

**MINUTES of the MEETING of BOXFORD PARISH COUNCIL** held on Tuesday 29th November 2022 at 7.30 p.m. in the Pavilion, Homefield, Boxford. This was postponed from the previous Tuesday.

**PRESENT:** L Wortley (Chaired the Meeting), J Moles, D Warren, H Watts, J Finch (County Cllr) and 20 members of the public attended in person. A Video link was provided.

**APOLOGIES:** were received T Munson, however, she attended via Zoom. J Fincham-Jacques (Chairman) had sent his apologies and also from D Hattrell (Clerk) as she had another Meeting. B Hurren had also sent his apologies.

**DECLARATION OF INTEREST BY COUNCILLORS:** L Wortley advised, for the sake of good order, that she is personally involved in objecting to the developments in the Dedham Vale AONB and Box Valley, although she does not have a declarable interest in this respect.

**MINUTES OF 25TH OCTOBER 2022:** These were accepted as correct.

**MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES:** Nothing was raised.

**PUBLIC FORUM:** A member of the public drew attention to the fact that the church clock face has now been returned and asked for public thanks to be given to P. Edwards for arranging the excellent restoration work. He also raised again the problems caused by parking in front of the bus shelter.

The traffic survey was raised again and J. Finch confirmed that, to the best of his knowledge, it would be completed within the next few weeks. L. Wortley drew attention to the traffic counting device which has been in place in Calais Street for several weeks and which residents had assumed was part of the traffic survey. J. Finch was unaware of this.

J. Finch confirmed that he had asked for the white lines at the junction at the bottom of Sand Hill to be repainted and that he was waiting for confirmation from Highways of when the work would be scheduled.

Various members of the public had attended to raise their concerns about the agricultural development on AONB and other protected land in Wash Lane. A representative from Boxford Farms offered a comprehensive explanation of the work so far and of the farm's intentions. He said he wished to correct what he considered to have been inaccuracies in some reporting of the development. He pointed out that the top of the cage constructions will be covered in white plastic netting, designed to combat hail, and that they will not be "fleece" as had been reported, while the sides will be enclosed in black plastic netting to combat attack from birds and larger insects. Also, that the commercial life of the orchard is likely to be around 20 to 25 years, not 50. He said that wildlife would be encouraged by headland and hedge planting, offsetting concerns about the loss of habitat.

Members of the public objected that the netting around the structures is going to block out the entire landscape, which has been protected under national legislation and the local Neighbourhood Plan, and that this was causing considerable distress to many local people, who felt that the area's heritage was being lost. Several people said they felt such farming methods were inappropriate in this location, within an AONB, and that the farm should have considered this before acquiring the land for this purpose. They were also concerned about the drastic cutting of the hedgerows along Wash Lane, which contained young trees planted

for the Millenium and now lost. Also, the use of Wash Lane by large agricultural vehicles is inappropriate.

The representative from Boxford Farms apologised for any upset caused by the hedge cutting and confirmed that new hedgerow plants were to be planted. He also acknowledged that this method of growing, entirely enclosing the trees in netting, is innovative and is not universally adopted by apple growers in England, even though Boxford Farms have been employing the method for a number of years. He said that hail is a major concern for the business and that the use of hail netting avoids the need for hail damage insurance, which has become prohibitively expensive. He denied that the area's tourism would be affected by the loss of what he considered to be a small part of the AONB.

**REVIEW OF ITEMS RAISED BY THE PUBLIC:** Most were covered under agenda items, but this seemed an appropriate time to consider the village audit which was recently conducted.

C. Parr reported that the village audit team had held useful meetings with the District and County Councils and had succeeded in identifying which body was responsible for most of the required work. Positive and constructive discussions had taken place regarding the schedule of gully clearing etc and the work to protect against flooding in Stone Street Road had now been completed. The audit team felt that the wardens could be doing more and that the contract with them should be reviewed to ensure that all the work which falls under their remit is carried out.

C. Parr confirmed that the plan to use the currently unused half of the Old Gaol as a tourist information centre would not require planning permission for change of use, but would require listed building consent. He asked that the PC make an application for listed building consent as soon as possible - **Action Clerk.**

T. Munson also gave an update on Reclaim the Rain. The steering committee is meeting regularly and should soon have access to detailed maps of the whole area showing the precise areas that are potentially subject to flooding.

The funding of Box River News was also raised. Currently, the publication is making a loss and the PC was asked to consider, during the budget review, making a contribution towards its costs - **Action Finance Working Group.**

C. Parr also suggested that as the PC is short of members, it might ask for help with various tasks from volunteers in the village, ie that certain people could serve as assistants on committees for which they had particular skills, forming a "Parish Support Group". It was agreed that this could be useful. Also, that it might be a good way of recruiting new PC candidates.

Finally, it was confirmed that the Coronation event will take place on the Sunday following the Coronation and that various fund-raising events have been arranged by the Community Council. These include a race night, a barn dance and a pop-up pub in the Village Hall on 16, 23 and 31 December, as there will be no pub in the village during the festive season. It is also likely that grant monies will be available.

**COUNTY COUNCIL REPORT:** County Cllr J Finch attended and his report in advance confirmed two Suffolk Social Worker's, Helen Southgate and Clare Fisk won Gold and Silver

Awards respectively at the Annual Awards in London. Further hosts are needed for Ukrainian families. The County's Cassius digital technology service was named "Best Elderly Care Technology Solution by Awards presented by Health Tech Digital Magazine this year. The Bramford to Twinstead pylons proposals are due to be submitted to the Planning Inspectorate for Examination next year. The East Anglian Green proposals will be subject to Statutory Consultation next year. Suffolk Archives online are showcasing the death of Queen Elizabeth II. Grit is being replenished and the road gritting program has started. A short film is showing to raise awareness of the need for Foster Carers. Foster Carer and Adoption Events continue.

