

LAYHAM PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of the Council held at 7.30pm on
Wednesday 27 March 2024 in the Village Hall

Present: Gillie Cranfield (GC)
Jane Cryer - Clerk (JC)
John Curran - Vice Chairman (JDC)
Will Dunn (WD)
Sue Keeble (SK)
Steve Laing - Chairman (SL)
Sheila Roberts (SR)
Julie Thickpenny (JT)

In attendance: John Ward, Babergh DC (JW)
6 members of the public

Apologies: Georgia Hall, Suffolk CC (GH)

24.3.1 APOLOGIES

See above.

24.3.2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

SL declared an interest in agenda item 24.3.10 and also the Public Forum; he withdrew for these two items.

24.3.3 PUBLIC FORUM

JDC took the chair for this item.

Referring to the licensing application made to Babergh in respect of music and serving of alcohol Steve O'Leary, owner of the Marquis, said Babergh's advice had been to make a full application initially; however, the application for music to be played outside had subsequently been withdrawn. A revised application was being prepared and would shortly be on the Babergh website; there was some uncertainty about whether this would be for a licence until 11.59pm or 11.30pm. Mr O'Leary said the Italian garden being created would include a 4m hedge all around, which would help to mitigate against noise; he confirmed that the only music played outside would be during the afternoon when a wedding was being held and music would be kept below the mandatory decibel level. He made the point that the original acoustic report had been produced before the doors to the building had been installed; a new report would be produced based on closed doors. In response to concerns from the public about noise when guests were leaving the premises, Mr O'Leary said most people would be staying at the Marquis, or at the newly refurbished Barclays building in Hadleigh - those staying there would be transported by Marquis staff so there would not be a large number of vehicles all leaving at the same time. GC asked whether the lighting in the car park could be lowered as it was clearly visible to neighbouring properties; Mr O'Leary said the new hedging should help with this. In response to a question from JDC concerning the withdrawn planning application for a conservatory, this would be re-submitted by the architects in due course. (*see also 24.3.10, below*).

24.3.4 ADJOURNMENT TO RECEIVE WRITTEN REPORTS FROM OUTSIDE BODIES

24.3.4.1 District Council

A written report had been circulated prior to the meeting, a copy of which is filed with these minutes. Babergh and Mid Suffolk, separate sovereign authorities but sharing a single workforce, had been named UK Council of the Year at the iESE Public Sector Transformation Awards held in London held on 6 March. The award was for a council deemed 'outstanding' in transforming its services and creating vibrant communities. JW confirmed that Council Tax for 2024/25 would be increased by the maximum amount, meaning a Band D property would pay £188.10; Babergh

received 9% of the total amount. The election for the post of Police & Crime Commissioner would take place on 2 May. SK expressed concern about SCC's proposed changes to Housing Related Support; JW confirmed that this would affect Babergh; the council had not been consulted about the changes. She was pleased to see that tax premiums had been agreed for owners of second homes and empty properties, as part of measures to bring more homes back into use. JW explained that some owners put furniture into empty properties and then called them second homes. In response to a question from SL, he said there were currently between 20 and 30 empty Babergh-owned properties. With regard to the proposed introduction of short-term car parking charges, JW said the recent accusations of predetermination aired at the recent Hadleigh Town Council meeting had occurred as a misunderstanding of the Localism Act. There would be a debate and vote in Cabinet on 8 April. Babergh was facing a deficit of £6.7m over the next four years, and had four options: introduce short-term parking charges; make cuts to other services; sell the car parks it owned; close those car parks. The car park near Corks Lane was currently rented from HTC on a 25 year lease. In answer to a question, he confirmed that CIL funds could not be used for the purchase of assets. WD asked why Babergh was charging only 48p per kilowatt hour for electric vehicle charging when Morrisons, for example, charged more than 70p; he felt that it was unfair for owners of electric vehicles to be subsidised when owners of petrol or diesel vehicles had to pay full price for their fuel. JW confirmed that Babergh's charges were due to be reviewed. Referring to CIFCO's administration costs, particularly salaries, WD wondered whether these could be reduced and therefore the income received by Babergh and Mid Suffolk from CIFCO increased.

