**GREAT ASHFIELD PARISH COUNCIL**

**Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on Wednesday, 17th May at 7.40pm**

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

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

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

**Mr. M. Taylor\* Mr. S. Miles\***

**Present: All marked\***

Suffolk County Councillor A. Mellen (part of meeting)

District Councillor Richard Winch

No members of the public were present

Mrs C White took the minutes.

Cllr Peake welcomed everyone to the meeting.

1. **Election of Parish Council Chairman and Vice Chairman**

Cllr Arthur Peake was proposed as Chairman by Cllr Stick, seconded by Cllr Dewhirst, all voted in favour of the election of Cllr Peake as Chairman. He confirmed that he would accept the position for the forthcoming year only.

Cllr Sadler was proposed as Vice-Chairman by Cllr Stick, seconded by Cllr Peake, all voted in favour of the election of Cllr Sadler as Vice Chairman. He confirmed that he would accept the position for the forthcoming year only.

Cllr Stephen Miles agreed to accept the role of Tree Officer in place of Bob Fitch who had retired as a councillor prior to the recent election.

Cllr Fitch was thanked for his dedicated service on the Parish Council over many years and he will be sorely missed.

**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**

An Annual Report had been received and presented to the Annual Parish Meeting and circulated to Councillors.

Cllr Mellen confirmed that a new sign had been ordered for the bottom of Ashfield Hill (Holland Hill).

He also highlighted a new one-off scheme to help offer financial support to Ukrainian refugees to enable them to move out of host family accommodation and into their own rented accommodation; a scheme offering Cassius digital care technology to help people requiring care to live independently; and he reported that a new bus scheme was being trialled using school buses on village routes during the daytime.

Cllr Mellen advised that a new Community Engineer had been appointed and suggested that the Parish Council might wish to have a meeting with him concerning traffic calming measures for Elmswell Road, Cllrs agreed that this would be a good idea and asked Cllr Mellen to progress this. It was also suggested that the new Engineer could have a look at the road surface at Daisy Green and on Wetherden Road where the surface is breaking up and subsiding, this had been reported on the Highways reporting tool, but no action forthcoming. Cllr Mellen recommended reporting this as a “dangerous road surface” to try and illicit a response.

Further to recent circulation of the Definitive Map the classification of Braziers Lane as a BOAT was raised and Cllr Mellen was asked for his help because whilst there is a PTRO in place to limit vehicle traffic on this lane in practice because both the Definitive Map and the OS maps do not show this, it means members of the public are using motor vehicles on this lane which is totally unsuitable for. It is understood that the public right of way is for walkers and horse riders only. This issue is causing unnecessary concern and expense for residents.

**ii) District Councillor Richard Winch**

Newly elected District Councillor Richard Winch attended the meeting & introduced himself. No official report had been prepared as he was still settling into his new role. The handover by Rick Meyer had been smooth and the Parish Council thanked Rick for all his assistance in recent years.

The recent election represented a period of transition as this was the first district council election requiring the presentation of voter ID.

Further to a query about the Joint Local Plan and land allocations, it was reported that this had been split into two parts and was still subject to examination and consultation, it was hoped that Part 1 would be completed by the end of the summer, but that the land allocations would be considered at a later date as part of the Part II round of examination and consultations.

The Clerk was asked to send Cllr Winch recent copies of the Great Ashfield Village News so he could read Rick Meyer’s previous reports and continue to contribute to this publication as District Councillor.

**iii) Public Forum**

There were no members of the public present.

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

The minutes of the scheduled meeting held on 16th March 2023, had previously been circulated and were accepted as a true record of the meeting.

**5. Traffic Issues**

**i) Traffic Working Group**

There had been no further developments to report in connection with this.

**ii) Portable Space**

A new full planning application DC/23/01506 had been submitted to consolidate and facilitate expansion at the Red House Farm site. The Parish Council had once again submitted comments/objections relating to the use of Wetherden Road/Daisy Green/School Road by HGVs and note highways have also registered objections in this connection. The Parish Council have been advised that this application will go before a Planning Committee shortly and have registered their intention to attend and represent the views of the village. Cllrs Mellen & Winch confirmed that they were meeting with the planners in the near future, to discuss this and they were asked to keep the Parish Council informed of any developments.

**iii) Community Speedwatch / SID Data**

Due to a continued lack of volunteers no speedwatch sessions had been held on Elmswell Road, although Long Thurlow CSW residents had organised themselves and held several sessions. Recent statistics for Elmswell Road confirmed that many vehicles were speeding, some at speeds more than 50, 60, 70 and even 80mph!

