

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF
CONEY WESTON PARISH COUNCIL
HELD ON WEDNESDAY 4th JANUARY 2024 AT 7.00PM
AT CONEY WESTON VILLAGE HALL**

PRESENT: Councillors Clarke (Chair), Flood, Francis & Lock
County Councillor J Spicer
District Councillor A Smith

5 members of the public

Councillor Clarke, Chairman, opened the meeting at 7pm.

AGENDA ITEM	ACTION
<p>1. To receive apologies for absence and approve the reasons given – apologies received from Cllr Craig due to health issues.</p> <p>A Morris (Clerk) due to family health issues. Cllr Lock took the minutes in the Clerk's absence.</p>	
<p>2. Declarations of interest – declarations of interest were received from Cllr Francis (item 8.2 relating to Village Hall & Payment Authorisations).</p>	
<p>3. To approve the draft minutes of the last Parish Council meeting (25th October 2023) – The minutes are deemed to be correct and a true record of that meeting – proposed by Cllr Clarke, seconded by Cllr Lock and voted unanimously.</p>	
<p>4. Scheme of public speaking (public participation about a specific agenda item) – no member of the public requested to speak at the meeting.</p>	
<p>Addendum: Parish Council Update – Drainage issues (Linked to Agenda item 7.7) – Cllr Clarke provided the following update given the ongoing drainage issues:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Following Storm Babet, the P.C. submitted a formal request (as an interim measure) to the Highways Dept. to clear the gullies, pressure-hose the drainage pipes and clear the pond. The gullies were cleared, and the pipework flushed. • There were similar issues in Paddock Farm associated with blocked gullies and drainage pipes. The flooding there was exacerbated by a blocked ditch-pipe underneath Coles Path. The Highways Jetting Team dealt with the gullies and drainage system – Cllr Lock and I cleared the ditch by using 3 rodding sets joined together. This resulted in a positive outcome. • In early December, CCllr Spicer arranged a meeting which included herself, the Parish Cllrs, Amanda Mays (the head of Suffolk Drainage) and two Highways Engineers. In addition, we invited John Hogg who was offering to share his knowledge of the current drainage system. Several options were discussed, and John agreed to take measurements and submit them to Amanda and her team. 	

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Peter Clarke, Chair



Mark Lock, Vice-Chair



<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The SCC Highway's plans for the replacement of the current drainage system were published on the Parish Website, along with the 2021 Highway Engineer's report. • We understand there are still ongoing discussions between the Highway's Legal Dept and the Riddlesworth landowner. • SCC Highways have also agreed to provide the Parish Council with a monthly progress update. Any clear progress provided will be communicated/published. • For noting: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the excavation in the car park is part of the investigative process – John Hogg is about to submit a detailed option paper to Amanda Mays for consideration. - The farmer, responsible for the ditch opposite the village sign, has been asked to dig it out, to alleviate the flooding and will be investigating tomorrow (05/01/24). However, he expects that the road drainage is blocked. • So, there are now much more positive signs that progress is being made and we feel more confident that there will ultimately be a favourable outcome. 	
<p>5. County Councillor's report – County Councillor Joanna Spicer opened her report by expressing her concerns for those affected by the sewage issues in The Street Coney Weston and enquiring as to whether SCC could do anything to help or whether the current issues lay with Anglian Water (AW).</p> <p>Cllr Flood, who is directly impacted, provided a summary of the events over the last 2 days which have meant that no access to toilet or washing facilities. The issues are linked to the failure of the AW wastewater pumps (two) in the Street. Attempts have been made to repair these which have so far been unsuccessful. It was also suggested that promises made by AW have not all been delivered at this time. It is hoped that one of the pumps will be repaired on 5th January and it is understood that a new pump has been ordered.</p> <p>CCllr Spicer highlighted that she had heard from another village resident who was experiencing similar distressing circumstances.</p> <p>Surface water issues are also believed to be contributing to the sewage pump failures as they have become overwhelmed. Cllr Lock will write to Suffolk Highways (Amanda Mays) to advise her of the current issues and copy in CCllr Spicer.</p> <p>Drainage Issues – CCllr Spicer shared some additional observations regarding progress. The village drainage plan remains in the top 2 priorities for SCC Highways. Things are also looking more positive with regards to engagement with the landowner with a legal deal getting closer. Amanda Mays continues to chase proactively. CCllr Spicer is very grateful to John Hogg for his work which has confirmed the existence of the pipe that crosses the landowners' property and to the C.W. Parish Council for their supportive approach to working with S.C.C Highways.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">598</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">ML</p>

