

WALBERSWICK PARISH COUNCIL

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

Present (physically): Councillors Lewis (Chair), Whiting (Vice-Chair), Bassinette, Richardson and Sutton. Sixty-two (62) 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 twenty-eight (28) members of the public, Cllr. Watson, Mark Knight, Parish Clerk and Simon Ashton, Responsible Financial Officer.

059/23-24 Chair's welcome.

The Chair noted that there were nearly 100 members of the public present in person and on Zoom. He explained how the public forum would work in accordance with legal requirements and standing orders which limited the forum to 15 minutes in total and 3 minutes per speaker.

He also emphasised that the agenda item today on Lionlink, that had brought so many people to the Parish Council Meeting, was only to allow the Council to consider a resolution to participate in the non-statutory consultation and on how it would do so.

He invited any members of the public present in person and remotely to make comment and that, given the great interest, he would follow the public forum with the Lionlink agenda item so that members of the public would not need to remain at the meeting if they didn't wish to do so.

060/23-24 To consider and approve any apologies for absence.

Apologies were received and accepted from County Cllr. Smith.

061/23-24 Declaration of Interest and Requests for Dispensation.

None.

062/23-24 Open Forum

Two members of the public spoke. One stated that people were attending today to understand better the process and to express their eagerness to support the Council in objecting to the latest proposal.

A second speaker said that he wished also to represent the voices of those attending who were firmly against the proposal for Walberswick by Lionlink. He reiterated that there was support for offshore wind, but not for destroying the coast and building energy infrastructure in the middle of the village and that there were better ways to


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bring the energy to where it was needed.

The Chair thanked the members of the public for coming and for their involvement in this issue. He said that the Council meeting in October would be the time that the Council would consider its consultation response and that this would be the main opportunity to discuss details.

He said that the process would be explained more in the following agenda item. He also pointed out that Cllr David Beavan, Walberswick's representative on the East Suffolk Council, was present and could respond to concerns during his report which would follow the Lionlink agenda item.

063/23-24 To receive a report from Suffolk County Councillor Richard Smith

County Cllr. Smith was not in attendance.

068/23-24 Eurolink/Lionlink Consultation

The Council **RESOLVED** to take part in the non-statutory consultation related to the new Walberswick proposal and to submit a consultation response to Lionlink before the consultation period closes on 3 November 2023.

The Council further **AGREED** to follow the process they had used for the earlier Eurolink and Sizewell C consultations by delegating Councillor Bassinette to draft the response and for the Council to consider it at its next meeting in October.

This timing was predicated on the lack of information provided by Lionlink to date and the need to attend the consultation event in Walberswick on 23 September (or one of the alternative venues in Reydon or Leiston or on-line) to understand more fully what they were proposing.

Cllr Bassinette then summarised for the meeting how the consultations had been approached before and what she believed would be the way forward:

- This was the second “non-statutory consultation” following the one in December 2022 on the first Walberswick landfall proposal. During the earlier consultation, Walberswick Parish Council had put in a response that set out why the proposal was wholly objectionable including points related to the specially protected environment, the impact on lives and livelihoods and general inaccessibility of the proposed site. She said that this response was available on the Walberswick Parish Council website (See December 2022 meeting documents) and remained broadly relevant. In coming back with this new proposal, Lionlink claimed that they had “listened” to earlier concerns. However, from what is known so far, it appeared that they had not ‘listened’ but instead may have made the situation even worse by moving the construction deeper into the very heart of the village and potentially making an even larger area susceptible to construction damage and disruption. Cllr Bassinette pointed out that the failure of Lionlink to provide detail of their new proposal was unacceptable.

