

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

PRESENT: C Parr (Chair), H Phillips, T Munson, D Warren, H Watts, L Wortley, K Couling, J Finch (County Cllr), B Hurren (District Cllr) (arrived around 8.15 p.m. as District Council Meeting first) and 4 members of the public attended in person. No Video link was requested.

RESIGNATION: The Parish Council (PC) were sorry to have received a resignation between Meetings from Louise Carpenter. She is keen to continue on the sidelines in relation to Environmental and Ecology matters. This Council now has 2 Vacancies.

APOLOGIES: were received and accepted from D Hattrell (Clerk).

DECLARATION OF INTEREST BY COUNCILLORS:

C. Parr declared an interest in the Planning section.

MINUTES OF 19th DECEMBER 2023: These were accepted as correct. Proposer D. Warren; Seconder H. Watts.

MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES:

1. Goodlands Playground: T. Munson reported that the Ecology and Environment sub-committee are still trying to find out the names of the residents' committee to liaise with them re planting etc. A meeting has been arranged with R. Parmée to discuss biodiversity improvements.
2. Jubilee bench: there has been no feedback. It was decided to go ahead with repairs if the bench appears unsafe.
3. 20 m p h project: Councillor Finch reported that a meeting has been arranged with Melanie Hall of SCC Highways on 5th February to inspect the roads and discuss speed limit and parking restrictions.

PUBLIC FORUM:

Residents from Wash Lane attended to ask whether progress had been made with Babergh Planning department re the structures in and near Wash Lane. The PC has received no response from the Chief Planning Officer, but C. Parr reported that he had been told, via Councillor Hurren, that Babergh is taking independent legal advice following the issue of a Contravention Notice. The legal action referred to here, we were informed, was initiated back in September/October 2023 and so it seems strange that the legal advice had not been received. It was agreed for the PC to send a reminder to the Chief Planning Officer, asking officially for an update on what is happening.

A resident raised 4 issues:

1. He thanked the PC for the work carried out to the bottom of The Croft, which has fixed the problem of the large puddle. C. Parr reported that the Flowline team (contracted by SCC) who carried out the gulley clearance in School Hill, Stone Street Road and Church Street had kindly offered to do this work for the PC, following the good work they had done on the other roads.

2. Parking on the grass verges in Ash Street/Fen Street, which has damaged the verges in the recent wet weather. Councillor Finch said that SCC is responsible for verges up to a width of 1m. C. Parr suggested that the damage is repaired in the spring, if necessary, by/on behalf of the PC.
3. Parking in Brook Hall Road. T. Munson reported that there have been no further updates from the care home management. The matter of establishing ownership of the land on which the cars are currently parking is not completely resolved, however, that does not prevent the business occupying those premises developing proposals for resolution of the parking issue. C Parr undertook to meet the management to understand what plans they are considering.
4. Cigarette butts left in bowl outside the Fleece. This is still a problem. T. Munson pointed out that when it rains, the water in the bowl becomes very toxic to passing animals, as well as being an eyesore. H. Watts offered to speak to the owners of the Fleece again about it.

REVIEW OF ITEMS RAISED BY THE PUBLIC: All were covered under Agenda items or addressed in direct response to the resident during the Public Forum (please see above).

COUNTY COUNCIL REPORT: County Cllr J Finch attended and his report issued in advance confirmed the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities has announced its funding package to support councils in England to deliver frontline services. At the County Council, this is considered far less than they need and by prioritising their statutory responsibilities this leaves difficult decisions about the services they deliver, how they deliver them and their Council Tax. Various Scams are happening including fake texts, emails websites, bogus charities, gift card scams and fake social media opportunities. Suffolk Trading Standards are urging residents to be wary of offers that look too good to be true and to stick with reputable websites and be suspicious of requests for bank transfers or personal details. A 1400 year old temple was discovered at Suffolk Royal Settlement at Rendlesham. Virtual Fostering and Adoption Sessions continue. Various events are taking place in relation to our Ukranian guests on around the second anniversary of the conflict starting.

C. Parr also reported a meeting with SCC re buses in Boxford. The service is secured for the short term and talks continue for the long term.

D. Warren asked whether the new road repair contractor, Milestone, is now in place. Cllr Finch confirmed this. T. Munson raised the issue of repairs being carried out on one pothole in a road, but the other nearby potholes being left, so that the repair lorry has to come back to do the work, rather than repair all the holes at once. Cllr Finch replied that limited resources mean that repairs have to be prioritised and those with top priority have to be done first, apparently contractors are penalised if they fail to do the number of potholes allocated to their programmes which is why “discretion” cannot be used in operation. K. Couling and C. Parr reported that the repair carried out to the hollow in the A1071 near Stone Street has entirely failed and will need to be done again.

