

BENHALL & STERNFIELD PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Benhall & Sternfield Parish Council Meeting, which took place at Benhall Ex-Servicemen's Club on Wednesday 17th January 2024, 7.00pm.

Present: Cllr Riven Brace – Vice Chairman, Cllr David Secret, Cllr Beverley Barclay, Cllr Alan Woods, Cllr Chris Durrant & Cllr Sue Nicholson,

In Attendance: 7 members of the public, the Responsible Finance Officer, the Clerk & ESC Cllr Katie Graham.

OPEN FORUM

No comments from the public.

The report had been received from SCC Andrew Reid, 1½ hours ahead of the meeting, it was agreed by all that this was too late for the Parish Council to consider the report.

1. TO APPOINT A NEW CHAIRMAN OF THE PARISH COUNCIL

Cllr Beverley Barclay is prepared to take on the role of Chair, proposed Cllr Durrant seconded Cllr Woods. All in favour.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE and to approve.

Cllr John Slade – work commitments, Cllr Archie Bhatia – holiday, Cllr Deborah Dann – personal reasons. SCC Andrew Reid. The Parish Council approved the absence's

3. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS. None.

4. MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL MEETING HELD ON 29th OCTOBER 2023 - To consider the approval.

The minutes were approved correct, proposed Cllr Woods, seconded Cllr Brace, signed by the Chair.

5. MINUTES OF THE PARISH COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 15th NOVEMBER 2023 - To consider the approval

The minutes were approved correct, proposed Cllr Brace, seconded Cllr Nicholson, signed by the Chair.

6. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES AND ACTION POINTS

a/p 3.9 Cllr Brace to arrange tour of the Wadd. Cllr Secret asked for this to take place soon, as he would like a better understanding which parts of the Wadd is owned by the estate and which parts have been gifted to the Parish Council.

a/p 2.7 Cllr Durrant to speak with Cllr Bhatia and suggest changes to the Cemetery risk assessment. This is still outstanding.

a/p 4.9 Cllr Durrant to contact the new management team at the Club to encourage them to put forward items for the parish website. However nothing has been forthcoming.

a/p 5.9 Previous Chairman and Cllr Dann to visit and inspect potential storage area for emergency equipment. Cllr Brace advised that a dry, secure place is still needed.

7. MINUTES OF THE EXTRA ORDINARY MEETING HELD ON 13th DECEMBER 2023 – To consider the approval

The minutes were approved correct, proposed Cllr Durrant, seconded Cllr Brace, signed by the Chair.

8. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES. None.

East Suffolk Cllr Katie Graham congratulated the PC for its excellent response to the Sealink consultation which was put together by Cllr Secret. She outlined the response which has been sent from the district council.

She advised that the development consultation for Sizewell C has been triggered, therefore work will commence even though the finance is not in place.

She also reported that a photo competition “East Suffolk Through the Lens” is to take place, deadline for entries 28 January.

29 January Saxmundham Green Print Forum to take place.

Audits are to take place on all of the district council playgrounds which they own or manage.

She encourages the PC to send a representative to the Community Partnership which meets quarterly.

Chair's initials.....

Cllr Graham proposes that she will send out a monthly update on all of the local energy projects.
Cllr Nicholson thanked Cllr Graham for her help and input on Benhall & Sternfield planning issues.
Cllr Graham left the meeting at 7.25pm

9. FINANCE a. Statement of Accounts & Finance Report. The RFO reported the bank balances as at 12th January 2024, HSBC £1,925.89, Suffolk Building Society £19,088.50. Read out the receipts and payments since the last meeting.

The statement of accounts was signed by Cllr Woods.

Outgoings, overall running to budget with the exception of 'donations' as no invoice has yet been received from SCC for the PC's contribution to the repairs to the footpath along the B1121. In addition Cllr Dann's training will be in excess of the budget as no training budget was agreed for 2023/2024, this was approved by all.

CILS holding is now £6,358.98. The first deadline to spend some of this sum is 16th October 2025. £3K CILS is earmarked for the repairs to the footpath alongside the B1121.

b. To Review and Approve the Asset Register

The RFO informed that the new cyclists warning sign has been included on the register and that 2 curved seats (play area) have been removed. The Asset Register was approved by all.

c. To Approve the Precept Budget for the Year April 2024 to March 2025

The RFO explained the proposed precept budget. No budgeted amount for the Wadd however money could be paid out of CILs. Cllr Brace suggests that £500 could be allocated specifically for repairs to the rotting timbers on the boardwalk. He will get a price for repairs.

It was agreed to budget £490 for the newsletter. When the PC submits articles to the editor always CC Cllr Dann so that she can double check its content. Also to liaise with the editor over the future of the Benhall and Sternfield newsletter. The PC as proprietor must have control and see a proof before it goes to print.

A local resident has kindly offered to give a one off payment of £200 towards the panels for the telephone kiosk.