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- It was essential going forward that all concerned residents, visitors and friends of Walberswick became engaged and took part fulsomely in the consultation process. This meant showing up at the consultation at the Village Hall on 23 September in the hundreds, not the dozens, and thereafter sending in well-reasoned and unequivocal objections to Lionlink's proposal. In her opinion, people should avoid using the questionnaire that Lionlink included in the consultation package since the questions and answers could be skewed towards giving Lionlink the answers they wanted rather than allowing the public to actually express what was wrong with the proposals.
- She said that following attendance at the consultation, people should prepare their written responses. They could do this any time before the consultation period ended on 3 November. They could wait until after the Walberswick Parish Council consultation response was prepared in order to have something more to draw on, but this was entirely up to personal choice.
- It was also essential that members of the public shared their responses with Government officials so that the depth of objection was clear. Following the October meeting, the Council would publish a list of proposed recipients and their email addresses including the new Energy Secretary of State Claire Coutinho, MP (and Environment Secretary of State) Therese Coffey, Suffolk County Council and East Suffolk Council. Emails should be sent directly and individually, not cc:'d. Members of the public should insist that their elected representatives, including their MP, represent the interests of their constituents.
- The Council would publish the draft consultation response a week prior to the October Council meeting in line with standing orders. This would allow the public time to read the draft. Members of the public were welcome to send their thoughts at any time to the Clerk and these would be shared with Cllr Bassinette to consider in the Walberswick Parish Council response.
- Finally, it was stressed that this was just the beginning of the process and that it could be expected to carry on for at least a year. It was essential that people stayed involved throughout and that there were many ways for people to ensure that their voices were heard outside of the written consultation and the Walberswick Parish Council. This could include direct action and making full use of contacts in the media, Government and other well known people who could amplify the reasons why the onshoring of Lionlink on the Heritage Coast was so wrong.

064/23-24 To receive a report from East Suffolk District Councillor David Beavan

Cllr Beavan said he was happy to be at his first in person meeting since the Green/Lib Dem coalition had taken control of ESDC. He said they were extremely busy cleaning up what had been left behind.

In terms of the Lion Link proposal, he reiterated that landing the cable anywhere on the heritage coast and building infrastructure in the East Suffolk countryside was a terrible idea and that a much better option was available to build a unified offshore cable link for all windfarms and to bring the power ashore in existing brownfield sites closer to where the energy was needed in London and the Southeast. Moreover, he said that the Government's refusal

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to date to put in the offshore cable for wind power was threatening the country's entire green energy future as the offshore windfarms were stacking up with no way to get the power they generated to where it was needed.

He said that none of the Lionlink energy was for use in East Anglia which was an energy net exporter and there was no excuse for bringing it onshore here and destroying environmentally protected areas and our rural communities.

At 7.31 twenty (20) members of the public left the online part of the meeting and sixty (60) members of the public left the meeting in person.

065/23-24 To consider the minutes of the meetings of 10th July 2023

The minutes of the 10th July 2023 meeting were **APPROVED** with the Chair to sign and to retain them until they can be handed to the Clerk in person.

066/23-24 Planning

066/23-24.1 The Council noted the response to six planning applications that had been taken previously under delegated authority:

066/23-24.1.1 Dutch House, The Street DC/23/2256/FUL

No objection should be raised for this application. There is no negative impact on the conservation area or the adjacent listed buildings, or the amenity of neighbouring properties.

066/23-24.1.2 Millside, The Street DC/23/2450/FUL

The Parish Council recommends this application is refused. It is a poorly conceived design, uses inappropriate materials and will negatively affect the Conservation Area.

066/23-24.1.3 Leveretts, The Street DC/23/2518/FUL

The Parish Council object to this application for the reasons expressed in 2017, which had been positively resolved by the scheme submitted and approved in 2018. The proposal to now raise the ridge height of the roof over the studio, exceeding the level of the eaves to the main house, along with the proposed dormer window to the south, is considered to be an unacceptable and obtrusive mass located in close proximity to The Street, and seen from the Conservation Area, a neighbouring garden to the east and from the AONB and public footpath to the east and south.

066/23-24.1.4 Lane Corner, Palmers Lane DC/23/2867/FUL

The Parish Council consider the details of this application require amendment and the application as submitted should be refused.

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066/23-24.1.5 Thatched Cottage, The Street DC/22/2417/FUL

In the opinion of the Parish Council this application should be withdrawn and further information regarding the impact to the conservation area supplied. Should no additional information be supplied then the application should be refused.

066/23-24.1.6 Garland, Lodge Road DC/19/4812/FUL

The Parish Council recommend that this application be rejected.

Cllr Bassinette noted that ESDC planning should be allowing Council's to request some extension to planning applications as it was inappropriate for WPC to have had so many applications covered by delegated authority. She noted that when our district had been Suffolk Coastal, this situation had not existed. The Clerk said that he was in discussion constantly with ESDC planning but that they had remained unwilling to consider any extension. Cllr Lewis said that he was aware the ESDC 's inflexible approach in Walberswick was not the experience of other Councils within ESDC. D. Cllr Beavan said that he would look into this if we provided him written evidence.

066/23-24.2 Applications to Consider

066/23-24.2.1 Seacroft, Millfield Road DC/23/3115/FUL

In the opinion of the Parish Council this application should be **WITHDRAWN** and further information relating to materials, landscape and residential amenity addressed by the applicant. If the application was not withdrawn, then the Parish Council recommends that the application be **REFUSED**.

