

Minutes

Held on **Wednesday 30th August 2023 at 7.00pm**

Present:- Councillors; Clarke (minute-taker), Flood, Francis, Lock and Mihr

County Cllr. J. Spicer and District Cllr. A Smith

6 members of the public

The Chair, Cllr. Mihr, opened the meeting at 7pm

1. **To receive apologies for absence and approve the reasons given.**
Apologies were received (and their reasons approved) from Cllr. Craig through illness and from the Clerk, Ms Morris, through annual leave.
2. **Declarations of interest.**
Cllr. Francis, relating to items 8 and 14
3. **To approve the draft minutes of the last Parish Council meeting (6th July 2023).**
Cllr. Lock asked that in Item 7.1 the reference to the new Playing Field Sub-committee should be changed to the Playing Field Task and Finish Group. This item and the Minutes, as a whole, were unanimously approved. Proposed by Cllr. Francis and Seconded by Cllr. Lock.
2 items which are still outstanding were highlighted, namely Item 7.3, seeking advice regarding the promoting of the pub's events and Item 7.6 regarding the future involvement of the Neighbourhood Watch Co-ordinator (the Clerk and Cllr. Clarke to follow up on these)
4. **Scheme of public speaking** (public participation about a specific agenda item).
A request from one member the public who wanted to speak on Item 15.
5. **County Councillor's report.**
Relating to the recent accident on the bend by the village sign, the possibility of repainting the white lines and painting SLOW signs has been submitted and awaits a reply.
Referring to the on-going flooding issue in The Street, an update was requested 2 weeks previously and a reply is awaited. The Highways Engineer, Julian King, has been contacted again and has agreed to arrange a date to visit Coney Weston, in order to answer villagers' questions, on his return from annual leave.
6. **District Councillor's report.**
The planning application relating to the large solar farm near Bardwell which will impact on this village is on its 65th week of consultation with no prospect of an early resolution.



Geoff Mihr, Chair

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Peter Clarke, Note taker

7. Councillor's Reports

7.1. Defibrillator, village group liaison and volunteers – Cllr Clarke

The next phase of the Bowls Club project is the installation of a toilet facility. This has now started with the setting of the concrete pad which has incorporated the connection to the pub's drainage system and the water and electric facility from the pavilion.

7.2. New residents, village initiatives – Cllr Craig

No report as she was absent

7.3. Website, Facebook page and publicity – Cllr Flood

Continued interest shown on the website. Matters of interest are regularly posted.

Facebook is being very well used with over 150 people regularly using it.

Noticeboards have been cleared and are up to date

7.4. Community Development – Cllr Francis

Volunteers will be co-ordinated to start work on the bus stop, in preparation for its future use.

7.5. Playing Field 'Task & Finish' group – Cllr Lock

A close working relationship between the Playing Field Trustees and the newly formed 'Task and Finish Group' is being forged with regular monthly meetings. A 12-month grass-cutting contract is being negotiated with a view then, to sell the ride-on mower. They are also upgrading the security of the entrance bollards. Urgent repairs to some of the play equipment has recently been completed. Special thanks need to be extended to Ron Martin for taking this on. Further maintenance work will be undertaken once the annual Health & Safety report has been received.

The current Trustees are keen to step down this year, so replacements are sorely needed.

7.6. Planning – Cllr Lock

Nothing to report

7.7. Highways, hedges and footpaths, speed device – Cllr Mihr

1st September is the date when hedges may be cut without affecting birds' nests. Warning letters will be sent to offending hedge-owners in a few weeks time.

We are on the Suffolk Police ANPR (Automatic Number Plate Recognition) rotation scheme. We had a police-session in January when a number of warning letters were sent out. The Rota has since stalled because of criminal damage to the devices.

Our own monitoring speeding device continues to show that alarming numbers of drivers are flouting the law – this data is regularly submitted to the police in the forlorn hope that they will instigate their own camera devices in the village. Thus far their support has been very patchy. Cllr. Mihr has been operating the speed device for over 6 years now and will be stepping down from this role at the end of September. This role will need to be undertaken by someone else.

Joanna Spicer offered to try and find the money to support the purchase of an additional speed device if that was thought to be useful.

8. DC/23/1246/CLP - Application for lawful development certificate for proposed use or development - installation of a timber shed at Coney Weston Village Hall.

Cllr Francis (the current Chair of the village hall committee) did not participate in the discussion but was able to answer questions about, and to clarify, some of the issues surrounding this.



Geoff Mihr, Chair



Peter Clarke, Note taker

The installation of a timber shed for storing village hall accessories was considered appropriate. The installation of the 2 glass-recycling bins was seen as more controversial. A local resident had written to the Parish Council expressing disquiet and was upset over the siting of the bins, being too near residential properties. This feeling was aired during the discussion. It was explained that 2 bins were now needed to cope with the increased volume of glass and that alternative locations on the site to position the bins were unfortunately inappropriate. It transpired that planning consent was not needed for this type of development, so consequently no formal comment by the council was required.

