

LEVINGTON AND STRATTON HALL PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH COUNCIL MEETING IN THE VILLAGE HALL HELD ON

Monday, 1st July 2024 7.15 pm

Present:

Cllr John Ross (Chairman)

Cllr Derek Dickerson

Cllr John Parrish

Cllr Neil Downing

Cllr Ann Wignall

Cllr C Yeo

Parish Clerk Angie Buggs

11 members of the public

VILLAGE FORUM

An opportunity for residents to give comments on any issues on the agenda. (As per standing orders max 15 minutes unless otherwise directed by the Chairman, a member of the public shall not speak for more than 3 minutes).

The Assistant Defib Guardian asked where the two replacement Defib Pads and the Rescue Ready pack should be stored? She said that there was no room to store the replacements in the Defib Cabinet and asked whether consideration could be given to storing them in the Parish Council cupboard in the Village Hall? Cllr J Ross said this question would be discussed under Item 4 of the agenda.

59.24 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Cate Last, Cllr Lee Reeves East Suffolk Council, Cllr Mike Ninnmey East Suffolk Council and Patti Mulcahy Suffolk County Council.

60.24 CODE OF CONDUCT & DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were received.

61.24 TO SIGN AS A CORRECT RECORD THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE 20TH MAY 2024

The minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on the 20th May 2024, which had previously been circulated, were approved, and signed as a true record by Cllr J Ross (Chairman).

62.24 MATTERS TO REPORT FROM THE LATEST MINUTES (not covered elsewhere on the agenda)

27.24 TO DISCUSS THE PARISH COUNCIL DOCUMENTATION WHICH IS STORED IN THE VILLAGE HALL

Cllr J Parrish reported that in David Pryke's absence he had agreed with David Long to continue to sort through the documentation stored in the Village Hall.

Cllr J Parrish asked whether consideration could be given to store the Defib stores in the Parish Council cupboard in the Village Hall to ensure that they are easily accessible. Cllr J Ross stated

that this seemed a sensible immediate solution, but for the longer-term the request would need to be discussed with the Village Hall Trustees as the trustees have requested that the amount of documentation stored by the Parish Council be reduced. **Action: Cllr J Parrish / Cllr J Ross / Clerk**

63.24 FINANCE

a. **Income**

None

b. **Expenditure**

HMRC Tax and NI	£392.79
Levington Village Hall	£75.00
Mrs A J Buggs Salary and Expenses May / June 2024	£836.26
Trevor Brown Audit	£200.00
Defib Store – Pads x 2 + Rescue Ready Kit	£292.79
Louise Overbury – Dog Bags	£11.91
Information Commissioners Office	£40.00

Cllr J Parrish proposed, seconded Cllr D Dickerson that the above expenditure is approved – all in favour. **Action: Clerk**

c. **Bank Balances**

Current Account as at 31 st May 2024	£23,236.53
Deposit Account as at 31 st May 2024	£8,774.43

The Parish Council noted the balances as at the 31st May 2024 for both the Community Account and the Premium Account.

d. **Audit Report 2023/2024**

1. **To discuss and accept the contents of the Internal Audit Report 2023/2024**

The Clerk had previously circulated the Internal Audit Report 2023/2024 to all councillors. The Internal Auditor Trevor Brown had not highlighted any areas of the audit which required the Parish Council to take action. Cllr C Yeo proposed that the Internal Audit Report 2023/2024 be accepted, seconded Cllr D Dickerson – all in favour. The Chairman, Cllr J Ross, gave a vote of thanks to Trevor Brown for carrying out a thorough and detailed report. **Action: Clerk**

2. **Confirmation of Exemption of External Audit**

The Clerk reported that the Parish Council had received formal notification of its exemption status for an External Audit for the year ended 31st March 2024. It was noted that the Parish Council's income or expenditure was required to be less than £25,000 to be exempt from an External Audit. **Action: Clerk**

64.24 TO DISCUSS AND CONFIRM THE NEW FINANCIAL REGULATIONS

The Clerk reported that the new Financial Regulations had been sent to all councillors. These are NEW Model Financial Regulations which **must** be adopted by the Parish Council and as indicated on the document, anything in bold indicates a legal requirement which a council cannot change or suspend.

