

MINUTES of the MEETING of BOXFORD PARISH COUNCIL held on Tuesday 23rd July 2024 at 7.00 p.m. in the Village Hall, Boxford.

PRESENT: Cllrs H Phillips (Chair), L Wortley, T Munson, V Strafford, D Warren, H Watts, D Hattrell (Clerk), J Finch (County Cllr), B Hurren (District Cllr) and 22 members of the public attended in person. No Video link was requested.

APOLOGIES: None were given, however, Cllr B Hurren was to arrive later following the District Council (DC) Meeting. Cllr Theresa Munson sadly announced her resignation for the end of the meeting – **Action Clerk to report to the DC.** Members had noted the Clerk's forthcoming retirement and were recruiting a new Clerk. The Chair took the opportunity to thank Cllr T Munson for all she had done, and he encouraged others to step forward to consider becoming Councillors. He thanked the Clerk for over 19 years' service to the Village and wished her well in her retirement.

DECLARATION OF INTEREST BY COUNCILLORS: The Chair declared interest in matters related to the Playing Fields as a drainage item and some paid secretarial/book-keeping support to Village Organisations were to be discussed later in the Meeting.

MINUTES OF 18th JUNE 2024: These were accepted as correct.

MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES: The Chair explained he had been chasing the Police to attend and whilst they are in contact, they have so far, been unable to come to a Meeting. He then took the opportunity to update the meeting on the 20-mph speed limit proposal. This is now out of our hands and a decision is pending. The Chair closed the meeting briefly to allow residents to comment. There was a mixed response as to whether the 20-mph limit was the best option. Some felt restricted access would be better. It was recognized Stone Street was used as a cut-through and as more housing is developed in the vicinity, matters may get worse. Ideas were discussed by residents about parking strategically to slow the traffic down and make it less convenient as a cut-through. Any speed limit is unlikely to be enforced. Cllr V Strafford felt people should consider the next step, as the 20-mph limit may be turned down. Currently the heritage properties along the road edge vibrate when traffic passes. Reporting accidents and incidents to the Police was encouraged as the statistics are considered in relation to traffic calming measures. The Chair agreed to circulate the report – **Action Chair.** The timetable for a decision and thereafter implementation was not known.

Attention then turned to the bowls club parking which the Chair had followed up and club members are being reminded to park at the Playing Field if they are able. The issue in relation to the oil tank bund has been resolved between meetings. Wash Lane has been scraped and some drains cleared, and potholes filled. A resident explained the reason Wash Lane gets in such a state is that wide agricultural vehicles from Boxford Suffolk Farms damage the verges pushing mud on to the lane. It was agreed for the resident to provide copy emails and photographs from her correspondence with Boxford Suffolk Farms and County Highways to the Chair. The positioning of the benches was resolved between meetings as agreed. Cllr H Watts reported that he has followed up the parking in Brook Hall Road and he is currently waiting for the Area Manager to contact him, so this is on-going.

QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC: A representative from the Church asked for permission to consult with the Cemetery Sub Committee between meetings in relation to discussions with Reclaim the Rain and the volume of water from the Church roof. This was agreed. She went on to explain they are considering installing an accessible toilet at the Church and would be consulting in this regard. Another resident asked for progress regarding the footpath from Cox Hill to Fen Street. The Chair explained the land is owned by a Parishioner and the responsibility for maintenance is with the County Council. The County Council are getting quotes. The resident then asked about the footpath to Primrose Wood. The Chair explained access to the wood is to be retained and there is a condition of the recent Goodlands Planning Consent for the land to be transferred to the Woodland Trust. When work commences CIL monies will be paid to the DC and Parish Council (PC). The resident then asked about the Housing Needs Survey. The Chair explained the start of the Survey has been put back 2 months. Another resident raised a couple of footpath issues around Wash Lane. Cllr L Wortley noted the concerns and explained what our Footpath Wardens were investigating. Cllr Wortley had also made an urgent report of the footpath sign which was sinking into a hole. Cllr Wortley confirmed the good news that 95% of the first round of footpath cuts had been completed. Finally, a resident raised the issue of the Fruit farm cages. Further structures are going up and the decision around a Planning Consultation is still outstanding despite legal advice and further time elapsing. It was agreed to ask for help from District Cllr Bryn Hurren when he arrived at the meeting.

REVIEW OF ITEMS RAISED BY THE PUBLIC: The items were addressed as they were raised.

