

LAYHAM PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of the Council
held at 7.30pm on Wednesday 30 September 2020 via ZOOM

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

In attendance: Gordon Jones - Suffolk CC (GJ)

Apologies: John Curran (JDC)
John Ward - Babergh DC (JW)

Following the co-option process, CB welcomed EP to her first meeting.

20.9.1 APOLOGIES

Apologies were accepted from JDC.

20.9.2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

20.9.3 PUBLIC FORUM

No parishioners were present.

20.9.4 ADJOURNMENT TO RECEIVE WRITTEN REPORTS FROM OUTSIDE BODIES

20.9.4.1 District Council report

A written report had been circulated prior to the meeting, a copy of which is filed with these minutes. Referring to various campaigns aimed at encouraging people to bin their litter or take it home, SR suggested the PC might help to promote these initiatives.

20.9.4.2 Suffolk CC

A written report had been circulated prior to the meeting, a copy of which is filed with these minutes. In response to a question from SR about the campaign to encourage young people to keep fit, GJ said initiatives would vary from parish to parish; he would be happy to discuss them further outside the meeting. MW commented that both Mary Evans and Andrew Reid had highlighted the importance of people getting and out about more, especially walking and cycling. However, as discussed in the past, it was dangerous to walk into Hadleigh from Upper Layham alongside the B1070; he would welcome the opportunity to discuss this further. GJ said he would be happy to have a site meeting; JC would liaise with him re possible dates. In response to a further question from SR concerning apprenticeships, GJ said local businesses were aware of the opportunities and the role of councils was about making it easier to navigate the process. BP asked about future budgets, given the current state of the country and the economy. GJ said SCC was working through budgets for the coming year; council tax and business rates income would be lower than in previous years. Details of the Comprehensive Spending Review would be announced in November. SCC budget scrutiny would take place in January 2021; a budget would be finalised by mid-February.

20.9.5 REPORTS FROM COUNCILLORS

20.9.5.1 SCC Community Self-Help Scheme

The working party had met and the notes had been circulated prior to the meeting. The notes included a recommendation that training volunteers should be a priority, as some of the possible activities would involve working on or alongside roads. CB said several parishioners had expressed interest in volunteering, but it would be important to discuss possible activities with them first, to ensure they were willing to participate. It was noted that some of the problems the working party had identified were actions SCC should undertake; he had reported these online. CB questioned whether councillors were fully committed to participating in the scheme, which was not compulsory. She proposed that everyone should review the notes and a decision should be made at the next meeting; this was seconded by MW and agreed unanimously. Another recommendation arising from the working party's meeting was that the Green Team should be expanded; SR suggested that anyone who participated in the litter picks could be considered to be a member of the team. It was noted that litter picks were not covered by the self-help scheme.

20.9.5.2 Speeding

Following the last meeting, JC had contacted SCC to ask if there was any room for manoeuvre on their decision not to process any new requests for SID device posts until the end of the year. SCC responded saying that there was a backlog of requests to deal with first; however, Layham had been added to the list of new schemes. In the meantime, SCC had asked the PC for possible locations. JDC had suggested two locations and requested a Zoom meeting to discuss the initiative in more detail; he was awaiting a response.

20.9.5.3 Emergency Plan

JDC had updated the communications tree, which had been circulated prior to the meeting. He asked everyone to check that their ELVs were happy to continue, and that their contact details were correct. Any changes should be sent to JDC before the next meeting, when the Emergency Plan would be on the agenda.

20.9.6 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS

20.9.6.1 Meeting held on 26 August 2020

It was proposed by SR, seconded by DP and agreed unanimously that the minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 26 August 2020 should be accepted as an accurate record, and signed accordingly.

20.9.6.2 Planning meeting held on 25 August 2020

It was proposed by CB, seconded by MW and agreed unanimously that the minutes of the planning meeting held on Tuesday 25 August 2020 should be accepted as an accurate record, and signed accordingly.