Following discussion Cllr J Parrish proposed that the Parish Council adopt the NEW Model Financial Regulations, seconded Cllr C Yeo – all in favour. **Action: Clerk**

65.24 TO RECEIVE AN UPDATE ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF A RESILIENCE / EMERGENCY PLAN

Cllr N Downing reported that he had read the existing Emergency Plan and felt it was a good place to start. He is attending a workshop at East Suffolk Council on Monday, 15th July 2024 and he stated that following the workshop he would put together a new draft document for discussion at the September 2024 meeting. **Action: Cllr N Downing / Clerk**

66.24 TO RECEIVE AN UPDATE ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE WEBSITE

A website plan had been signed off under the previous Parish Council and Phase 1 which relates to the Parish Council has been implemented. It had been agreed that the website should have a multi login which will enable village organisations to manage their own area of the site which would enable Phase 2 of the website to be implemented. We had been advised that guidance / regulations had changed and our Phase 2 approach would not be permitted. Cllr J Ross updated that he had sought clarification from OneSuffolk (the provider of the Parish Council website) and they have confirmed that there are no barriers to our Parish Council's approach.

The Parish Council will now proceed with Phase 2 of the website for any organisation who would like to go ahead with managing their own area of the website, and training and support will be provided by the Parish Council to enable organisations to set up their own website page. **Action: Cllr J Ross / Clerk**

The Parish Council has been contacted by OneSuffolk who are now able to offer gov.uk domain names and email addresses for all councillors and the Clerk. The Central Digital and Data Office's vision is that by 2025, the UK Government will be a transformed, more efficient digital government that provides better outcomes for everyone. This includes an ambition to make town and parish councils work in a secure and efficient way.

Cllr J Ross said that he would present a report to the next Parish Council meeting so a decision can be made as to whether the Parish Council should go ahead and move on to a gov.uk for both the website and email addresses. The cost would be approximate £300.00 for the first year and then subsequent years. **Action: Cllr J Ross / Clerk**

67.24 TO RECEIVE AN UPDATE OF THE ISSUE OF FLOODING

Cllr J Parrish said he had been unable to get in touch with Suffolk County Council Highways so nothing further to report. **Action: Cllr J Parrish**

68.24 TO RECEIVE AN UPDATE ON THE MANAGEMENT OF CHURCH FIELD

Verbal report by Cllr A Wignall

The following factors need to be taken into consideration:

“What is its correct title? Meadow? Or Field?”

“Possible Conflict of Interest: Church Meadow. Warden and Councillor with responsibility for investigating the management of Church Meadow.”

“Church Meadow is designed as part of the Natural Landscapes originally known as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. It is the only place within the village that opens up a magnificent view onto the Orwell Estuary, from Levington to Felixstowe, in all seasons and weathers because of its height above the river. From the Shotley side, the Church Meadow allows the view to be opened up across the river to show St Peter’s Church in all its glory:

“As various legal documents dating from 1978 make it very clear Church Field was bequeathed to the inhabitants of Levington and of the adjoining or adjacent areas’ as an open space for recreational purposes, ‘for all time’.

- The Report of the Church Field Management Working Party: 2005.
- The current usage.
- Environmental Issues.
- The Maintenance of Church Field and the related Management Techniques.
- Need for independence and not total reliability on the goodwill of villagers.
- Health and Safety Issues.
- Equipment and related costs.
- Acquiring Funding.

