**GREAT ASHFIELD PARISH COUNCIL**

**Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on Thursday, 23rd November 2023 at 7.30pm**

**Held at The Limes, Long Thurlow Road, Great Ashfield, IP31 3HA**

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

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

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

**Mr. N. Jones\***

**Present: All marked\***

Suffolk County Councillor Andy Mellen

District Councillor Richard Winch

Mrs C White took the minutes.

Cllr Peake welcomed everyone to the meeting and introduced Great Ashfield’s newest Councillor, Neil Jones.

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

Apologies had been received and were unanimously accepted by the meeting from Cllr Stick, due to an unexpected engagement.

**2. Declarations of interest**

Cllr Sadler declared an interest in Agenda item 9.

**3. Reports**

**i) Suffolk County Councillor Andy Mellen**

A report had been received and circulated including details of: Support for Suffolk Farmers; Walking & Bridleway Access and a meeting of the Suffolk Local Access Forum; Suffolk Pharmacies looking at the services provided, and the challenges faced; Budget Consultation taking place, all invited to participate & share their views; storm Babet flooding and help available; A1088 bridge re-construction, details of first liaison group meeting.

**ii) District Councillor Richard Winch**

A report had been received and circulated including details of: financial assistance available to homes and businesses flooded during recent bad weather; solar farms, a position statement had been agreed on solar farms at MSDC’s meeting in October; at the October meeting there had been an agreement to form a working group to review sustainable, integrated transport in the district; Cosy Homes insulation initiative being launched 15th November, eligibility criteria to apply; council housing, the new administration will be focusing on the backlog of repairs and maintenance required in this sector; BMSDC Joint Local Plan Part 1 inspection had been completed and would now be formally adopted; homelessness strategy subject to a general review of the services on offer; Portable Space – MSDC planning are currently in discussions with the company on an acceptable way forward (more details below).

Details of the Cosy Homes initiative had been posted on the village WhatsApp Group but it was agreed that it should also be included in the next edition of the Newsletter, in order to reach as many residents as possible.

**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 Parish Council Meeting held on 24th August 2023, had previously been circulated and were accepted and signed as a true record of the meeting.

**5. Traffic Issues**

**i) Portable Space & Planning Application DC/23/01506**

The Parish Council were once again advised that discussions were continuing in this regard and that a further extension of time had been granted until January 2024. It was provisionally advised that this application would go before the Planning Committee to be held on Wednesday, 17th January 2024. A representative from the Parish Council would attend this meeting to represent the views of residents and it is likely that other residents may wish to attend to speak also. It had been suggested that liaison meetings between Portable Space, representatives from affected parishes and the authorities might be a way forward. However, Cllrs unanimously felt that an enforceable traffic management plan needed to be introduced to ensure that Portable Space complied with any agreement reached.

**Note**: Contacting the Bury Free Press in this connection was discussed, see Agenda item 12(iii) below.

Cllr Mellen left the meeting at 7.50pm.

**ii) Community Speedwatch / SID Data**

In the absence of Cllr Stick, Cllr Peake reported that current SID statistics indicate that 75% of traffic passing through the village is still speeding.

It was noted that since the last meeting there had been two accidents on Elmswell Road on the bends near the junction with School Road, one involving a motorcyclist who required the assistance of the air ambulance and one in which a car hit Ashton House causing damage to fencing and the house itself, the SID near Tudor Lodge recorded a vehicle travelling at 75mph at roughly the time this occurred. Although the cause of the accidents was not known, speeding was likely to be a contributing factor. Cllrs agreed it would be a good idea to contact the police Community Liaison Officer to get details of the accident history on Elmswell Road, particularly on the ‘S’ bends near School Road where the recent accidents occurred.

**iii) A1088 – Bridge Repairs & Road Closure**

A liaison group had been set up and a meeting had been held with SCC Highways, the Contractor, and the Parishes likely to be affected by the proposed road closure needed to carry out repairs to the bridge. The detour route for the closure is yet to be determined, but the new SCC contractor (Millstone) will have a hotline for residents to report issues to.