9. Financial Report

- 9.1. To review income and expenditure from **1st April 2023 to 23rd August 2023** against budget and to confirm that the bank reconciliation agrees with the bank statements and sign off;
- 9.2. Sign off payment schedule and authorise payments:
 - 9.2.1. Kate Martin, £31.20, VAT £0.00 Total £31.20
 - 9.2.2. Planning Portal, £58.50, VAT £0.00, Total £58.50

All items were unanimously agreed. Proposed by Cllr. Mihr and seconded by Cllr. Flood.

{Note:- The payment to West Suffolk Council for the 'administration of uncontested election' was initially queried but has since been clarified by District Councillor Smith}

10. To note the use of the Clerk's Delegated Power for the following item:

- 10.1 Kate Martin, purchase of flowers for village sign - £31.20, VAT £0.00, total £31.20 (payment schedule refers)
- The use of the Clerk's delegated power was noted.

11. To review and approve Parish Council insurance premium for the year **1st October 2022 – 30th September 2024.**

It was agreed to renew the existing insurance policy, with Zurich, at a cost of £264.00 (inc. tax) as it was the best value for money. Proposed by Cllr. Mihr and seconded by Cllr. Francis.

12. To review and approve updated Parish Council Financial Regulations.

The Clerk had circulated the regulations with a number of items which had been recommended by our Auditor, in her annual report, highlighted in yellow. The changes were agreed unanimously. Proposed by Cllr. Mihr and seconded by Cllr. Flood. Cllr. Francis had queried some of the regulations and these had been listed with responses from the Clerk. Most of the responses were straightforward, but some will be clarified by either Cllr. Mihr or Cllr. Francis with the Clerk on her return from annual leave.

13. To discuss and approve the opening of an interest bearing account for Parish Council reserves.

It was agreed in principle to opt for an interest-bearing account. Proposed by Cllr Mihr and seconded by Cllr. Flood. Further work needs to be done in order that we can choose an appropriate account at the next meeting.



Geoff Mihr, Chair



Peter Clarke, Note taker

14. To discuss the proposed charge by the Village Hall Committee for the hire of the Hall for Parish Council meetings.

Cllr Francis (the current Chair of the village hall committee) did not participate in the discussion but was able to answer questions about the issue.

The reason for the charge is to ensure the prudent administration of the village hall's finances, especially in view of the current cost-of-living crisis and the impending large increase in electricity charges.

After some discussion it was unanimously decided to ask the village hall committee to reconsider their policy and to make the Parish Council meetings an exception.

****It was unanimously agreed to extend the recommended 2 hour time limit for meetings (Standing Order 3x)****

15. To discuss the lifting of the current ban on allowing dogs onto the Playing Field.

Cllr. Clarke presented a report which highlighted the pros and cons of allowing dogs (under close supervision) onto the playing field, maintaining the ban within the enclosed play area. The main advantages of relaxing the ban are:-

- a) To make better use of a village asset which is currently very under-used.
- b) To improve the security within the playing field and reduce the incidence of vandalism and other anti-social behaviour, with the regular use by dog-owners.

It is believed that the incidence of dog owners not picking up their dog's poo is rare and that there is no reason to believe this will change if they use the playing field.

Part of this proposal would include the installation of a dog-waste bin.

****The full report is attached as an appendix to these minutes.****

Several members of the public expressed concern about the proposal and believed strongly that the number of dog-owners who walk their dog within the village, and did not pick up their dog's poo, was considerable and that if this was transferred to the playing field it would adversely affect the current users.

After much discussion it was agreed to defer the decision until the next meeting which would give the Councillors an opportunity to investigate the extent of the incidents involving irresponsible dog-owners within the village.

16. To review and approve amendments to the Emergency Plan.

Cllr. Francis was thanked for her work in updating the policy. All items were unanimously approved. Proposed by Cllr. Mihr and seconded by Cllr. Flood. Cllr. Francis was asked to look out for the Risk-assessment forms which seem to have disappeared from the report.

17. Items for consideration for inclusion on the next agenda.

- a) Result of enquiries into the Emergency Plan risk assessment forms
- b) Cllrs. to research the extent of irresponsible behaviour on the part of dog owners who do not pick up their dog poo from the village street, in readiness for further discussion about changing the 'No dog' rule on the playing field.
- c) To review the agreement undertaken by Mr Chapman and his lorries in the village.

18. Date of next meeting – Wednesday 27th September 2023 at 7pm in the Village Hall.

Meeting was closed by the Chair at 9.25pm



Geoff Mihr, Chair



Peter Clarke, Note taker