**6. Planning**

i) Applications received:

DC/23/01700 – Application to Determine if Prior Approval is required for a Proposed: Erection, Extension or Alteration of a building for Agricultural or Forestry Use.

Located at: Land off Westley Way, Great Ashfield, IP31 3DL.

No comments were submitted in response to this application.

DC/23/01506 – Full Planning Application – Change of Use of Land from agricultural to use for storage of containers, portable cabins and similar items and equipment used for the maintenance and conversion of such items, construction of an earth bund & landscaping.

Located at: Red House Farm, Rectory Road, Bacton, Stowmarket, IP14 4LE.

The Parish Council had submitted comments and objections to the use of village lanes by HGV’s exiting this site and concern that continued expansion will exacerbate current problems.

ii) Applications decided since the last meeting:

DC/23/01700 – it was determined that prior approval was not required for this application.

**7. Finance**

1. Parish Council Audit: The Clerk presented the Auditor’s Report for the year to March 31st, 2023, confirming examination of the accounts for the year. An Annual Statement for the year and Statement of Significant Variances had been circulated and was accepted by Cllrs. The Annual Governance Statement, Certificate of Exemption and Accounting Statements were accepted and signed on behalf of the Council by the Chairman.
2. A short finance report had been circulated prior to the meeting:

**Bank balances at 9th May 2023**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Current Account | Balance at 16th March 2023 | **£7,509.73** |
| Less payments | Parish Clerk Salary  Admin Expenses  Lord Thurlow Hall Hire  SCC - Streetlights | -£350.00  -£46.10  -£20.00  -£640.73 |
| Receipts | HMRC VAT Refund  MSDC Precept | £151.58  £1,400.00 |
| **Balance at 9th May 2023** |  | **8,004.48** |
|  |  |  |
| **Deposit Account Balance** |  | **£1,004.99** |
|  |  |  |
| **Total** |  | **£9,009.47** |
|  |  |  |

**Receipts Outstanding**

None.

**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.

1. **Payments**

Cllrs authorised the following payments:

To MSDC Dog Bin Emptying - £223.34 – payment online.

To SALC Membership - £198.28 – payment online

To M. Saunders (Auditor) - £85.00 – cheque no. 404

1. **TSB Bank Mandate Alterations**

Bank Mandate Forms requesting the removal of Bob Fitch from the Bank Account and the addition of Stephen Miles to both the current and deposit accounts were tabled.

Cllr Miles confirmed that he would complete the forms as necessary and take them to the branch with his ID.

Cllr Taylor confirmed that he had not yet attended branch to present his ID, but that he would try and do this.

**8. Annual Review of Policies**

i) Standing Orders and Councillor’s Model Code of Conduct – these had been circulated prior to the meeting and all Cllrs agreed that no amendments were required at this time.

ii) Model Financial Regulations 2019; Internal Control Statement; Internal Control Report; Financial Risk Assessment & Management, these had been circulated prior to the meeting and all Cllrs agreed no amendments were required and these were signed as accepted by the Chairman.

**9. Future of the Parish Council, Councillor Vacancy & Meeting Dates**

At the recent Parish Council election, no new nominations to become councillors were received and six existing Cllrs were duly re-elected. However, the retirement of Bob Fitch means there is a vacancy for another councillor.

It is noted that as no new volunteers have come forward and the fact that of the current six councillors accepting re-election, four have confirmed that they are only willing to serve for another year, without new volunteers to join the council, it will not be quorate and will not be able to function and running of the Parish Council will inevitably pass to the district council.

It was agreed that the Chairman would draft an item for the Village Newsletter explaining this situation and asking for new volunteers to come forward and serve on the Council. Cllrs agreed that they would do everything possible to encourage others to join the Council over the forthcoming year and that this would remain an agenda item for each meeting.

Regarding Parish Council meetings, it was agreed to reduce the number of scheduled meetings to be held quarterly as follows:

Thursday, 24th August 2023

Thursday, 23rd November 2023

Thursday, 22nd February 2024

Thursday, 23rd May 2024 (Annual Parish Meeting & Annual Parish Council Meeting)

Planning meetings would be convened as and when required.

**10. Correspondence received:**

i) Email 22nd March 2023, from resident regarding flooding on the Wetherden Road – this matter had been raised with Cllr Mellen and would also be raised with the Community Engineer when a meeting can be arranged for him to visit the village.

ii) Email 4th May 2023, Updated Parish Maps, the Definitive Map & Statement of Public Rights of Way available on SCC’s website. The issue of Brazier’s Lane had been raised with Cllr Mellen (see SCC Report above).

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

There were no additional matters arising or new issues raised.

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

The next Parish Council Meeting will be held at on Thursday, 24th August 2023 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 8.45pm.