Depending on current works on the A14 it is likely that the closure would take place from May 2024 for approximately four months.

**6. Planning:**

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

ii) The following planning applications have been granted: DC/23/02759 Householder Application & DC/23/03738 Application for Listed Building Consent re Erection of single storey rear extension at Thatched Cottages, Long Thurlow Road.

iii) DC/22/04028 Rookery Barn, this application was still with enforcement, but Cllr Winch reported that an agreement & resolution was expected very soon.

**7. Finance**

1. A short finance report had been circulated prior to the meeting:
2. **Bank balances at 1st November 2023**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Current Account | Balance at 16th August 2023 | **£7,478.36** |
| Less payments | PBS Newsletter  LTVH – Hall Hire  A C White – Admin expenses  AC White – Salary  SSP Blue HGV Signs  MSDC – Election Expenses  Zurich Insurance  Amazon - Litter Pickers  Get Geared - Pressure Sprayers  CAS – website hosting | -£42.00  -£15.00  -£37.00  -£350.00  -£322.56  -£132.64  -£420.05  -£190.94  -£40.98  -£60.00 |
| Receipts | MSDC – Precept  MSDC – ‘Pride in your Place’ Grant | £1,400.00  £250.00 |
| **Balance at 1st Nov. 2023** |  | **£7,517.19** |
|  |  |  |
| **Deposit Account Balance** |  | **£1009.65** |
|  |  |  |
| **Total** |  | **£8,526.84** |
|  |  |  |

1. **Receipts Outstanding**

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, grants must be repaid if not used for the purpose for which they were awarded (see below).

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

CIL Grant outstanding, £1,420.85 (Blue HGV signs purchased out of grant).

1. **Payments to be considered:** Cllrs agreed that the Clerk could make the following online payments:

PBS Winter Newsletter - £42.00

Regarding contributions towards printing of the Newsletter, the meeting received offers of sponsorship for the next three issues, including the current edition.

1. **Repayment of Grants for Quiet Lane Poles & Signs**

As the Parish Council had recently been informed that funding for the Quiet Lane poles and signs in the Parish had been met out of central funding, the PC were advised that locality grants from SCC in the sum of £920 for poles and DC in the sum of £720 for signs were repayable according to the terms of the grants. District Cllr Winch agreed to investigate whether it would be possible to reallocate these funds to other projects in the village, specifically towards the cost of repainting the village sign, a quote for this had previously been received in the sum of approximately £2,000, which had put this work out of reach of Parish Council funds. Cllr Winch agreed to liaise with Cllr Mellen in this regard.

1. **TSB Bank Mandate Alterations**

Cllr Miles advised that he was intending to visit the branch for identity checks shortly.

A new mandate to include Cllr Neil Jones on the current account was presented for completion and signature. An update of the deposit account mandate was outstanding.

**Post meeting note**: Cllr Miles confirmed he had attended TSB for identity checks.

1. **Parish Council Budget for 2024-25 and Precept Requirement for 2024-25**

A budget forecast had been circulated prior to the meeting, indicating a potential expenditure shortfall based on the current precept. Any shortfall would have to be met from reserves. After discussion Cllrs unanimously agreed that a 5% increase in the precept was necessary to mitigate further depletion of reserves. Using the provisional tax base calculations provided this equates to an increase in the precept request from £2,800 to £2,994.

**8. Future of the Parish Council**

Cllrs Peake, Sadler & Dewhirst advised the meeting that they would be standing down from the Parish Council in May 2024, Cllr Taylor also confirmed that he was planning to move house and would be leaving the Parish Council sometime in 2024.

A Parish Council is only quorate if one third of its membership is present and voting, and the quorum must be no less than three. In the absence of new volunteers to join the Parish Council it is likely that in May 2024 the Parish Council will cease to be viable.

After discussions District Cllr Winch agreed to investigate whether the setting up and running of a Great Ashfield Parish Meeting, rather than the Parish Council might be a more appropriate means of resident representation and participation.

This item to be on the agenda of the next meeting.