Cllr A Wignall suggested there are three issues to consider:

1. Fire risk - grass/hay should not be left lying as it can become combustible. It also encourages the development of ‘rank’ grasses which ‘block’ the future development of wildflowers.
2. Implementation of the existing Field Management Plan - planning needs to be put in place to allow for a total cut of Church Meadow sometime soon, to ensure that it is brought back under control and to ensure the natural development of the Meadow. Advice could be sought from Suffolk Wildlife Trust.
3. Review of the existing Field Management Plan – identification of possible changes to the existing plan, and reasons why to keep the plan as it is.

Fire risk

There was discussion about the fire risk of leaving the grass cuttings in heaps on Church Field. It was noted that the weather had been wet and chilly, but that the next meeting of the Parish Council would be the other side of the summer period. It was noted we should seek advice from the Fire Brigade.

The Chairman closed the meeting to gather the views of the public.

- The Parish Council have never been in the position to collect grass cuttings.
- Church Field is an amenity for villagers to picnic but in the past the grass has been too long.
- The close proximity to thatched houses is a fire risk.
- When Church Field was gifted to the village no H&S regulations were in place and no villagers have been harmed.
- It is about the maintenance of the field.
- The cutting of the grass appears to be an issue as there is a public footpath which runs across Church Field.
- There are people in the village who would be prepared to pick up the grass cuttings.
- The Church Field plan on the website is not up to date.
- The latest Church Field plan is November 2018.

- Cut a border around the edge which would act as a natural fire break.
- Although the management plan is very detailed about what to do it does not contain information about how it should be done.
- The views of the villagers should be taken into consideration.

The Chairman reopened the meeting.

Cllr J Ross asked councillors to give their views on whether they believe there is a fire risk and whether the Parish Council needed to take action to mitigate those risks.

Following discussion the following proposals were considered.

Motion 1

Cllr A Wignall proposed that the Parish Council consider there is a fire risk and should take action to remove the piles of hay from Church Field, seconded Cllr J Ross – 3 in favour, 3 against and 0 abstentions.

Motion 2

Cllr D Dickerson proposed that there is no fire risk therefore there is no need for the Parish Council to take action to remove the piles of hay from Church Field, seconded Cllr N Downing – 2 in favour, 3 against, 1 abstention.

It was agreed that Motion 1 was carried, and that the Parish Council should take action to remove the piles of hay from Church Field.

Implementation of the existing Field Management Plan

It was noted that the usual arrangements for the cutting of Church Field had fallen through at short notice, meaning the field had not been cut and was at knee height. Spontaneous arrangements had been made with the support of a resident to cut part of the Field to enable the D-Day anniversary event to take place.

It was agreed arrangements needed to be put in place to manage the field in accordance with the existing Management Plan.

Review of the existing Field Management Plan

Cllr J Ross confirmed that Cllr D Dickerson is the Lead Councillor for delivery of the Management Plan for Church Field and Cllr A Wignall is the Lead Councillor for revision of the Management Plan for Church Field.

Cllr J Ross said that a Sub-committee of the Parish Council should be set up to draw together the case (or not) for amending the Field Management Plan. The decision-making will remain with the Parish Council. We need to engage with the public to seek their views. One resident has already sent the Parish Council their views. The Parish Council agreed a Sub Committee should be set up of three as follows; Cllr A Wignall, Cllr C Yeo and Cllr J Parrish.

Finance

The Clerk pointed out to councillors that the next Parish Council meeting is in September and therefore councillors should allocate funds to cover any immediate work which might to be undertaken before September.

Cllr C Yeo proposed that the Parish Council allocate £1,000 to cover any expenditure on the removal of the hay and cutting the grass on Church Field before September, seconded Cllr J Ross – 5 in favour, 1 abstention (Cllr D Dickerson).

69.24 PLANNING

General – Updated Planning List for June 2024

Parish Councillors noted the updated June planning list.

