**GREAT ASHFIELD PARISH COUNCIL**

**Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on Thursday, 22nd February at 7.30pm**

**Held at The Lord Thurlow Village Hall, School Road, Great Ashfield IP31 3N**

**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\***

There were five members of the public present.

Mrs C White took the minutes.

Cllr Peake welcomed everyone to the meeting.

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

Apologies had been received and were unanimously accepted by the meeting from Cllr Stick, Cllr Sadler, and Cllr Jones. County Cllr Mellen and District Cllr Winch also sent their apologies.

**2. Declarations of interest**

None.

**3. Reports**

**i) Suffolk County Councillor Andy Mellen**

Although Cllr Mellen was not in attendance, a report had been received and circulated including details of: County Council Budget 2024-25 with proposals to be voted on at a meeting on 15th February; OFSTED/CQC Report on SEND Services reveals a failing service, reorganisation and new leadership has been promised for this service although funding remains an issue; Autism Strategy as commissioned by SCC and local NHS providers in conjunction with Suffolk people with Autism; Sizewell C construction has begun, SCC has secured £250m “mitigation” monies for Suffolk communities; New funding of £150,000 from the Home Office to support Suffolk’s Serious Violence Strategy; Suffolk ‘Good Journey’ Scheme launched inviting visitor attractions promoting car free days out in Suffolk to join; Blue Badge Team change of phone number; DEFRA’s Property Flood Resilience Grant for homes/businesses flooded by Storm Babet, applications not already made should be made as soon as possible.

**ii) District Councillor Richard Winch**

Although Cllr Winch was not in attendance, a report had been received and circulated including details of: Local JLP, Part 1, has been adopted; MSDC budget includes a 2% council tax increase to ensure financial stability for day-to-day services; Proposed Green Skills & Innovation Centre based at Gateway 14 has been approved by Council; Recycling, a number of changes are planned over the coming few years to improve this; Community Rail Partnership is to be set up; Mid Suffolk added 86 new council homes to their housing stock in 2023; Planned new sports facilities for Stowmarket have been given the go ahead; a call for land to support nature recovery has been circulated.

**iii) Public Forum**

There were five members of the public present, the matters raised were primarily in connection with the current traffic/HGV issues affecting the village.

Considerable concern was expressed at the on-going problems of HGV’s, particularly Portable Space, using the narrow lanes in the village as a cut through from Red House farm. There had been several recent incidents involving confrontations between HGV’s and other drivers, resulting in residents experiencing intimidation and even aggression. Any such incidents should be reported using the SCC HGV incident reporting form. There was also the on-going problem of damage to verges, the road surface and drains.

A number of residents had questioned the validity of Portable Space Ltd’s Operator’s Licence permitting them to use the access from College Road onto Wetherden Road with DVSA and it was agreed that the Parish Council would write to the planners again raising this issue as a further objection to the current planning application under consideration.

Residents also queried the fact that the access from College Road, Red House Farm, on to Wetherden Road had been designated a BOAT in recent years, the Chairman advised that the Parish Council had no knowledge of this, nor had they been consulted on any such change in designation.

Other residents present raised the issue of the increasing volume of HGV traffic using Elmswell Road, and expressed concern at damage to drains and pavements as a result. It was noted that often HGV’s have to mount the narrow pavements on the bends on Elmswell Road at the junction with School Road and it was felt that there was a serious safety issue here. Whilst some of the increase in HGV traffic was related to the A14 works, the situation was not helped by the extent of building/construction works in neighbouring villages and would be further exacerbated by the upcoming closure of the A1088.

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

The draft minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on 23rd November 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**

District Cllr Winch has advised that it is anticipated that this application will come before the Planning Committee on Wednesday, 13th March, confirmation of this was yet to be received. Cllrs Mellen & Winch intended to be present at this meeting.

Cllr Mellen has queried the Portable Space Operator’s Licence with the Office of the Traffic Commissioners but had not yet received a response. It was confirmed that he had also requested that Highways check the visibility splays at the junction of School Road and Elmswell Road.

**ii) Community Speedwatch / SID Data**

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

Cllr Peake and the Clerk had recently met with the Community Engineer who had advised that before any action could be recommended Highways required their own data to assess the severity of the speeding problem, therefore, Cllr Mellen had agreed to fund a traffic speed survey out of his locality budget in the sum of £375.00, it was likely that this would take place during March.

Cllr Peake reported that the SID mounted on the pole near Tudor Lodge required a new rechargeable battery. The Clerk confirmed that CIL money could be spent this, and Cllr’s unanimously agreed that a new battery could be purchased at a cost of £39.95, plus delivery.