Peter Clarke, Chair



Mark Lock, Vice-Chair



<p>Bridge at Knettishall – CCllr Spicer and Cllr Flood attended a meeting to discuss the safety and potential replacement of a foot bridge across the river between Hall Farm Knettishall and Angles Way at Riddlesworth. It is considered unrepairable, and a replacement bridge would cost c£100k. CCllr Spicer is fighting for repairs on a further 5 bridges and is not inclined to support this one given its apparent low usage. Legally, S.C.C. has no specific timescale within which the work to remove it has to be completed.</p> <p>Preliminary Budgets 2024/25 – CCllr Spicer highlighted that there are significant budget challenges and that she had over-estimated the level of donation that she had offered to Coney Weston Parish Council to support speed reduction initiatives. Regretfully, it is necessary to reduce the assistance from £2,500 to £2,000.</p>	
<p>6. District Councillor's report – DCllr Smith acknowledged that the actions from the November 2023 Parish meeting in respect of engagement with Chapmans regarding lorries had not yet taken place. CCllr Spicer stated that she had a list of the Chapmans lorry routes and would share them with DCllr Smith.</p> <p>After 3 years and 2 drafts, work the Local Housing and Employment plan has been completed for West Suffolk Council (WSC) and was approved in December 2023. There is nothing to be concerned about from a Coney Weston perspective with no additional housing planned - subject to exceptional / special circumstances. A third and final consultation document will be published by end January 2024, once signed off it will run until 2041.</p> <p>WSC Grass cutting – following a poor year, where growing conditions meant that schedules were not always met, 4 additional employees are being sought together with some new equipment for 2024. This should allow the planned 3 weekly cuts to be achieved. Better co-ordination is also being sought with, for example, housing associations to ensure efficiency.</p> <p>DCllr Smith also advised that he had advised Daniel Gospel, Tree Preservation, on notice that potential alternative surface water drainage routes were being considered which might come close to trees with TPOs.</p>	JS
<p>7. Councillor's Reports</p> <p>7.1. Defibrillator, village group liaison and volunteers – Cllr Clarke reported that progress was being made with the build of the new toilets at the Bowls Club. He also confirmed that the defibrillator was operating well.</p> <p>7.2. New residents, village initiatives – Cllr Craig absent – no report. It was agreed that Councillors should discuss how best to manage engagement in the short term.</p>	All




<p>7.3. Website, Facebook page and publicity, noticeboards – Cllr Flood reported that the website is up to date. It was noted that very few parishioners had read the posts on the website and Facebook page regarding the drainage issues (< 10) and that most views had related to Village Hall events.</p> <p>7.4. Community Development, speed device – Cllr Francis reported that the number of sandbags at the bus stop appeared to have reduced and that it was not clear where they were being used or if they have been stolen. This will be monitored. A new helper/volunteer is needed/sought to maintain the flower beds outside the bungalows in Thetford Road. Cllr Francis will progress. Cllr Francis also sought opinion as to whether she might approach to village pub to see whether they would consider hosting some 'warm spaces' events. It was agreed that Cllr Francis would circulate the guidance information on the warm spaces to enable other councillors to consider prior to taking action.</p> <p>7.5. Playing Field 'Task & Finish' group – Cllr Lock reported that engagement with the Playing Field Trustees had become more difficult in recent months due to their other competing commitments. Efforts will continue to be made by the Parish Council to support their activities. A member of the public raised concerns regarding the use of a motorbike on the playing field. Cllr Clarke offered to assist the parishioner with drafting an email to the trustees.</p> <p>7.6. Planning, speed device – Cllr Lock reported that no new planning applications had been received. The speed device is now back in use with a two-week rotation planned between the three camera points in The Street, Thetford and Rushford Roads. Results from The Street in December showed that 35% of vehicle counts were travelling more than the speed limit with 55mph the highest recorded speed. Results have been shared with Police Community Engagement Officer.</p> <p>7.7. Highways inc flooding, hedges and footpaths – Cllr Clarke reported that two letters had been sent to the landowner responsible for cutting the hedge on the perimeter of Coney Weston Hall and could now report that this had been cut back. A member of the public asked about the hedges at The Cattery in Rushford Road. Cllr Clarke stated that the general understanding was that SCC Highways were responsible for maintaining them and took an action to write and chase.</p>	<p>BF</p> <p>PC</p> <p>PC</p>
<p>8. Financial Report</p> <p>8.1. To review income and expenditure from 1st April 2023 to 27th December 2023 against budget and to confirm that the bank reconciliation agrees with the bank statements and sign off;</p> <p>8.2. Sign off payment schedule and authorise payments as presented on the payment schedule</p> <p>Cllr Clarke proposed that the financial records, bank statement and payments schedule were correct, seconded by Cllr Lock and voted unanimously.</p>	




To note, the payment schedule items approved:

- 8.3. Hire of village Hall for P.C. meeting £10.00 (no VAT);
- 8.4. Reimbursement of monies for purchase of sandbags £12.49, VAT £2.50 – total £14.99;
- 8.5. Signed for postage for Lloyds Bank letter £4.20 (no VAT);
- 8.6. Travel expenses for attendance at SALC Annual Conference 29/11/2023 £32.57, VAT £1.08 – total £33.65;
- 8.7. Clerk's Salary – 6 weeks - £527.19 (no VAT);
- 8.8. Personal Tax Clerk (Nov & Dec 2023) - £122.80.