It makes sense for the donation to be given to the History Group to manage the panels. Cllr Dann to speak with the resident and express the thanks of the PC for the generous donation and ask that the money is given directly to The History Group. Also for Cllr Dann to contact the History Group and inform them of the situation.

Cllr Slade has informed that his company is happy to pay for the cost of lighting the beacon in future. Thanks from the PC to Cllr Slade for this kind offer.

The RFO suggests £400 is included in the budget towards training for the new Clerk and Councillor.

Cllr Secret is disappointed that no provision is being considered for any likely spending of money for Benhall Low Street or Sternfield. It is obvious that Benhall Green has the wider spend of the budget. The PC should consider increasing the precept budget for such a time. Replacement batteries are needed for the SID as the current battery is not holding its charge, cost £400. This will be added to the agenda for the next PC meeting.

It was then agreed that the Precept Budget will remain the same as the current year, £9,500, approved by all.

d. Clerks Salary and Expenses – Invoices to pay. Clerks final pay to 23 February 2024 £1102.76. Clerks expenses includes half year working from home reimbursement £166.20. Approved for payment.

10. PLANNING a. Applications and Report

Cllr Nicholson reported that the last 2 months have been the busiest ever for the Planning Working Group. The National Grid Sealink converter station/s Consultation took many hours of research, meetings and report writing. We have already reported to the PC on this in detail.

In addition, Saxmundham Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group invited the PC to attend a meeting with them and Pigeon Investment Management re the South Saxmundham Garden Neighbourhood. We were invited as, although none of this is technically in Benhall because of the boundary change, its physical location of course hasn't moved. It is very much a 'watching brief' - we can only hope to influence not demand.

There will be further meetings approx every 2 weeks. The aim is to have the draft Masterplan ready early to mid March with Consultation soon after. The first part to be developed will be the 6 ha employment area consisting of light industrial, office, workshops, storage (it was clear that there are tenant/s already lined up for some or all of the office space)

The second part will be the service station etc - they may 'separate' it from the housing/employment and apply as essential A12 services. Residential will follow. likely time scale: 10 years.

There is no further information re the 41 house extension of Shotts Meadow: the Planning Officer has agreed to come to visit the site so we can explain the issues but we have not yet been able to get him to propose a date.

12 Benhall Green using annexe for AirBNB contrary to Planning Consent: reported to ESC Planning Enforcement but still no response from them.

Cycle/walking/riding route Benhall to Sax (and Kelsale): We have been chasing this regularly - and updating ESC on the increasing urgency for this, based on the enormous increase in traffic, especially HGVs and LGVs, because of Sealink, Shotts Meadow, and SSGN. ESC have a meeting on Monday 22 January to discuss their strategy. They are aiming to do a site visit on Wednesday 17 or Thursday 18 Jan but we don't have a confirmed date at present.

Chair's initials.....

Work is soon to commence at West House, Benhall on the retaining wall.

The 4 lodges at Snape Watering has not yet been determined.

Cllr Secret will contact ESC planning department re the footpath diversion at Hall Farm to ensure it is not overlooked.

11. TO CONSIDER THE FUTURE OF THE PARISH COUNCIL FACEBOOK PAGE

Cllr Nicholson proposed that the PC uses the Benhall & Sternfield Community Group facebook page in future for its notifications. It gets far more views and is used more than the PC facebook page. She is happy to undertake this and will also duplicate the posts onto the PC facebook page. Agreed by all. The Chair passed on thanks to Cllr Nicholson.

12. TO CONSIDER THE FUTURE OF THE VILLAGE NEWSLETTER.

Already dealt with under 9.c

13. ROAD MARKINGS, B1121 THE STREET, STERNFIELD - To consider removing the centre line and replace with edge markings.

Cllr Secret informed that he and members of the PC had met with an officer from Highways last year to discuss potential implications to highways resulting from the proposals for Sea Link. Whilst reviewing the B1121, The Street, Sternfield, the width of the road was measured by Start Farm and the opinion was that the road was too narrow for the centre marking. Given the curvature of the road, cars drive within the marked lane on the presumption that they are safe, without appreciating that lorries and farm traffic are obliged to approach in the centre of the road. Needless to say, there have been many near misses, particularly during the summer months when there is significant holiday traffic, not familiar with the road, and increased farm traffic. The Highways officer suggested that the centre marking could be removed and edge marking applied to emphasise the narrowing, as well as serve to protect Start Farm, which is a listed building.

The Parish Council agrees that SCC should be asked to consider these safety measures. Cllr Secret will draft a letter to be sent to Andrew Reid SCC for him to pass on to the Highways department.