DISTRICT COUNCIL REPORT: District Cllr B Hurren attended and reported on the predicted deficit of 1.4M. Car parking charges are back on the agenda as well as making Babergh and Mid Suffolk one sovereign Council. Considering the Post Office scandal, he urged people to support their local Post Office. The net gain of Affordable Housing last year was 119 homes. A call for sites will run until spring for future housing land. The Appeal

against refusal of the 64 homes on Sand Hill will be the first test of the adopted part of the Joint Local Plan. The full sweeping is scheduled for half term on 19th February. Cllr Hurren provided leaflets, asking people not to park on the roads which are to be swept on that day. The PC will arrange to distribute them. He is adding pressure to resolve the condition of Wash Lane and Butchers Lane. Wash Lane may have to be closed to cyclists, as its condition is now dangerous for cycling. His Locality budget of £1000 is available for the remainder of this Financial Year. He drew attention to the excellent work being done by the Babergh Environmental Health Team. He has also carried out a survey of the benches in the churchyard and outside the flats in Ash Street. One needs to be moved and repaired; cost approx. £100. He will provide a quote.

FINANCE: The Bank balances on 3rd January 2024 were **£18358.81** in the Community Account, **£13543.18** in the Deposit Account and **£72813.33** in the Reserve Account making a total of **£104,715.32**.

The following were pre-agreed payments for December: -

Cheque No.	Payee	Amount	Details
Funds Tr	Employment Costs totalled	1432.70	Salary, ERS NIC & Pension
Funds Tr	Mortmer Contracts Ltd	576.00	Cemetery hedge
Funds Tr	Sudbury Town Council	186.20	Base for Restored Seat

Recommendations from Finance Sub Committee and full Council brainstorming

- 1) The Precept will increase to a new operational level, a Precept of £64,817 was recommended by the Full Council brainstorming session.
- 2) Burial Fees will be uplifted by 10%
- 3) This Council will subscribe to a Scribe Accounting system and a new domain with Clerk and Councillor mailboxes
- 4) The reasonable cost of transitioning to the new systems will be met.
- 5) This Council will continue to adhere to Nationally Agreed payscales and terms For Local Council Clerks.
- 6) This Council shall Register Bell House with Land Registry and meet the cost of legal fees - this is being done - approved at November PC Meeting.
- 7) This Council shall consider funding secretarial support for some Village Organisations and contribute towards Box River News
- 8) This Council shall consider going ahead with a Housing Needs Survey and meeting the cost
- 9) The Standing Orders, Financial Regulations and Reserves Policies have been reviewed and it was recommended the Parish Council adopts those. Our Internal Control Policy also needs reviewing on an Annual basis - February 27th Agenda item - **Action Clerk.**

All the above Recommendations were approved.

Proposer: H. Watts; Seconder K. Couling – Vote unanimous.

Precept for 2024/25

The form was duly signed showing a Precept of £ 64,817.00.

Cemetery Fencing quotes were circulated ahead of the agenda and meeting.

This was discussed under the Cemetery Agenda item below.

New dog bin and post for Gunary Close – the quote had been circulated and this could go ahead – **Action Clerk.**

CORRESPONDENCE: The summary report was issued with the agenda and all on-going matters were noted.

CEMETERY:

D. Warren reported that work previously commissioned to the trees had started. The large tree by Rectory Gardens has been removed and work on the oak tree by the village hall was due to be carried out that week, to disentangle it from the power lines. Logs will be stacked so that local people can collect them.

Up to £5,000 had previously been allocated for work on the cemetery. It was agreed to go ahead with new fencing, quoted at £2,532 + VAT and to include a rack for watering cans by the tap at a cost of £235. The cemetery entrance has become dangerous and needs to be re-surfaced. It was agreed to go ahead with this and to salvage the timber if possible.

D. Warren had obtained a quote to tarmac the path in the churchyard. This was high, at £1,364, because the minimum order for tarmac is one tonne. It was agreed to look at alternative surfacing to see whether this work can be done along with the work on the entrance to the cemetery.

H. Phillips reported that he has made a start on cutting back the brambles in the churchyard. Biodiversity advisors had suggested cutting these back in several stages. The first stage of cutting has revealed 4 graves which could not previously be seen.