DISTRICT COUNCIL REPORT: District Cllr B Hurren apologised for arriving late, however, he was attending the full DC Meeting. He offered to help raise money for worthwhile projects in his Parishes. CIL funding is still available from DC. In the previous week, a successful youth conference was hosted at Endeavour House in Ipswich. He stressed the importance of getting young people engaged in local government. At the DC Meeting, they agreed on a paper to relax the rules on solar panels on outbuildings of heritage properties. He then spoke of the poor financial state of many DC's, and he stated it would be better to have longer term settlements to enable the Council to plan beyond a year. They are encouraging progress at the Delphi site. He is arranging for Wash Lane to be swept soon following the scraping and repairs. The issue raised at the last meeting with the bund below an oil tank at Ash Street has been resolved. Finally, Cllr Hurren was asked to chase for a response from the Chief Planning Officer regarding the fruit farm structures. The upset and anger this is causing to residents was stressed. He agreed to ask for a meeting – **Action Cllr B Hurren.**

COUNTY COUNCIL REPORT: County Cllr J Finch attended and confirmed a £600m solar farm is given the go ahead in West Suffolk despite local objections. A new all age Autism strategy has been launched in Suffolk. Many local businesses from Suffolk and Norfolk were celebrated for taking climate action at the annual Carbon Charter Event. Suffolk Trading Standards are alerting residents to the risks of doing business with cold callers. The County Council backs youth justice plan with a focus on keeping families together. Virtual Fostering and Adoption Sessions continue. Cllr Finch confirmed that a flyer would be delivered

shortly from Chambers Buses and an update will be provided in Box River News regarding the Village Bus provision. Following his report, a resident asked about the schedule of re-surfacing and whether this involves routes local to the Parish. Cllr Finch believed that it did, however, would need to check – **Action Cllr J Finch.**

TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR VOLUNTEER GROUP AND PROJECTS:

- a) **Terms of Reference** – the terms of reference below were circulated ahead of the Meeting. The Clerk had suggested risk assessment be included in the Terms of Reference. Cllr T Munson agreed with this suggestion as this is normal practice from her experience. It was therefore resolved the Terms of Reference will read as follows: -
1. *Projects to be proposed by either the Volunteer Group (VG) or Parish Council (PC) for in principle approval by the PC.*
 2. *Once approved, accepted and agreed in principle projects to be defined and costed by the VG for agreement with both PC and VG.*
 3. *A risk assessment for each project to be undertaken by the VG and lodged with the PC. The number of volunteers to be advised to the PC for each project. This is to identify and minimise risks whilst maintaining good records for insurance purposes.*
 4. *PC to allocate funds.*
 5. *VG to take on the project to deliver within project definition and cost.*
- b) The Old Gaol and railings alongside. Good progress is being made by the VG in relation to the approved works at the Old Gaol. In addition, it was agreed for the railings alongside to be refurbished at a cost in the region of £200 for the materials.
- c) Purchase of dark green and black paint had been approved by the PC previously. This can be purchased, and the receipt provided for reimbursement.
- d) Other projects – none are confirmed currently.

MAINTENANCE PLAN AND CONTRACT SPECIFICATION AND PERFORMANCE:

Cllr D Warren confirmed concerns with current contract work and suggested the VG help get a maintenance plan together. Cllr Wortley reminded fellow Councillors specifications for the tenders are required for this autumn. This will be for contracts commencing at the start of the new Financial Year – April 2025. It was therefore resolved for VG (if they agree) to assist with the contract specifications for the invitation to tender document. This will need to be approved at the September PC Meeting, so the tenders can be received ahead of budget – **Action Clerk to include on the September Agenda.**

BUS SERVICE UPDATE: This item was covered under County Council Report Agenda item.

FOOTPATH UPDATES INCLUDING THE PERMISSIVE PATH OFF COX HILL: This item had already been covered under the Public Forum section.

FINANCE: 1ST June 2024 opened with total Bank Balances at **£116,333.46**. Income in June came to **£819.48** including Burial fees and Bank Interest. The sum of the payments made during June was **£5735.16**. The Bank balances closed on 28th June 2024 at **£17,460.02** in the Community Account, **£40,625.26** in the Deposit Account and **£53,332.50** in the Reserve Account making a total of **£111,417.78**.

The following pre-agreed payments for June paid on 1st July and 12th July 2024: -

| Cheque No. | Payee | Amount | Details |
|-------------------|---------------------------|---------------|----------------------------------|
| Funds Tr | Employment Costs totalled | 1447.69 | Salary, ERS NIC & Pension |
| Funds Tr | SALC | 386.40 | Internal Audit Fee |
| Funds Tr | Vertas Group | 768.04 | PF Grass 2 nd Quarter |
| Funds Tr | M A Crighton | 185.00 | Cemetery contract July |
| Funds Tr | M A Crighton | 185.00 | Cemetery contract June |
| Funds Tr | Boxford Village Hall | 94.50 | Hall hire |
| Funds Tr | Mortimer Contracts Ltd | 42.00 | Cemetery path |
| Funds Tr | Glasdon | 217.56 | Dog waste bags |
| Funds Tr | SALC | 42.00 | Training |
| Funds Tr | Barriers Direct | 594.96 | Croft - Locality grant |
| Funds Tr | Clarks of Walsham | 442.84 | Croft - Locality grant |
| Funds Tr | J Eastwood | 54.00 | Natural Boxford banner |
| Funds Tr | Gotelee Solicitors | 450.00 | Croft - deposit for exch. |
| Funds Tr | C D Lawson | 300.00 | Bench base |

