it was agreed that he should also be added as a bank account signatory, Clerk to obtain necessary forms.

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

A revised budget had been prepared and circulated prior to the meeting. Latest tax base calculations had been received. The budget tabled indicated a ‘forecast budget expenditure’ of £3,414.00.

After discussion all Cllrs agreed that the Precept should be increased from £2,700 to £2,800, an increase of 3.89%. Any shortfall in anticipated budget expenditure would be met out of existing current account balances and reserves. Savings to be made wherever possible.

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

Although the printer, PBS, had offered to defer the cost of printing this, all Cllrs agreed that due to current financial constraints the Parish Council could not commit funds to cover the cost of printing. Cllr Stick, co-author of the publication, very kindly offered to allow anyone wishing to read this a .pdf download version free of charge, it was also proposed that a .pdf version should be included on the village website. A notice to this effect to be included in the next edition of the Newsletter.

**10. Correspondence received:**

i) Email, 1st December 2022 – Bloor Homes re closure of School Road, Elmswell, details circulated and noted, and a copy put on the village WhatsApp Group and noticeboard.

ii) Email, 2nd December 2022 – Notification of appointment of External Auditor for 5-year period 2022-23 to 2026-27. Auditor PFK Littlejohn remains unchanged. Details circulated and noted.

iii) Email on behalf of Chief Planning Officer, concerning Consultation re Local Validation List – comments before 20th January 2023. Details circulated and noted, no comments were forthcoming.

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

i) An email had been received advising that a planning application had now been submitted in connection with Land at Shepherds Grove, Stanton. The development will include a new regional hub for Copart, an industry leader in the resale and remarketing of used, wholesale and salvage vehicles, together with other uses such as offices, industrial units, and storage/distribution. The development will create new jobs for the local area, and will include a new roundabout and access road from the A143 linking through to Grove Lane, providing all the industrial estate HGV traffic that currently travels through Stanton village with a new, safer and more direct route from the A143 to Shepherds Grove West.

Comments can be made on West Suffolk Council website, reference: DC/22/2190/HYB. A decision is expected in April 2023.

ii) Designation of Wetherden Road as Quiet Lane was to be progressed at Wetherden Parish Council January meeting.

ii) King’s Coronation Tea / Event, although the Parish Council did not propose to organise a special event for this occasion, they were happy to support any celebrations that may be organised by the Village Hall Committee.

iii) The Clerk reported that the wooden noticeboard outside the village hall needed refurbishment.

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

The next meeting is scheduled to be held at 7.30pm on Thursday, 16th March 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