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

The next meeting of the Liaison Group is due to take place on Monday, 26th February. Cllr Peake confirmed that he would be attending and would report back.

**6. Planning:**

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

ii) The following planning application has been granted: DC/22/0408, works at Rookery Barn.

**7. Finance**

1. A short finance report had been circulated prior to the meeting:
2. **Bank balances at 21st February 2024**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Current Account | Balance at 1st November 2023 | **£7,517.19** |
| Less payments | PBS  Gt Ashfield & Badwell Ash WI  ICO (data protection) | -£42.00  -£100.00  -£35.00 |
| Receipts | Newsletter Sponsorship  WWI Booklet | £12.00  £10.00 |
| **Balance at 1st Nov. 2023** |  | **£7,362.19** |
|  |  |  |
| **Deposit Account Balance** |  | **£1,013.08** |
|  |  |  |
| **Total** |  | **£8,375.27** |
|  |  |  |

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.

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 Spring Newsletter - £59.00, including flyer for village hall ‘reopening event’

Clerks Salary - £350.00 (payment due 16th March 2024)

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

Since the last meeting District Cllr Winch had confirmed that the QL grant of £720 could be reallocated to another village project, invoices to be forwarded to him in due course.

County Cllr Mellen was still looking into the reallocation of the £920 grant.

It was agreed that a new wooden noticeboard was needed at the village hall, the cost of which could be met out of the reallocated funds and CIL funds held by the Parish Council. Quotations received by Cllr Peake were considered expensive and a resident attending the meeting offered to obtain more reasonable quotations elsewhere for consideration.

1. **TSB Bank Mandate Alterations**

The Bank Mandate needs updating again, the Clerk advised that this could be done online, but that she could not do it as she was not a full authorised signatory. Cllr Peake agreed to investigate this. The Clerk has one paper copy of the Mandate form for completion if necessary.

**8. Future of the Parish Council**

Residents present expressed concern at the potential demise of the Parish Council if prospective new councillors do not come forward. Cllr Peake has outlined the situation in the current edition of the Newsletter asked that anyone interested in joining the Parish Council should come forward, as soon as possible.

In addition to Cllrs Peake, Sadler and Dewhirst having confirmed their intention to step down at the Annual Parish Council Meeting in May, Cllr Taylor confirmed that he had a moving date, and expected to be leaving the Parish Council in May. The Clerk agreed to contact Democratic Services with a view to advertising the Cllr vacancies, so that new Cllrs could potentially be co-opted onto the Council at the May meeting.

Since the last meeting the Clerk had confirmed her intention to step down at the end of March 2024. The vacancy has been advertised on the SALC website, on the village noticeboard and in the Newsletter.

**9. ‘Pride in Your Place Funding’**

Litter picking equipment and washers have been purchased, as agreed, Cllrs decided that it was prudent to wait for better weather before arranging a litter picking/sign cleaning working party. Cllrs were grateful to those residents who continued to litter pick whenever possible.

**11. Correspondence received:**

i) Email: 7th December 2023, BMSDC Public Realm, advising of forthcoming dog bin emptying cost increase for 2024/25, circulated, for information. No further action.

ii) Email: 7th December 2023, from BMSDC, Richard Parmee – Call for Land Nature Recovery, circulated for information. No further action.

iii) Email: 20th December 2023, Details of New Neighbourhood Policing Model, circulated for information. No further action.

iv) Email: 21st December 2023, National Strategic Infrastructure Projects Bulletin, circulated for information. No further action.

v) Email: 22nd December 2023, BMSDC Public Realm, Details of actual cost increase in dog bin emptying service costs, circulated for information. No further action.

vi) Email: 5th January 2024, BMSDC ‘Call for Sites’, circulated for information. No further action.

vii) Email: 22nd January 2024, from Philip Isbell, Joint Local Validation List Consultation, from 22nd January 2024 to 4th March 2024. To do with additions/alterations to planning requirements. Circulated for information. No further action.

viii) Email: 8th February 2024, from SALC, confirming subscription charges to increase by 3%, invoices to be prepared and sent out on 1st April 2024. No further action.

ix) Email: 8th February 2024, from SALC, Devolution & what it could mean for Suffolk, invitation to pre-consultation sessions. Circulated for information. No further action.

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

No other issues were raised by Councillors.

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

The Annual Parish Meeting will be held on Thursday, 23rd May 2024, at 7.00pm in the Lord Thurlow Village Hall.

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There being no further business, the Chairman thanked everyone for attending and the meeting closed at 8.45pm.