- a) **The first quarter VAT reclaim** - was completed and **£1383.36** received from HMRC on 4th July. Further VAT reclaims are to be scheduled for October, January and End of Year - **Action Clerk**.
- b) **Audit Action Plan and Schedule for remainder of Financial Year** -
 - 1) Produce a grant awarding policy - **Action Chair**.
 - 2) Bank statements compared to balances reported to meetings -frequency quarterly. *Cllr Wortley is gaining online access to the bank accounts and will report quarterly to PC Meetings* - **Action Cllr Wortley**.
 - 3) Tailor our Model Publication Scheme to accurately reflect PC's activities - **Action Cllr Wortley**.
 - 4) Agreement of Tender Specifications - **September Agenda item** - **Action Cllr Warren** to have the specifications ready for the September PC Meeting to consider with help from the VG, if possible. **Action Clerk** to include on the September PC Agenda.
 - 5) Review of Asset Register and Insurance - **September Agenda item** - **Action Clerk** to forward details to the Chair.
 - 6) Annual Reviews of Policies: - Finance Sub Committee Meeting November (F/S).
Financial Regs
Standing Orders
Internal Control Policy
Reserves Policy
 - 7) Annual Budget Preparation - **F/S**.
 - 8) Review of Reserves - **F/S**.

9) Review of Risk Assessment – **Action Clerk - October Agenda item.**

10) Review of Burial Fees – **F/S.**

11) Review of Employment national rates, terms and conditions – **F/S.**

c) Review of Effectiveness of Internal Audit and appointment of Internal Auditor

The Internal Audit carried out by SALC was reviewed and members agreed it was comprehensive and it was resolved to continue to appoint SALC as the Internal Auditor in the current Financial Year.

d) First quarter budget review was to be circulated in early August – Action Clerk and will form a September Agenda item.

(This is for expenditure on work completed in the first quarter of this financial year. Most of the payments made in April 24 were for work completed in the 23/24 year and were therefore adjusted into that year in the End of Year Accounts on instructions by this PC – the first quarter budget review will largely include payments made in May, June and July).

e) Box River News Contributions. The Invoice for the first quarter had been received. Background: - It had been resolved at the January PC Meeting as follows: -

“Recommendations from Finance Sub Committee and full Council Brainstorming: -

... ..

7) This Council shall consider funding secretarial support for some Village Organisations and contribute towards Box River News”

It was resolved that the quarterly Invoices can be paid to Box River News in this Financial Year without further reference to PC Meetings. The Chair agreed to discuss with the Editor other streams of Income to help keep the PC fully informed – **Action Chair.**

f) Church Clock repair and maintenance. The Chair had organized quotations to repair the Church Clock and for on-going servicing. The first quote had been circulated ahead of the meeting. A second quote was due shortly. It was resolved for the Chair to authorize the work between meetings up to the cost of the first quote – **Action Chair.** This is to be reported to the September PC Meeting – **Action Chair.**

g) Installation costs for the croft gates and bollards. A quote had been circulated ahead of the meeting and it was resolved to instruct the work – **Action Cllr Wortley.**

h) Sudbury CAB request for donation. Information had been circulated from the Citizen Advice Bureau between meetings. It was resolved for the Chair to liaise with Box River News about covering the cost of publicizing the Bureau to local Parishes – **Action Chair.**

i) Consider the one-off cost to remedy poor grass cutting Ashe Str/Fen Str and Gunary Close. This item is no longer being pursued.

j) **Any other urgent Finance matters.** Nothing was raised.

CEMETERY: Report from Sub Committee. Briefing from recent training, wildflower update, and purchase of watering cans. Cllr D Warren had attended Cemetery training recently and confirmed some updates regarding reservation of burial plots. He also confirmed that when the Annual Risk Assessment in the Churchyard and Cemetery is carried out and work is identified to stabilize memorials, the work needs to be carried out by Specialist Stone Masons. It is also possible with care to lay memorials flat pending the restoration. If a memorial does present a risk to residents and visitors, the area needs to be cordoned off until it is made safe. It was resolved for Cllr D Warren to purchase around 6 watering cans for use in the Cemetery and Churchyard - **Action Cllr D Warren**. Permission for some further tree surgery was requested by Cllr D Warren and in view of the costs, it was agreed to prioritise further and obtain competitive quotes for consideration at a future PC Meeting - **Action Cllr D Warren**. Due to an injury to the contractor concerned, the restoration of the Churchyard wall may need to be delayed. Alternatives will be considered urgently between meetings as Church Permission, Traffic Management and the School Holiday's all contributed to this approval and it would be disappointing to have to coordinate all these factors again - **Action Chair, Cllr D Warren and Cllr V Trafford**.

