

LAYHAM PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of the Council held at 7.30pm on
Wednesday 29 January 2020 in the Village Hall

Present: Charlotte Britton - Chairman (CB)
Jane Cryer - Clerk (JC)
John Curran (JDC)
Bill Paton (BP)
David Pratt (DP)
Sheila Roberts (SR)
Michael Woods - Vice Chairman (MW)

In attendance: Gordon Jones, Suffolk CC (GJ)
John Ward, Babergh DC (JW)
Steve Laing - Parishioner

Apologies: Tony Stenning (TS)

20.1.1 APOLOGIES

See above - apologies were accepted from JDC, SR and TS.

20.1.2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

20.1.3 PUBLIC FORUM

Steve Laing explained that Hadleigh First Responders were aiming to raise funds to purchase a small 4x4 to replace their old vehicle, which would be more appropriate for the rural area they covered outside Hadleigh (ie Layham, Hadleigh Heath, Polstead Heath, Boxford and Elmsett); the cost would be in the region of £10,000. The First Responders provided an essential service for more than 9,500 residents and in the past year had attended nearly two hundred 999 calls. It was agreed to discuss a possible donation from the Parish Council at the February meeting.

20.1.4 ADJOURNMENT TO RECEIVE WRITTEN REPORTS FROM OUTSIDE BODIES

20.1.4.1 District Council report

A written report had been circulated prior to the meeting, a copy of which is filed with these minutes. With regard to the issue of council tax fraud, JW said Cabinet had approved the adoption of the Citizen's Advice Bureau Tax Protocol; with effect from 1 April 2020 the council would have the option to issue an initial penalty of £70 to anyone failing to declare changes in their circumstances affecting their entitlement to discounts, exemption or a reduction. JW would provide more information about the budget for 2020/21 at the next meeting, but said that council tax was set to rise by £5 per year. Council house rents would also be increased. In response to a question from JDC about the transformation fund, JW said this was to help fund improvements to the way in which Babergh DC operated.

20.1.4.2 Suffolk CC

A written report had been circulated prior to the meeting, a copy of which is filed with these minutes. Cabinet had approved the budget for 2020-21 and it would now be presented to full council on 13 February. The budget included an increase of 2% for adult social care and an increase in council tax of 1.98%. Council was currently looking at the impact of the increase in the national living wage. The consultation on the future of Children's Centres had started. With regard to the proposed Ipswich northern bypass, GJ said there was a strong business case for this, but it would have to be supported by development; the two district councils at either end were not in favour of increased development. A decision would be taken at the February Cabinet meeting.

In response to a question from MW about a newly created bridleway in Bury St Edmunds, GJ said this had been made possible with S106 funding; the question of new bridleways in general would need to be looked at on a wider scale.

20.1.5 SUFFOLK 2020 FUND

This new fund had been announced in the local press in December 2019. GJ said it was a proposal in the budget and the budget would need to be approved first. The fund was likely to be launched in early March and bids would require the support of the appropriate Cabinet member. The minimum bid would be £50,000; the maximum £500,000. It was agreed to defer this item to a future meeting once further information was available about the process.

20.1.6 REPORTS FROM COUNCILLORS

20.1.6.1 Speeding

The update from the working party was noted. BP would represent Layham on the speeding working group being set up by GJ. The first meeting of this group would be on Friday 7 February in Bentley Village Hall; GJ confirmed that all ten parishes within Samford Division were interested in attending. It was therefore agreed to defer further discussion on speeding until the February meeting, when BP would be able to update the PC on the working group's discussions. However, it was noted that representation on the new group did not preclude the PC continuing to explore various options.

20.1.6.2 Emergency Plan

JDC's report was noted. The training session for ELVs held in December had gone well, with 25 people attending. The recent heavy rains had led to flooding in some areas of the village - particularly the area around the Mill, Church Lane, and parts of Rands Road. With regard to the Mill, BP would contact the owner of Mill House to discuss the opening and closing of the gates; JC would copy Environment Agency correspondence from a few years ago to BP. MW had reported the flooding in Church Lane to SCC, who had replied to say this was the responsibility of the landowner; it was noted that the landowner in question had tried to clear the soakaways on several occasions. It was agreed that all PC members would forward any information they had on flooding issues to JDC so that a log could be kept.

20.1.6.3 Local History Recorder's annual report

MW's report was noted and would be posted on the website.