14. ENERGY REPORTS – Cllr David Secret

Review of Sea Link Statutory Consultation Responses (January 2024)

Saxmundham Town Council (21pp)

- Opposed as presented by NGET
- No preference for access stated
- North option would give some benefit to High Street & access to supermarkets
- South access damage to setting of Hurts Hall
- adverse impact on landscaper
- require cycleway along B1121 (South Entrance)
- Provide a green corridor / pathway from Saxmundham to Friston

East Suffolk Council (50pp)

- Improve engagement with local communities (2.1)
- Develop masterplan for converter station site (7.1)
- Redhouse Farm access has least landscape impact, but utilises inappropriate roads (10.2)
- North access allows traffic to bypass Sax town centre, but impacts on Carlton Park (10.2)
- South access impacts on Fromus Valley (10.2)
- No access preference stated
- Require appropriate surface water drainage at converter station site (10.3)
- Consider footpath diversions with masterplan to avoid need for sequential diversions (10.4)

Suffolk County Council (83pp)

- Supports the project, provided it is appropriately delivered (2.5 - 2.6)
- Expect the project to deliver community beneficial in addition to compensation and mitigation (2.8)
- Disappointed with quality of engagement (2.17)
- A preliminary masterplan needs to be developed for the converter station site in conjunction with Sax TC and relevant parish councils (2.25)
- Failure to coordinate with Lion Link could lead to County Council objecting to Lion Link (2.29)
- Essential for NG to fully align Sea Link & Lion Link in timing of consent process to allow Planning Inspectorate to consider the projects simultaneously (2.33 – 2.34)
- NG Group must manage its subsidiaries to meet full coordination (2.52)

Chair's initials.....

- Not content with a number of access routes proposed (landfall, cable routes & converter station) (8.2)
- No specific comments on options for converter station access
- Concern re capacity of A1094 with respect to cumulative energy projects, and particularly the junctions by Snape church (8.35)
- B1121 (Church Hill and The Street), and B1121 & B1119 from A12 through Sax not considered appropriate for significant volumes of construction traffic (8.53)
- Concern re right turn from dual carriageway at A12/B1121 junction (8.113)
- Surface water discharge to be attenuated such that not more than greenfield run-off rate (10.7)
- PROWs should be holistically considered, not fragmented in a de minimus manner (13.1)
- General frustration that points made to and accepted by other energy project promoters have been ignored

The Chair congratulated and thanked Cllr Secret for his work.

15. REPORTS FROM PARISH REPRESENTATIVES

The Wadd - Cllr Brace nothing further to report.

Village Green – Cllr Durrant informed that this is now a dormant period. He will however inspect the swings.

Trees – Cllr Brace nothing to report.

Cemetery – Cllr Bhatia has advised that a fallen branch has been removed. She is due to check on the condition of the church yard and will report back on what work may need to be carried out.

Newsletter – Nothing further to report.

Website – Cllr Durrant has nothing further to report.

Emergency Planning – Cllr Dann to investigate storage for equipment.

Benhall Club – No report.

16. CORRESPONDENCE a. Notice to Co-opt a new Parish Councillor.

The Clerk informed that she has received notification from the district council that an election is not needed to fill the Councillor vacancy. A poster will be placed on the noticeboard advertising the vacancy. It is hoped to co-opt a new member at the next PC meeting.

17. ANY OTHER BUSINESS New Residents in the Village.

Cllr Secret asked if new residents who move into the village are in receipt of a “welcome letter”? Cllr Nicholson will update the letter which had been used in the past and will bring to the next PC meeting.

The Chair thanked the Parish Clerk on behalf of the PC for all her work over the past 8 years, this is the last meeting she will attend as she leaves the parish council on 23rd February 2024.

18. DATES OF FORTHCOMING MEETINGS.

13th March. 22nd May APM followed by AGM. 24th July 2024

The meeting ended at 8.25pm.

List of Action Points:

a/p 6 - 3.9 Cllr Brace to arrange tour of the Wadd.

a/p 6 - 2.7 Cllr Durrant to speak with Cllr Bhatia and suggest changes to the Cemetery risk assessment.

a/p 6 - 5.9 Cllr Dann potential storage area for emergency equipment still needed.

a/p 1 – 9.c Cllr Brace to get a quote for repairs to the board walk at the Wadd.

a/p 2 – 9.c Cllr Dann to liaise with the editor over the future of the Benhall and Sternfield newsletter.

a/p 3 – 9.c Cllr Dann to thank the resident for the donation towards the panels at the kiosk, ask that the money is given directly to The History Group. Cllr Dann also to contact the History Group and inform them of the situation.

a/p 3 - 10 Cllr Secret to contact ESC planning department re the footpath diversion at Hall Farm.

a/p 4 – 13 Cllr Secret to draft a note to Andrew Reid SCC asking that the centre line is removed and replace with edge markings, Start Farm, Sternfield. Clerk to send to Andrew Reid SCC

a/p 5 – 17 Cllr Nicholson to update the welcome letter for new residents in the village.

Signed (Chair) Date