ENVIRONMENTAL AND ECOLOGY: Report from Sub Committee. Biodiversity Statement and stag beetle pyramids project. It was agreed to discuss the Biodiversity Statement at the September PC Meeting - **Action Clerk** to put higher on the agenda. The community project, with the support from the Woodland Trust, to construct stag beetle pyramids was noted and agreed as a PC project. The Risk Assessment and the numbers of volunteers working on this project have been received and proof of the PC's Public Liability Insurance has been issued to the volunteers.

PUBLIC REALMS: Report from Sub Committee. Cllr D Warren confirmed UK Power Networks were pruning trees close to overhead lines.

MEMBERS REPORTS: Cllr T Munson confirmed she will continue with her projects and arrange handover. This includes Emergency Planning and Cllr V Trafford volunteered to take this over from Cllr Munson.

CLERK'S CORRESPONDENCE: All matters were incorporated into Agenda items.

CLERK'S VACANCY UPDATE AND ASSISTANT CLERK ROLE: The interviews for the new Clerk had been scheduled for the following day. It was agreed to delegate the appointment of the new Clerk to the interviewing panel between meetings. This together with another staffing matter was to be discussed in Committee following the Meeting.

The meeting closed at **9.40 p.m.**

Planning Meeting Held by Boxford Parish Council in Boxford Village Hall on Tuesday 23rd July 2024

The following decisions were advised from the Planning Authority: -

- A) Planning Permission was granted to vary plans and visibility splays for 6 dwellings on land to the South of Daking Avenue, Boxford - **DC/24/01029**. Note point 24 in the Decision Notice - Access track to Primrose Wood before development is commenced above slab level.
- B) Conditions were approved for insulation, roof tiles and lime mortar at Old School House, School Hill - **DC/24/02168**.
- C) Consent was granted to crown lift trees along footpath on School Hill - **DC/24/02732**. Both the Parish Tree Warden and the Parish Council had No Objections between meetings.

The following applications were discussed: -

- 1) Application for works to trees in Conservation Area at 12 Fen Street - **DC/24/02864**.

Both the Parish Tree Warden and the PC had **No Objections** between meetings.

- 2) Application for creation of rain garden in front of the Village Hall - **DC/24/02526**.

The PC had **No Objections** between meetings. However, there may be further discussion with the Village Hall Management Committee in this regard.

- 3) Application to fell 4 conifer trees (in Conservation Area) at 8 The Causeway - **DC/24/03119**.

There were **No Objections** from both the Parish Tree Warden and the PC.

- 4) Householder application - Erection of extension following demolition of garage and other alterations at Cygnet House, Swan Street - **DC/24/03130**.

Whilst the PC had **No Objections**, the following comment to the Planning Authority was agreed: -

Have the objections of the neighbour in Wynne House, which resulted in the first application being withdrawn, been sufficiently considered (shading, overlooking garden, etc) and adequate alterations to that plan been implemented to overcome those objections?

- 5) Application for a detached bungalow following demolition of existing at Highview, Cox Hill - **DC/24/01724**.

The PC had **No Objections**.

- 6) **Strategic Planning** - Housing Needs Survey, Car Park and Croft projects including drainage advice. The Chair updated the PC on these projects. The Housing Needs Survey had been postponed by 2 months largely to accommodate holidays for both the PC, Clerk and the residents/recipients of the Survey.

In relation to the potential Village Car Park, the Chair and Cllr V Strafford have been discussing with the landowner with a view to bring a formal proposal to the PC. However, the terms so far discussed, fall short of a satisfactory proposal. Talks continue between meetings.

In relation to drainage for the Playing Field Car Park and the Croft, the Chair had declared an interest as he still Chairs the Playing Field Management Committee. If the Playing Field Car Park is expanded, this could affect its drainage and that of The Croft. It was agreed to consider appropriate advice.

In relation to the purchase of the Croft land, Cllr H Watts proposed this Council buys the land from reserved funds as soon as possible. This was seconded by Cllr V Strafford and carried. Cllr V Strafford offered to assist Cllr L Wortley to work on some options for the land and footway. Whilst the purchase of the land will come from PC funds, it is hoped grants will be available to assist with further projects relating to the Croft.

- 7) **Any Other Urgent Planning Matters** - The Chair explained this PC has been approached by an architect wanting to attend a PC Meeting to share two options for land at Calais Street. It was agreed for the Chair and Cllr L Wortley to gain further information between meetings and share with the PC - **Action Chair and Cllr L Wortley.**