20.1.7 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

It was proposed by BP, seconded by DP and agreed that the minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 27 November 2019 should be accepted as an accurate record, and signed accordingly.

20.1.8 ACTIONS FROM PREVIOUS MEETINGS

Most of the actions were either ongoing or were on the agenda. There were updates on the following:

20.1.8.1 SCC consultations

GJ would send JC press releases on forthcoming consultations so that councillors had advance warning as timescales for responses were often quite tight.

20.1.8.2 Wildflower bank

As agreed at the November meeting MW had written to Cllr Elisabeth Malvisi, Cabinet Member for the Environment at BDC, about a grass bank where the owner of the neighbouring house cut it back too early in the season, thereby destroying wild flowers. Cllr Malvisi had confirmed that the bank was owned by SCC; it was therefore agreed that MW should write to see if SCC would be prepared to ask the houseowner to leave them to cut the bank later in the year.

20.1.8.3 Reporting online

Several issues had been reported by councillors using SCC's online reporting tool - eg potholes, missing white lines etc. It was agreed that anyone reporting problems online should inform JC so that she could keep a log.

20.1.8.4 Training

SALC's online questionnaire about planning had included a section on planning training. SALC was currently reviewing its training offer and would take into account the responses to the survey. They were also looking at working with Babergh and Mid Suffolk DCs, and Birketts. It was agreed to discuss training in more detail when more information was available.

20.1.8.5 War Memorial

As agreed, JC had added the War Memorial to the PC's insurance policy. She would circulate details of the cover provided.

20.1.9 FINANCIAL MATTERS

20.1.9.1 RFO's report

It was proposed by JDC, seconded by CB and agreed unanimously that the finance report for 29 January 2020 should be approved and payments of £615.33 were authorised.

20.1.9.2 Events Committee

It was proposed by MW, seconded by JDC and agreed unanimously that the PC would act as banker for the Events Committee, in the same way as it did for the Local History Group.

20.1.10 PLANNING

20.1.10.1 DC/19/05966 & 05957 - Uplands House, Upper Street

Councillors wished to object to this application on safety grounds - ie whether or not the entrance into the proposed new building plot was safe. The splay available would be acceptable where the speed of passing vehicles could be demonstrated to be generally at or below 30mph and a traffic survey carried out for the architect suggested that this was the case; however, the results were all taken at off-peak times and were therefore not typical. The figures were very different to the figures obtained in the survey carried out in October 2019 by SCC Highways. Councillors felt consideration should be given to the suggestion made by SCC's Senior Development Management Engineer that a shared access for the two buildings would significantly improve visibility.

20.1.10.2 DC/19/04913 - Partridge Cottage, Stoke Road

It was noted that permission had been granted for change of use of agricultural access track and erection of boundary wall (retention of).

20.1.11 SCC COMMUNITY SELF-HELP SCHEME

It was proposed by BP, seconded by SR and agreed unanimously that the most appropriate agreement for Layham was the one 'for community volunteers working in the highway'; the agreement was signed by CB. A working party comprising SR (lead), CB and MW would meet to identify possible works to be carried out; recommendations would be brought to the May meeting.

20.1.12 GENERAL RISK ASSESSMENT

It was agreed that members should email JDC as soon as possible with proposed amendments, including comments on which risks should / should not be included, and suggested frequency of inspections. JDC would prepare an updated assessment for approval at the February meeting.

20.1.13 SPRING CLEAN

It was decided to hold the annual Spring Clean on Saturday 7 March 2020.

20.1.14 CLERK'S CORRESPONDENCE

20.1.14.1 Garden fires

A parishioner had complained about a neighbour's frequent garden fires which caused smoke to cover her garden. JC would ask Cllr Ward if he would look into this.

20.1.14.2 Parking on Brett Green

A parishioner had expressed concern about the parking of cars on the paths on Brett Green, which caused difficulties for pedestrians.

20.1.14.3 Hydrant markers

A parishioner had drawn attention to the number of damaged and missing hydrant markers in Upper Layham. JC would contact the appropriate utility companies and would request a location plan.

20.1.14.4 Withdrawal of planning application

It was noted that a planning application for change of use and alterations to facilitate the conversion of a barn to a dwelling at Pope's Green Farm had subsequently been withdrawn.

20.1.15 CLERK'S REPORT ON URGENT DECISIONS SINCE THE LAST MEETING

None.

20.1.16 NEXT MEETING

The next meeting would be at 7.30pm on Wednesday 26 February 2020, in the Village Hall.

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