9. **2024-25 Budget approval.** The initial budget proposal discussed at the November 2023 Parish Council meeting was reviewed and updated. The significant amendments were the inclusion of –
- £300 for email and web migration – see section 12.
 - £120 to install Office 365 on the Clerk's Parish Council.
 - £150 for Defibrillator training
 - £1,000 to contribute to an additional Speed Indicator Device (SID) with further funds taken from reserves – see note below.
 - £140 to cover the cost of the internal auditor - see section 10.
- Overall, a 9.95% increase in precept to £10,676 was proposed by Cllr Clarke and seconded by Cllr Lock. Agreed unanimously.

Note – Given the generous offer by CCllr Spicer to provide £2k towards speed awareness efforts in Coney Weston, two potential uses were presented to the meeting by Cllrs Francis and Lock.

Village gates – quote shared by Hopton Parish Council suggests that each pair of gates would cost c£1.7k, total c£5.1k (3 roads).

A new/additional SID – a basic device with data capture capabilities would cost c£4k and allow two of the three village roads to be continuously monitored.

The pros and cons of each were discussed, key points –

- Cllrs felt that although gates were aesthetically pleasing, but they were not convinced that they would reduce speeding.
- Gates are more expensive and would require considerably more project management to deliver which is a consideration with reduced Cllr numbers.
- A SID was considered more likely to influence speed awareness with analysis of current data suggesting that average speeds captured are lower than top speed for most counts, indicating vehicles slowing.
- Having two SIDs would reduce the amount of rotation required and increase coverage.
- Cllr Francis also highlighted that the SID coupled with other work with SCC to improve sign painting etc would have a longer-term benefit to the village.
- A SID was also the cheaper option.

The outcome of the discussion was to budget for a new SID device. Proposed by Cllr Clarke and seconded by Cllr Flood. Agreed unanimously.



<p>10. Appointment of internal auditor for financial year 2023-24 – Councillors reviewed the proposed quote from Victoria Waples for internal audit services.</p> <p>Cllr Francis proposed, seconded by Cllr Lock. Agreed unanimously.</p>	
<p>11. Policies & Procedures – plan for review – Cllrs reviewed the full list of Parish Council policies published on the website. A number of these are overdue for review. It was agreed that a clear process for maintaining these be established. Process agreed –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policies and Procedures to become a standing agenda item. • Two policies to be reviewed for approval at each Parish Council meeting. • A policy review ‘owner’ to be appointed at each meeting to present at the following meeting. • The policy review owner will circulate their updates for review by the other Parish Councillors in advance of the next meeting for feedback. • The Policy monitoring spreadsheet to be maintained by the Clerk. <p>Grants Policy to be updated for meeting on 7th March 2024 Safeguarding Policy to be updated for 7th March 2024 Monitoring spreadsheet to be updated to include review and approval dates.</p>	<p>PC BF ML</p>
<p>12. Website & email addresses – review status – Councillors agreed after discussion that for security, freedom of information, General Data Protection Regulation and general governance purposes, that it was not acceptable to continue to use personal Gmail accounts for Parish Council communications and that migration to gov.uk aligned platforms was necessary during 2024.</p> <p>Further investigations as to the most appropriate approach / platform / provider is necessary. Housing the Parish Council website on the same platform with the same provider seems sensible.</p> <p>It was proposed by Cllr Francis and seconded by Cllr Flood that £300 should be included in the 2024/25 budget to cover the migration cost. Voted unanimously.</p>	
<p>13. Items for consideration for inclusion on the next agenda –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Councillor recruitment – Cllr Flood advised that she would not be standing for re-election in 2024 but would be happy to continue to maintain and update the Parish / village Website. Cllr Clarke thanked her for her significant contribution to the Parish. 	
<p>14. Date of next meeting – Thursday 7th March 2024 at 7pm in the Village Hall.</p>	

Cllr Spicer and DCllr Smith left the meeting at 8.00pm. Cllr Flood left the meeting at 8.50pm.

Public meeting closed at 9.00pm.

Peter Clarke, Chair



Mark Lock, Vice-Chair