70.24 PLANNING POLICY UPDATE – PLANNING APPLICATION GUIDANCE FOR HEALTHY ENVIRONMENTS

The Clerk reported that the Planning Application Guidance for Healthy Environments had been sent to all councillors. The contents were noted by the Parish Council.

71.24 PLANNING FORUM FOR TOWN AND PARISH COUNCILS – PLANNING UPDATE

The Clerk reported that Town and Parish Councils had been invited to the next Planning Forum which will include an update, Q & A with Planners and the opportunity to gain further knowledge. Cllr A Wignall will be attending the forum at East Suffolk Council Melton on Thursday, 25th July 2024 and will report back to the next meeting. **Action: Cllr A Wignall**

72.24 CORRESPONDENCE

All relevant correspondence has been forwarded to councillors.

73.24 REPORTS FROM COUNCILLORS

a. Church Field Warden

Report from Cllr Derek Dickerson

Cllr D Dickerson stated that in the period before the D-Day anniversary, the grass on Church Field had become extremely long. Historically the grass has been cut by a resident with access to farm type machinery. Unfortunately, this is no longer feasible and an alternative need to be found.

For the D-Day celebrations another resident assisted with their domestic machinery, and the grass was cut. The machinery did not collect the cut grass, so I and two residents raked the surface to make it suitable for use. We finished just an hour before the Church bells rang to start the event.

Going forward we need a solution for the cutting of the grass on the field. Perhaps this could be included for consideration under the review of the management plan for the field?

Cllr D Dickerson reported that a decision needs to be made about the cutting of the grass as soon as possible. It was agreed that Cllr J Ross would make enquiries about the possibility of somebody local cutting the grass going forward.

Cllr D Dickerson expressed concern about the piles of grass cuttings on the field which will become an issue if we experience a spell of dry weather.

b. Village Hall

Report from Cllr John Parrish
Nothing to report.

c. Sir Robert Hitcham's Almshouses

Report from Sue Parrish
Cllr J Parrish stated that the Almshouses have welcomed back Louise Overbury as their Chairman and Sarah Gregory as a trustee. Jane Mumford has been appointed as a trustee to represent Nacton. The Almshouses have received the Quinquennial Inspection Report which the trustees will be acting upon. The Trustees have a new tenant for the empty property who will be moving in, once remedial work has been carried out.

d. Public Transport

Report by Marian Rose
Marian Rose thanked residents for their hard work in cleaning the bus shelter and the pavements in the village.

e. Footpaths

Report from Cllr John Parrish
It was noted that the post displaying the footpath sign at Levington Creek has still not been replaced by Suffolk County Council Highways. The Clerk was asked to report this again to Martin Williams Environment and Transport Officer. **Action: Clerk**

f. Port Liaison Group

Report by Cllr Derek Dickerson / Cllr John Parrish
Cllr D Dickerson said that he would provide a report to the Parish Council at the next meeting of the latest Port Liaison Group. **Action: Cllr D Dickerson**

g. Police / SNT / ASB

Nothing to report.

h. ESPA

No report.

74.24 DATE OF NEXT MEETING: MONDAY, 2ND SEPTEMBER 2024 IN THE VILLAGE HALL

The Chairman closed the meeting at 8.40 pm.

VILLAGE FORUM (Opportunity to raise issues not necessarily on this agenda)

A resident commented that it would be beneficial for village organisations to be able to have their own pages and keep them updated on the website. Cllr J Ross stated that training would be provided and that each part of the website would be a separate secure area with an administrator. **Action: Cllr J Ross / Clerk**

A resident expressed concern about the entrance to the new Red House Farm development not being located in the right position. Cllr J Ross stated that a Planning Enforcement Officer would be visiting the site to review the position of the entrance. He also stated that when a full Planning Application is submitted it will be regarding the houses, etc. Cllr D Dickerson commented that he had been made aware that the developers may not have permission to drop the kerb.

Signed..... Date

Angie Buggs
Clerk to Levington and Stratton Hall Parish Council