066/23-24.2.2 The Anchor, The Street DC/23/2816/FUL

In the opinion of the Parish Council this application can be **APPROVED**.

D Cllr. Beavan and two (2) members of the public left the meeting at 7.44pm.

067/23-24 Finance Matters 2023/4

067/23-24.1 Review bank receipts/budget & payments/budget (as at 31st August 2023)

It was **RESOLVED** to accept the figures as presented.

067/23-24.2 Approve bank reconciliation (to 31st August 2023)

The paper was presented and it was **RESOLVED** to accept the figures with Cllr. Richardson being authorised to review and sign as appropriate.

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067/23-24.3 Approve items on the Authorisation to Pay Sheet

It was **AGREED** to pay all items on the sheet. Cllrs. Bassinette and Sutton were authorised to carry out the electronic payments.

067/23-24.4 Annual Insurance Cover Renewal (1st October 2023)

It was **AGREED** to accept the increase of 5.6% on the insurance cover and this was explained due to an increase of assets and rises in prices across the industry.

It was also **AGREED** that Cllr. Lewis would arrange the installation of the noticeboards which had been added to the insurance coverage.

The Responsible Financial Officer left the meeting at 7.58pm.

069/23-24 Village Flagpole replacement

It was **AGREED** to take back ownership of the flagpole and to replace the damaged one currently in place. It was further agreed to seek to share the costs with the Village Hall where the flagpole is erected and that the Council would also seek co-funding from the Walberswick Common Lands Charity.

It was further **AGREED** to suggest to the Village Hall Committee that they install an extra wooden post near the base to better protect it from being hit by a reversing vehicle which was the source of the damage to the current pole.

070/23-24 Parish Meeting on 13th September

Cllr. Lewis explained that 35 members of the Parish has requested this meeting to discuss the planting of a permanent Christmas Tree on the Village Green. This meeting was scheduled for 13 September.

In light of this meeting, the Council agreed to postpone any further action on its resolution to plant such a tree until its October meeting in order to hear back from the views expressed at the Parish Meeting.

071/23-24 Oral Updates from Councillors on areas of responsibility if relevant.

071/23-24.1 Footpaths

It was **NOTED** that the work on the Spong bridge had been completed well ahead of schedule and that people were very pleased with the replacement.

071/23-24.2 Highways

Nothing further for this meeting.

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071/23-24.3 GDPR, SALC and Website

Nothing further for this meeting.

071/23-24.4 Playing Fields and the Green play area

The recent cut of the Village Green was **NOTED** as well as the process.

071/23-24.5 Safe Spaces and Harbour Management

Cllr Bassinette said that there was a lot of uncertainty at the moment around the Harbour with the resignation of a key staff member and the change in the Harbour Management Committee following the May election. The fire at the fish and chip shop in the harbour had also raised some potential health and safety concerns that needed to be addressed by business operating there.

071/23-24.6 Sizewell and other power related developments

In addition to the Lionlink proposal, Cllr Bassinette said that she would be attending a long-scheduled meeting with EDF, Suffolk Highways and the other 7 Parish/Town Councils who had signed a letter many months ago insisting that there be more detailed discussions and planning on the traffic and road safety concerns associated with Sizewell C.

071/23-24.7 Neighbourhood Plan

It was reported that the document was being drafted and a meeting would be held soon.

Standing Orders were suspended at 8.02pm to allow Cllr. Watson to speak.

071/23-24.8 Village Hall and Heritage Hut

Cllr. Watson reported that he was now on the committee of the Village Hall and the Heritage Hut. He noted an upcoming Treasure Hunt for families which would take place on Saturday 16th September.

Standing Orders were reinstated at 8.03pm.

071/23-24.9 Village News

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

072/23-24 Oral Committee reports if relevant.

There were none. It was **AGREED** that a meeting of the Safety Committee would take place, to be arranged by Cllr. Lewis.

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073/23-24 Clerk's report

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

074/23-24 Matters arising

It was reported that matters concerning Lionlink, the conclusion of the External Audit and the Christmas Tree would be placed on the October agenda.

075/23-24 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** and all members of the public and Cllr. Watson left the meeting both online and in person at 8.14pm.

077/23-24 Date of next meeting was confirmed as being Monday, 16 October 2023 at 7pm.

076/23-24 To discuss co-option of Councillors

The applications were discussed and it was **AGREED** to seek more information before making a decision.

The meeting closed at 8.31pm.

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