Cllr Jones was advised that there was training run by SALC available for new Councillors if he was interested and the Clerk was asked to forward details to him for consideration.

**9. WI Centenary – Request for a Donation**

An email had been received from the Great Ashfield & Badwell Ash WI requesting a donation towards the celebration of their centenary in 2024. It was understood that Badwell Ash Parish Council had offered a donation. Cllrs all agreed that the WI had been very supportive of village and community events and whilst PC funding is limited, a donation of £100 should be offered as a token ‘thank you’ for all the WI’s efforts over the years.

**10. ‘Pride in Your Place Funding’**

A grant of £250 had been applied for and received. The money is for spending on cleaning and tidying up around the village. It is the Parish Council’s intention to invite residents to join them in cleaning signs and litter picking around the village in the new year. To facilitate this, two portable washers and several litter pickers have been purchased with an amount of approximately £50 outstanding to spend in support of this event.

**11. Correspondence received:**

i) Email: 29th August 23, from resident complaint about footpath in Long Thurlow needing clearing, reported. This had now been cleared.

ii) Email: 1st Sept. 23, BMSDC Community Planning, re publication of Elmswell Neighbourhood Plan, circulated for information only. Noted.

iii) Email: 1st Sept. 23, BMSDC Grants – ‘Pride in your Place’ grant awarded of £250. Project to be completed within 6 months & form to be completed & returned. Details noted.

iv) Email: 5th Sept. 23, from Richard Winch re Rookery Barn planning application DC/22/04028 – resolution expected by Oct/Nov. Circulated for information. District Cllr Winch to follow this up.

v) Emails: 20th Sept. 23, Media Release re Joint Local Plan & Inspector’s Report letter, circulated for information. Noted.

vi) Email: 22nd Sept. 23, from resident Wooden Footbridge beside the Ford near the church damaged in recent bad weather. Cllr Miles reported that the necessary repairs had been carried.

vii) Email: 26th Sept. 23, Invitation to BMSDC Town & Parish Councils Liaison Meetings, circulated for information. No Cllrs attended.

viii) Email: 27th Sept. 23, Invitation to New Policing Model Consultation Meetings, circulated for information. Noted.

ix) Email: 12th Oct. 23, SALC Conference Invite, circulated for information.

x) Email: 16th Oct. 23, Land at Shepherds Grove, update on planning application DC/22/2190/HYB, circulated for information. Noted.

xi) Email: 23rd Oct. 23, Bus Strategy, request for ideas & suggestions on how to spend grants SCC has received for enhancements to the current passenger transport network. Noted.

xii) Email: 10th Nov. 23, Streetlighting, details of new contract for maintenance & energy, circulated for information. Noted, no details of actual costs to be available until March 2024.

xiii) Email: 10th Nov. 23, Citizens Advice Update & Request for Donations, circulated for information. Whilst appreciating the work that the CAB do, Cllrs did not feel they could offer any financial support at present.

xiv) Email: 10th Nov. 23, Invitation to Participate in Consultation concerning introduction of Local Listed Building Consent Orders, circulated for information. Noted.

xv) Email: 22nd Nov. 23, Notice of Adoption of Babergh & Mid Suffolk Joint Local Plan, Part 1 – 2018-2037. Circulated for information. Noted.

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

i) The possibility of producing a Great Ashfield Village Calendar for 2025 was discussed as a community effort and as a means of raising money. Cllr Miles advised that this had also been considered by members of the Church and agreed to find out what the situation was in this regard.

ii) Cllrs agreed that a reminder that the Great Ashfield Millenium Book is on display in All Saints Church should be placed in the next edition of the Newsletter, as this may be of interest to existing and new residents and may encourage more people to visit the Church to view all the recent work that has been carried out.

iii) With regard to Portable Space Cllrs discussed whether it would be appropriate to contact the Bury Free Press, and whilst it was decided that the PC would not initiate this, it was agreed that they would be prepared to comment should a member of the public/resident contact the BFP of their own accord and should the BFP contact the PC for comment.

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

The next Parish Council Meeting will be held at on Thursday, 22nd February 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 9.10pm.