

WALBERSWICK PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Meeting of the Parish Council meeting held on Monday 11th December 2023 at 7pm.

Present (physically): Councillors Whiting (Vice Chair and Chair of the meeting), Bassinette, Richardson, Sutton and Watson (from 7.03pm). Also in attendance was County Cllr. Smith. No members of the public attended in person. Only Councillors physically present can speak (except during the public forum or if standing orders are temporarily suspended) and vote.

Also in attendance (remotely via Zoom) were Cllr. Lewis and Mark Knight, Parish Clerk. Also in attendance (remotely) was District Councillor Beavan.

116/23-24 Chair's welcome.

The Chair welcomed those present to the meeting and those attending by Zoom.

117/23-24 To consider and approve any apologies for absence.

Apologies for not attending in person were received and accepted for Cllr Lewis.

118/23-24 Declaration of Interest and Requests for Dispensation.

Cllr. Whiting declared a non-pecuniary interest in item 123/23-4 pertaining to planning and took no part in this discussion.

119/23-24 Open Forum


None.

Cllr. Watson entered the meeting at 7.03pm.

120/23-24 To receive a report from County Councillor Richard Smith

Cllr. Smith reported that there had been over 200 responses to the Lion Link consultation from Walberswick which was a remarkable achievement from a village of our size. He extended his thanks to everyone who had taken the time to send in their considered responses. He said that SCC had put in their objection to the Lionlink landing site in Walberswick.

He said that there had been many difficult meetings to discuss the county budget and that it was expected that the outcome would be in draft documents available after the start of the year. He said that the discussions were particularly challenging because the County was mandated to spend on Social Care and SEND (providing school transport for children with special needs) but that the amount of funding provided from the national government was not keeping up with the increasing demand and costs of these programs. Therefore, there was a £30 million overspend of which £10 million was covered by increased revenue from the County's state-of-


15th JANUARY 2024

the-art waste recycling plant. SCC was not suffering from the severe financial difficulties that were affecting other councils (most recently Nottingham) but that was only because SCC was able to cover the shortfall from the reserves that had taken many years to build up. He felt that the situation was not sustainable in the long-term and would undoubtedly lead to an increase in Council tax this year.

121/23-24 To receive a report from East Suffolk District Councillor David Beavan

Cllr Beavan reported that the budget setting process at the District Council was also underway, but was being made more complicated by not knowing what central government funding the council would receive. There certainly would be an increase in the District portion of the Council tax, likely at the maximum allowed which would still be below the inflation rate.

He said that East Suffolk Council has formally submitted their opposition to the Sea Link project. The Council was concerned by the huge numbers of energy projects and the lack of joined up thinking that should be leading to offshore infrastructure instead of cables and substations on land in Suffolk. At the same time, it was looking ever more likely that Sizewell C would go forward and that it would be necessary to put all effort into accessing funding to help local communities deal with the overwhelmingly negative impacts the project would have.

The Harbour Committee has resumed meetings and is now looking at funding to support the needed improvements. A longer-term strategic plan was being discussed which would cover the next ten years and would look to address flooding and erosion issues inland as well as coastal issues.

Finally, an investigation over the licensing of holiday lets in the area was ongoing, and the 2023/7 Strategic Plan was now on the East Suffolk Council website.

C Cllr. Smith left the meeting at 7.18pm.

122/23-24 To consider the minutes of the meetings of 13th November 2023

The minutes of the 13th November 2023 meeting were **APPROVED** with the Chair to sign and to retain them until they can be handed to the Clerk in person.

123/23-24 Planning

123/23-24.1 Applications to Consider

123/23-24.1.1 Pebbles, The Lea DC/23/4128/FUL

It was **RESOLVED** to **SUPPORT** the application.

123/23-24.1.2 Briar Cottage, The Green DC/23/4456/FUL

It was **RESOLVED** to **OBJECT** to the application, due to concerns over the

Bea
15/1/24

joining of the two buildings being permitted development and the lack of required parking for such a large house. It was felt that the loss of two modest cottages would have a detrimental impact on the Conservation Area, immediate locality and wider village.