24.3.4.2 County Council

A written report had been circulated prior to the meeting, a copy of which is filed with these minutes. With regard to SEND, SK commented on the additional £1m for 14 temporary posts and the 46 new posts; she hoped this did not mean a pay rise for existing staff who had not been doing their jobs properly. SL wondered whether it was possible to have sight of the priority action plan submitted to Ofsted and CQC on 7 March. JC would raise both of these issues with GH.

24.3.5 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

It was proposed by SK, seconded by WD and agreed unanimously that the minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 21 February 2024 should be accepted as an accurate record, and signed accordingly.

24.3.6 ACTIONS FROM PREVIOUS MEETINGS

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

24.3.6.1 Village signs

SK said Bob Barbiaux was approaching local artists re possible designs; he had also sent an application to highways/streetfurniture@suffolk.gov.uk and was awaiting a response. The next fund raiser would be a quiz in the Queen's Head on 6 April.

24.3.6.2 Gigaclear

JC had continued to chase a response from Gigaclear about the cabinet at the top of Mill Lane; SK had also written to the Chief Executive.

24.3.6.3 SID

SCC had begun work earlier than anticipated to change the poles for the SID on Upper Street in order to enable them to support a solar powered device; the SID would now be returned to the supplier to be converted from battery to solar power.

24.3.7 FINANCIAL MATTERS

24.3.7.1 RFO's report

JC explained that it had not been possible to produce the usual finance report as the latest bank statement had not been received from Barclays; she had requested a copy but this had not yet arrived. However, she had circulated a summary of cheques for payment and current balances; payments of £2,059.72 were approved. She would produce an end of year finance report for approval at the AGM and would circulate this in advance of the meeting.

24.3.8 REPORTS FROM COUNCILLORS

24.3.8.1 Emergency Plan

JDC's report on the desktop exercise was noted. He and JC had met Freddie Gallagher, Suffolk's Safety Officer, on 6 March and discussed how this might work; they were due to meet again on 3 April to finalise the scenario and confirm a date for the exercise - it was agreed that this should take place on either a Monday or Wednesday evening, in the Village Hall. In response to SL's question about the emergency boxes, JDC had asked Freddie for advice and recommendations.

24.3.9 PLANNING

24.3.9.1 DC/24/00848 - 1 Old Orchard

Councillors had no objections to the application for a single storey rear extension.

24.3.9.2 & 3 DC/24/01074 - Layham House, Overbury Hall Road (Listed Building Consent)

Councillors had no objections to the application for a new doorway and repairs to windows.

24.3.10 MARQUIS OF CORNWALLIS

JDC took the chair for this item (see also Public Forum). It was agreed that, given the withdrawal of the request for outside music after 9pm, and the revised application for a licence until midnight at the latest (with the exception of New Year's Eve), the Parish Council would not object unless the revised application differed significantly from this.

24.3.11 ANNUAL PARISH MEETING - WEDNESDAY 24 APRIL

The final agenda was agreed; JC would circulate this nearer the time.

24.3.12 CLERK'S ANNUAL REVIEW

It was agreed that SK, GC, JT and JC would meet in April; JC would circulate some possible dates.

24.3.13 CLERK'S CORRESPONDENCE

24.3.13.1 Water Lane

SCC had visited the site and felt there was no requirement for any action, despite several reports to the contrary by the PC and residents. This would be an item for the May meeting.

24.3.13.2 SCC Locality funding

JC had received an email from GH shortly before the meeting saying there was a small amount of Locality funding available for parish councils, but the deadline for applications was 1pm on Thursday 28 March. It was agreed to ask whether any additional funding might be available towards the conversion of the SID to solar power.

24.3.13.3 Suffolk Preservation Society

JC had received an email asking whether the PC might consider re-joining, having been a member until 2017; the annual cost for parish councils was £30. This would be an item for the May meeting.

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

None.

24.3.15 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Annual Parish Meeting at 7.30pm on Wednesday 24 April 2024, in the Village Hall.