

MINUTES of the MEETING of BOXFORD PARISH COUNCIL held on Tuesday 13th August 2024 at 7.00 p.m. in the Village Hall, Boxford.

PRESENT: Cllrs H Phillips (Chair), L Wortley, D Warren, H Watts. D Hattrell (Clerk), and 2 members of the public attended in person. No Video link was requested.

APOLOGIES: were received and accepted from Cllr V Strafford. (The PC Meeting can go ahead with a minimum of 3 Councillors – see our Standing Orders.)

DECLARATION OF INTEREST BY COUNCILLORS: The Chair declared an interest in the financial item in relation to a Playing Field grant.

MINUTES OF 23rd JULY 2024: These were accepted as correct.

The Chair took the opportunity to update the meeting regarding the 20-mph limit – **Agenda item for September – Action Clerk**, his follow up with Boxford Fruit Farms re Wash Lane, the Housing Needs Survey due to start in October with help from the Volunteer Group and a discussion that morning with the Hadleigh Architect regarding a potential development in Calais Street.

QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC: The Clerk was thanked by a resident and the District Cllr for all her years of service to the Village. A resident shared her concerns that the perimeter footpath to Primrose wood is uneven towards the end and could become an issue for some residents in the winter months. She suggested a working party of volunteers. The Chair confirmed he would support that idea. (Later in the Meeting, Cllr B Hurren arrived and prompted by Cllr H Watts, he agreed to do some research with the Woodland Trust, and he will liaise with the resident concerned – **Action Cllr B Hurren**). Another resident asked for progress with the Fen Street to Cox Hill path. The Chair confirmed a quote had been received by the County Council and he will ask for an update – **Action Chair**. It was also confirmed the Police are being encouraged to attend a future PC Meeting. Concern about some of the restored benches and plaques was then raised (Later in the Meeting, Cllr B Hurren agreed to return the brass plaques – **Action Cllr Hurren**.) The Chair in his role of Playing Field Committee Chair had a brass plaque made to go on the new picnic table at the Playing Field. The resident expressed that in his opinion this was not a fitting tribute.

Later in the Meeting, Cllr B Hurren updated on new government actions on housing, transport, skills and the environment. The housing targets are more challenging; however, the building supply is still strong notwithstanding these increases. However, as time goes on, there will be more pressure to accept development in appropriate locations. Our Chair commented that the Neighbourhood Plan may need updating in this new regime. Car park charges are being introduced in Sudbury and Hadleigh largely due to the business rates. Cllr B Hurren is chasing the Chief Planning Officer re the Fruit Farm structures Planning. He is organizing a sweep of Wash Lane following rainfall as the state is already deteriorating. Boxford Fruit Farms are happy to clear up any issues they cause from Farm traffic.

FINANCE

a) First quarter budget review

The first quarter budget review was issued from our Scribe Accounting platform towards the end of July 2024. The Clerk/RFO and Chair explained some of the variations. The Chair is following up with the Editor of Box River News regarding other funding sources and Citizen Advice Bureau publicity which this PC would like to support funding wise – **Action Chair**. It was noted that various Audit/Compliance items had been suggested by the Clerk/RFO for the remainder of this Financial Year – **Action Vice Chair to support the new Clerk in this regard**.

b) Playing Field Grant Request from Earmarked Reserves

A letter had been received from the Playing Fields Management Committee giving an update on the floodlights project to which this PC has pledged £2000 from our earmarked funds. They will apply for this amount in due course. They are now requesting a further £2000 towards the aerial slide project, again from our earmarked funds. The current level of earmarked funds for the Playing Field is £10,000, so will reduce to £6000 if both projects conclude with support from the PC.

In view of the stated Declaration of Interest, the Chair, took no part in the following discussion.

It was resolved that the PC will agree to the further £2000 from the earmarked reserves towards the aerial slide project. The Playing Fields will request each sum in due course – **Action Chair**.

CEMETERY: *Briefing from Cllr D Warren*

The work proposed is as follows.

Churchyard:

Reduce tree stumps by graves to the east of Church (Also treat to stop regrowth) Shape and prune small Yew tree Clear undergrowth along boundary with school to allow safe access to trees Remove 3 x large over-hanging branches along school boundary - (note: it may be necessary to cut up these branches into smaller pieces and put them in the churchyard for chipping / disposal as it may not be possible to position the chipping machine on the school premises near the point of work) Raise canopy of yew trees along school boundary

Cemetery:

*Remove undergrowth along west boundary
Remove 2 x branches over-hanging properties in Rectory Park Remove branches along west boundary over-hanging cemetery Raise canopy where possible to let in more light over graves in centre of cemetery (near bench)*

Work will include a general tidy up of all trees and shrubs.

Work is estimated to take 3 to 4 days. This estimate is the worst case and depends on the difficulty in removing over-hanging branches without causing damage to adjacent properties.

Estimates for maintenance work as described is £600 per day for a 2-man team. Both Suffolk Tree Services and Eco Systems quoted the same price.

It was resolved that Cllr D Warren can proceed to instruct Eco Systems up to a maximum cost of £2400 based on the agreed daily rate – **Action Cllr Warren.**

The Church has approved the above work in the Churchyard.

The restoration of the Churchyard wall has been delayed to the October half term starting at the bridge. All interested parties are on board with the delay. Work is in progress regarding specifications for the Cemetery and Public Realms tenders. The Volunteer Group are assisting. Cllr B Hurren agreed to obtain a schedule from the District Council of the village grass cutting – **Action Cllr B Hurren.** The Biodiversity Statement will be on the Agenda for the September Meeting -**Action Clerk.**

UPDATE ON THE CROFT: The purchase of the Croft was completed on 2nd August and the gates and bollards were installed as agreed at the July PC Meeting. The PC is thankful for Cllr Bryn Hurren's Locality Grant which covered the cost of materials. The Chair was authorized up to around £65 to purchase a chain and lock and to consider a key safe arrangement – **Action Chair.**

CLERK/RFO RECRUITMENT UPDATE: The Clerk's potential successor has been interviewed and an offer made subject to satisfactory references. The intention is for her to start after the Bank Holiday in August and then handover can be arranged.

OTHER MATTERS: The Volunteer Group are organizing the celebration for the 250th year of the Postal Service in the Village. They have asked whether the PC would consider underwriting the costs up to say £500. This has not been proposed ahead of the event with full details, so would be a retrospective application at the September PC Meeting. Members concluded not to include it as an Agenda item going forward, so no contribution will be made.

The Volunteer Group will be reminded that the purchase of paint to restore Village Assets was previously agreed and the receipt should be presented to the PC for reimbursement.

The Meeting closed at 8.45 p.m.