123/23-24.1.3 Mulberry House, Millfield Road DC/23/4447/FUL

It was **RESOLVED** to **OBJECT** to the application due to the removal of a hedgerow being in contravention of the Supplementary Planning Documents. The removal of the existing hedge and replacement with a uniform woven fence does not comply with specific comments contained within the adopted Walberswick conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan. It was noted that if the current hedge needed to be replaced, it should be done with a new hedge, rather than fencing.

123/23-24.2 The Council noted the decisions on planning applications that had been taken previously under delegated authority:

123/23-24.2.1 The House on the Green, The Green DC/23/3765/FUL

It was **RESOLVED** to **SUPPORT** the application.

D Cllr. Beavan left the meeting at 7.26pm.

124/23-24 Finance Matters 2023/4

124/23-24.1 Approve items on the Authorisation to Pay Sheet

It was **AGREED** to pay all items on the sheet. It was noted that the items associated with play area payment were retrospective. Cllrs. Bassinette and Sutton were authorised to carry out the electronic payments.

124/23-24.2 To consider the opening of a PayPal account

Standing Orders were suspended at 7.28pm to allow Cllr. Lewis to participate.

The logistics and need for the account were discussed at length and it was **AGREED** that the Council needed to continue to upgrade its approaches to making payments as the financial industry developed. It was **AGREED in principle** that it would be preferable to set up a business account with PayPal, in the name of the Parish Council and linked to the Council's bank account as the means for making payments directly for on-line and some other services where invoicing was not an option. This would substitute for Councillors having to make payments from personal accounts and seeking reimbursement which was currently the situation with some online and IT services. To take this proposal forward, it was **AGREED** to seek formal approval by the Council at the next meeting along with appropriate amendments to the Financial Regulations and Internal Controls to support the creation and use of the PayPal account.

Ael.
15/1/24

Standing Orders were reinstated at 7.33pm.

125/23-24 Finance Matters 2024/5

125/23-24.1 To review and approve the draft budget, precept and reserves

The report and documents were discussed and it was **RESOLVED** to make no further changes to the budget, precept request or reserve allocations as set out in the report. Therefore:

The precept was **APPROVED** at £20,000, which represents a 0% increase on the 2023/4 precept. It was noted that because of a decrease in the number of Council tax payers in the village, it would result in a 0.26% in individual homes tax rate.

The draft budget and the individual line items were **APPROVED** for a total of £25,165 with monies coming from the precept and ring-fenced reserves.

The ring-fenced reserves were **APPROVED** at £35,977 with net reserves of £11,173 in line with best practice.

125/23-24.2 Precept request form submission arrangements

The Parish Clerk and RFO were **AUTHORISED** to sign the precept request in time for the January deadline.

126/23-24 Christmas Tree Update

It was reported that a donor for the Christmas Tree had come forward and that a group had organised themselves to procure, set up, decorate and take down the tree. This was all done by volunteers within the Village, without the need for WPC financial involvement nor the need to plant a permanent tree on the Green.

127/23-24 Refurbishment and Purchase of Play Equipment

Standing Orders were suspended at 7.37pm to allow Cllr. Lewis to participate.

Cllr. Lewis reported on remedial works and new capital purchases discussed at the Safety Committee after the recent ROSPA reports were received. Already committed expenditure as a result of the ROSPA report was confirmed as:

- Repair of toddler playground: £1,535.
- Replacement flat swing seat for The Green: £93.78.
- Replacement chains and shackles for toddler swing on The Green: £117.40.
- Wooden parts for wooden climbing frame: £276.40.
- Removal of flat swing (end of life) on playing fields: £100.
- Total: £2122.58 to be financed through playground and maintenance budget lines

Ael.
15/1/24

Cllr. Lewis then proposed the following new items of new expenditure for the improvement of the play areas and which was in line with the need to remove some equipment that was identified in the ROSPA report as no longer fit for purpose:

- Removal of the current springy sheep.
- Purchase and installation of a new three-way 'springy' equipment: £1,372.50.
- Purchase and installation of a new wooden see-saw: £5,293.
- Purchase and installation of a new birds nest style swing: £5,495.