**DISTRICT COUNCIL REPORT:** District Cllr B Hurren had sent his apologies. He was pleased to report the most regrettable housing tenant issue has been resolved with a new tenant due in Ash Street shortly. Hedges are due to be cut around Homefield and Partridge Close soon. He is still chasing the legal department at Flagship regarding the croft footway issues. He was pleased a response was issued from Planning regarding the agricultural structures. He has asked Public Realms to sweep School Hill and Church Street to facilitate the drain works by the County Council. He is asking for a sweep and clean down Wash Lane which is in a very poor condition currently. He is concerned local councils are able to increase Council Tax up to 5% which he considers too high in a cost of living crisis. The District Council has secured £2M to build some social housing on derelict land. They have officially asked Anglian Water to explain why raw sewage has been discharged into Babergh's rivers.

**APPOINTMENT OF REPRESENTATIVES AND SUB-COMMITTEES:** It was agreed that 2 more members are required for the Finance Committee. It was agreed to hold the Half Year Budget Review via Zoom at 7.30 on 13th December and to discuss membership of the Finance Committee then, including considering whether it would be procedurally permissible and appropriate to include a volunteer from among the parish support group.

**NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANNING:** H Phillips had circulated papers in advance of the Meeting. He gave a detailed presentation about the referendum and the priorities identified by the NP team. It was agreed to adopt the list of priorities as set out in the papers previously circulated.

**FINANCE:** The Bank balances as at 2nd November 2022 were **£59237.24** in the Community Account, **£13407.98** in the Deposit Account and **£62887.31** in the Reserve Account making a total of **£135532.53**.

The following pre-agreed payments for October: -

<b>Cheque No.</b>	<b>Payee</b>	<b>Amount</b>	<b>Details</b>
<b><u>For September month</u></b>			
Funds Tr	Employment Costs totalled	1283.59	Salary, ERS NIC & Pension
Funds Tr	M A Crighton	185.00	Cemetery Contract
Funds Tr	Mortimer Contracts	42.00	Cemetery path
Funds Tr	Boxford Village Hall	34.50	Hall hire
Funds Tr	Sudbury Town Council	1455.78	Street Cleaning Services
Funds Tr	Vertas	1246.82	Playg Field grass contract
Funds Tr	J Fincham-Jacques	23.98	Remembrance wreath

The Half Year Budget Review had been circulated ahead of the Meeting showing expenditure at 39% of budget at the half year point. The underspend is largely due to the Churchyard boundary wall project stalling in relation to the Heritage and Planning Permission. It was agreed to outsource the application to an agent to expedite the appropriate permission with the planned restoration taking place during the appropriate school holidays with the funds rolling over into next financial year - **Action Clerk.**

A confidential finance matter was discussed after the meeting and it was agreed to include this on the agenda for the next meeting.

**PROMOTING THE ELECTIONS AND NEW COUNCILLORS:** As the Christmas season is approaching, it was felt that any events to promote the elections and attract new Councillors would have to take place in the new year. It was agreed to investigate the exact timetable for the run-up to the elections and the rules governing co-optation of new members, etc during this period - **Action Clerk.**

**TREE CANOPY STRATEGY - BABERGH DISTRICT COUNCIL:**

T Munson is taking the lead on this. She reported that Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils are keen to increase tree coverage and are encouraging people to apply for planting schemes. The Boxford WI have suggested a number of locations in the village suitable for tree planting, including the top of School Hill and the corner of The Causeway. The Scouts have also indicated that they are keen to help with planting. It was noted that various third parties will have to be involved (Flagship, SCC Highways).

T. Munson offered to find out prices for trees so that the PC can consider budgeting a sum at the Finance Review - **Action T Munson.**

**CORRESPONDENCE:** The correspondence report had been circulated ahead of the Meeting. All matters were noted.

**CEMETERY:** D. Warren was due to meet with Suffolk Tree Surgeons on Friday 3<sup>rd</sup> December to discuss the tree work currently required and a potential ongoing maintenance contract. It was agreed that the best solution to the Heritage and Planning Permission problem is to outsource the application to an agent. This was discussed under Finance.

**URGENT REPORTS AND QUESTIONS FROM CHAIRMAN AND MEMBERS:**

These had all been discussed under other headings.

The meeting closed at **10.20. p.m.**

Planning Meeting Held by Boxford Parish Council in the Pavilion, Homefield and by Video Conferencing on **Tuesday 29<sup>th</sup> November 2022**

The following decision was advised from the Planning Authority: -

The Planning Authority do not Object to the pollarding of willow in Conservation Area at 14 Cox Hill - **DC/22/05079**.

The following applications were discussed: -

1) Tree Conservation Area application at Hill Cottage, 38 Ellis Street - **DC/22/05536**

The Parish Council had **No Objections** between Meetings.

2) Listed Building application to repair boundary wall and replace wrought iron gate at Swan Cottage, 19 Swan Street - **DC/22/05711**

The Parish Council had **No Objections**.

3) Any other urgent planning matters.

A response had been received between meetings from the Chief Planning Officer regarding the developments by Boxford Farms in the AONB and protected landscape around Wash Lane. The Officer had said that at this stage, he did not intend to take any further steps. He said that he had not been asked to issue a Certificate of Lawfulness for this development and had therefore not been required to consider whether, as a matter of law, planning law was engaged in these circumstances. The Parish Council considered that it is of utmost importance to ensure that correct process is being applied in this very sensitive matter and resolved to take further steps to investigate the position. It was agreed to work in close co-operation with Polstead Parish Council in this regard - **Action L Wortley**.