ENVIRONMENTAL AND ECOLOGY:

It was agreed to co-opt L. Carpenter to the sub-committee. T. Munson reported on the first meeting of the village group, led by L. Carpenter. The group has adopted the name Natural Boxford. Attendees showed much enthusiasm and are willing to help with planting, maintaining flower beds, citizen science projects, etc. T. Munson had also discussed monitoring water wildlife with village resident Adrian Chalkley, who is an expert on the subject. The group will work with the Hadleigh environmental group on monitoring water in the River Box. A meeting was scheduled with Richard Parmee on 29th January. The group intends to draw up a schedule of projects and aspirations for various areas in the village, along with annual maintenance requirements etc, so that in future these can be considered in the budget.

The next meeting of the Wildfire and Emergency Resilience Planning group is on Tuesday 6th at 7.30pm in the pavilion.

URGENT REPORTS AND QUESTIONS FROM CHAIRMAN AND MEMBERS:

Streetlights. K. Couling reported on the street-light survey, carried out with the help of a representative from SCC. The condition is mostly good, but some of the lights on the buildings in Swan Street will need to be replaced. The trees will need to be trimmed around the lights in School Hill. A new light is required on the corner of Ash Street/Butcher's Lane. A light is also needed on the corner of Cox Hill/Brook Hall Road. However, this would involve cutting down the walnut tree which currently grows there. It was agreed to talk to

residents and to investigate possible alternative arrangements. It was agreed to allocate up to £2,500 for the work: Proposer H. Watts; Seconder H. Phillips.

Hedge on the corner of Sherbourne Street. This has not been trimmed for a long time and is encroaching on the footpath. Cllr Hurren will investigate it. If it is not possible to be done quickly the Parish Council are to be informed and we will consider the trimming locally.

Potential car park in Stone Street Road. The policy for a village car park was set out in policy 1A of the Neighbourhood Plan. However, it is not clear whether the site near the school in Stone Street Road is suitable, given its position within the flood plain. It was agreed to commission a feasibility study: Proposer H. Watts; Seconder D. Warren - **Action H. Phillips**. This will be undertaken by Hestur Limited – consulting engineers at no cost to the Parish Council. This help has been made possible via Suffolk ProHelp supported by Community Action Suffolk. The Parish Council is very grateful for this and a donation of up to £100 was suggested for Community Action Suffolk – See February Agenda item – **Action Clerk**.

Bell House. H. Phillips reported that the application for listing is underway at the Land Registry.

The Old Gaol. C. Parr reported that the application for listed building consent had been submitted to Babergh.

Path between Cox Hill and Fen Street. The permissive path is in poor condition following the recent rains, part of the bank having collapsed, leaving holes in the side of the footpath. Cllr Hurren will investigate whether there is an agreement in place with the owner. In the meantime, L. Wortley will report the problem on the SCC website.

The meeting closed at 9.30 **p.m.**

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

The following decisions were advised from the Planning Authority: -

- A) Planning Permission was granted to reposition cartlodge at Unit 1, Hawthorn Business Park, Calais Street - **DC/23/05086**.
- B) Planning Permission was granted to create a new dwelling from the existing detached annex at Annexe At, Pipettes Farm, Stone Street - **DC/23/05238**.
- C) Consent was granted to thin re-growth of oak by approximately 40% at 27 Brook Hall Road, Boxford - **DC/23/05753**.

The following applications were discussed: -

- 1) Application for listed Building Consent for internal alterations at first and second floor at The Old Bakery, 12-16 Broad Street - **DC/23/04804**. This was considered between Meetings to comply with the deadline.

The Parish Council had **No Objections**.

- 2) Householder Application for a two-storey side extension and relocation of oil tank at Cygnet House, Swan Street - **DC/23/05572**. This was considered between Meetings to comply with the deadline.

The Parish Council had **No Objections**.

- 3) Householder Application for a brick wall and sliding gate at 4 Butchers Lane - **DC/23/05530**.

Councillor Parr declared an interest. The Parish Council had **No Objections**.

- 4) Application to vary approved plans and documents at 30 Stone Street - **DC/23/05770**.

The Parish Council had **No Objections**.

- 5) Application to vary approved plans and documents at Unit 1 Hawthorn Business Park, Calais Street - **DC/24/00183**.

The Parish Council had **No Objections**.

- 6) Any other urgent planning matters including update on Sand Hill Appeal.

L. Wortley reported that the PC's final statement had been submitted to the Inspector. The Appellant had until 26th January to submit a Final Word statement, after which the Inspector will proceed to a decision.