All of the above prices are excluding VAT.

Total available funding for the new equipment is as follows:

- Locality Grant of £1,000 pledged by D Cllr. Beavan (to be confirmed through grant request to be submitted by the Clerk)
- Locality Grant of £500 pledged by C Cllr. Smith (to be confirmed through grant request to be submitted by the Clerk).
- Use of Community Infrastructure Levy monies of £14,022 currently held by WPC.
- Ring fenced playground money currently in reserves: £5,500.

It was **AGREED** to proceed with the above based on the financing scheme proposed. It was further agreed that the exact sources of funding would be confirmed and approved at the next meeting.

It was noted that as part of regular maintenance of the playing field, the WCLC was planning to undertake clearance of the gorse to a minimum of 1 meter from the playing field fence. Once this was done, the WPC would be in a position to assess the condition of the fence and any necessary repairs and maintenance that it would need to undertake.

Standing Orders were reinstated at 7.57pm.

128/23-24 Oral Updates from Councillors on areas of responsibility if relevant.

128/23-24.1 Footpaths

Nothing for this meeting.

128/23-24.2 Highways

Nothing for this meeting.

128/23-24.3 GDPR, SALC and Website

Nothing for this meeting.

128/23-24.4 Playing Fields and the Green play area

Ael.
15/1/24

Nothing further for this meeting following the extensive discussions in the above items.

128/23-24.5 Harbour Management and Car Park

Cllr. Bassinette reported that there was a new business operations manager in post.

128/23-24.6 Sizewell and other power related developments

Cllr Bassinette reported that a report would be submitted to the January meeting with a proposal developed by the B1125 Working Group on the closure of the B1125 at the Water tower. This would be necessary to control the dangerous level of traffic and speed that would result from the thousands of workers that would use this route to reach SZC and the thousands of cars and vans that might rat run down the B1125 to avoid what would be expected to be years of delays and backups on the A12 caused by SZC.

It was also reported that Walberswick had not been invited to be part of the Northern Transport Forum which was unacceptable given the impact that SZC would have on Walberswick and the role of Walberswick in the B1125 Working Group. Cllr. Bassinette reported that she had taken this up with the head of Community Relations for SZC and that he was following up to see if this oversight could be rectified.

Finally, it was noted that SZC's external legal advisors wrote about the amended DDO and that they would return to Walberswick to advise whether we would need to resign the DDO to take account of some small amendments made.

It was asked that the Parish Clerk keep this in his monthly report to ensure that this is not lost.

128/23-24.7 Neighbourhood Plan

Cllr. Whiting reported that a meeting had taken place on the 24th November where specific potential planning polices were discussed. Members of the group were now reading similar approved plans as it was felt that the plan could be more ambitious.

128/23-24.8 Village Hall

Cllr. Watson gave details on activities taking place and plans to commemorate an anniversary of the building in 2024.

1128/23-24.9 Village News

The items to include in the Village News were discussed and agreed.

129/23-24 Oral Committee reports if relevant.

Aed
15/1/24

None. It was reported that minutes for both the Safety & Employment Committees were now available on the website.

130/23-24 Clerk's report

The Clerk presented the report. Questions were asked on some of the items with further explanation given by the Clerk.

It was noted that the items related to SZC discussed earlier should be carried in the report.

131/23-24 Matters arising

None.

132/23-24 To consider a resolution under the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 to exclude the press and public for the duration of the following items in view of the confidential and personal nature of the business to be transacted. If resolved, such items to be dealt with after the item that confirms details of the next meeting.

This was so **RESOLVED**, all members of the public left the meeting at 8.10pm

134/23-24 Date of next meeting was confirmed as being Monday, 15 January 2024 at 7pm.

133/23-24 To discuss co-option of Councillors.

All candidates who had expressed an interest in being co-opted were discussed and a way forward was **AGREED**.

The meeting closed at 8.24pm.

Aed
15/1/24