20.9.7 ACTIONS FROM PREVIOUS MEETING

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

20.9.7.1 Suffolk 2020 Fund

GJ had circulated a press release announcing the first project to benefit from this initiative: funding for electric vehicle charging points in rural Suffolk. He confirmed that the deadline for applications had been extended until the end of November,

20.9.7.2 Sign for Pope's Green Lane

JC had contacted SCC Highways, but they were only responsible for putting up signs to facilities (eg the Village Hall). Councillors expressed some concern about costs and setting a precedent. It was agreed that JC would do some further research; a decision would be made at the next meeting.

20.9.7.3 Litter Pick

This would take place at 10am on Saturday 31 October. SR would contact Babergh to clarify whether there was a requirement for any roads to be closed.

20.9.8 FINANCIAL MATTERS

20.9.8.1 RFO's report

It was proposed by MW, seconded by CB and agreed unanimously that the finance report for 30 September 2020 should be approved and payments of £608.50 were authorised.

20.9.8.2 New NJC salary scales

The new NJC salary scales had been published, effective from 1 April 2020. It was proposed by CB, seconded by DP and agreed unanimously to approve the increase to the Clerk's salary.

20.9.9 PLANNING APPLICATIONS

20.9.9.1 DC/20/02078 - Acer View, Potts Lane

It was noted that the application had been approved for change of use, extension and conversion of barn to dwelling, and erection of 3-bay garage with office over.

20.9.10 PLANNING MATTERS

20.9.10.1 Process for dealing with planning applications

CB referred to the recent Marquis planning application, when a working party had been formed to pull together the draft response, and asked whether this had been the right approach. BP commented that working parties should have a clear remit, understood by all members. DP felt that working parties were a good idea in principle, but one solution would not fit everything; it depended on the subject. It was agreed that working parties were not always appropriate - as far as planning applications were concerned, it was agreed that each one should be considered as it arose and a decision made on how to approach it. MW said planning training should be a priority as council members all had a different level of understanding of the process. However it was noted that the Government White Paper on changes to the planning system could affect parish councils' future involvement in planning applications (see below).

20.9.10.2 Response to Government White Paper

The Suffolk Preservation Society had expressed concern about the proposed reforms, which included a move away from locally responsive policies in local plans; the planning application stage would effectively be removed in growth and renewal areas. The Government claimed that this system would speed up development, but the SPS had concerns about the implications on local democracy. MW said he was unsure whether parish councils' views would be taken into account; however, CB felt the PC should respond, given the importance of localism. MW would draft a response and send it to JC for circulation.

20.9.11 LOCALITY GRANTS

JC would recirculate information about locality grants so that members could give some thought to possible projects - a decision would be made at the October meeting.

20.9.12 REMEMBRANCE SUNDAY

It was agreed to order a wreath as usual, in the hope that the service would be able to go ahead under Covid-19 regulations. JC would ask JDC if he would like to lay the wreath.

20.9.13 CLERK'S CORRESPONDENCE

20.9.13.1 Babergh's tree planting initiative

Babergh and Mid Suffolk were working on mapping both districts to identify where wildlife corridors needed to be established or improved to link up sites. They were also seeking to plant more trees and hedgerows to encourage more wildlife. Parish councils had been approached to see if they would like to be involved. MW proposed that the PC should register an interest; this was seconded by CB and agreed unanimously.

20.9.13.2 Village Hall Management Committee

At the AGM of the Village Hall Management Committee held on 1 September, it had been agreed that the Committee would stand down in April 2021. Although the PC was the custodian trustee it was not obliged to act as the management committee but would work with the existing committee to try and recruit new members. DP would summarise the responsibilities of committee members before any recruitment started; in the meantime JC would contact CAS for advice - DP would let JC have a copy of the governing document for background information.

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

None.

20.9.15 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

7.30pm on Wednesday 28 October 2020, via Zoom.

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