

Culford, West Stow and Wordwell Parish Council

MINUTES

of the Meeting held at Culford Village Hall on

Thursday 24th November 2022

Present: Councillors: Rachael Salt (Chair), David Fisher, Paul Luke and Paul Turnill
Cllrs David Hurcombe and Andrew Miller joined the meeting following their co-option.

In attendance: Maximilian Clay (Clerk to the Council)
Five members of the public.

57. Apologies

All councillors were present and so there were no apologies.

58. Declarations of Interest

- a. There were no declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests in items on the agenda.
- b. There were no declarations of Other Disclosable Interests in items on the agenda.

59. Minutes

- a. The minutes of the meeting held on 29th September 2022 were agreed to be a true record and the Chair of the meeting was authorised to sign them as such on behalf of the Council.

60. County & Borough Councillor Reports

- a. District Cllr Susan Glossop had submitted a written report and highlighted matters relating to local devolution and to homelessness, as well as action concerning the cost of living crisis, asking that information be added to the Council's website.
Noting that the coronation of the new King would take place on the 6th May 2023, D Cllr Glossop went on to say that she had £1,000 left in her locality budget for the current year and that she was allocating that sum equally across her six parishes, should they wish to apply for a grant towards coronation related events or a commemorative item for distribution to residents. If some parishes decided not to apply the remaining funds would be split equally across any that do apply. Applications for funding would have to be made early in the new calendar year.
- b. The Council noted its disappointment that County Cllr Rebecca Hopfensperger did not attend the meeting for the second time in succession, especially in the context of the ongoing issues relating to Highways. C Cllr Hopfensperger had sent an email setting out the Highways Officer's response to comments about the inadequacy of their response to the HGV routes review and this is referred to in item 61.

The Chair informed the meeting that she intended to move agenda item 65 to this point of the meeting, so as to allow any newly co-opted members to participate in the rest of the meeting.

65. Co-option of Councillors

The Chair reported to Council that of four candidates, two had been interviewed and both these were recommended for co-option: David Hurcombe and Andrew Miller. One further candidate had not yet been interviewed and one had decided to withdraw. The Council resolved to co-opt David Hurcombe and Andrew Miller and they joined the meeting.

61. Lorry Route Review

In the absence of C Cllr Hopfensperger, the Clerk read out the Highways Department's reply to C Cllr Hopfensperger's email, mentioned above:

“We received community-led feedback from Culford, West Stow & Wordwell parish relating to issues along Ingham Road, Flempton Road & Icklingham Road in West Stow village and the B1106 Northbound from the roundabout North of Fornham St. Genevieve. The following was reviewed –

Damage to Property – As above, I have been in touch with colleagues from Suffolk Highways regarding damage to property along all these routes and they raised no incidents of HGVs causing any damage to property. Please let us know if an incident had been raised previously and if you need to raise any concerns regarding HGVs in the future, please use the following link - <https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/roads-and-transport/traffic-management-and-road-safety/report-a-heavy-goods-vehicle-incident/>.

Road Safety – As above, we analysed hundreds of police accident reports relating to all weights of vehicle that were involved in accidents within Suffolk. We found that over the last five years, there was no HGV involved in any accident along either of these routes. As per South Street, Risby we carried out further Road traffic casualty analysis along all routes for the last five years and found there to be no casualties involving HGVs – see below:

Damage to Highways – As above, we engaged with colleagues from Suffolk Highways and they reported back no major concerns to issues relating to surface or verge damage along either route. Please raise any future concerns via this link: <http://highwaysreporting.suffolk.gov.uk/>

Speeding – As mentioned in our previous feedback, we have been unable to verify speeding issues along routes which has been raised by parishes. However, the Suffolk Roadside Partnership does provide information on how communities can help to tackle issues relating to speeding drivers. Please use the following link - <https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/roads-and-transport/traffic-management-and-road-safety/road-safety/>.

Given the access requirements (see below) South and East of West Stow village, we took the decision not to recommend any other routes – West Stow Road and the B1106 between the A1101 & A134 which both have a 7.5Tonne weight restriction. We found them to be less suitable and more densely populated routes compared to Icklingham Road. Furthermore, we didn't want to highlight or encourage other routes to be used by HGVs.

As mentioned previously, we did downgrade the local access route (original green route) along Icklingham Road to a local access route with restrictions (yellow route) – see below. This also highlights and encourages HGVs to access locations east of the parish via the A134 to avoid these restrictions.

Finally, we will be passing on the issues raised by Culford, West Stow and Wordwell parishes to the Road Haulage Association which we are currently in dialogue with. We have made it clear that we expect haulage companies and alike to plan accordingly along with their drivers, to adhere to the rules and regulations of the highway.”

The Council was extremely concerned by the review and shared the view of C Cllr Hopfensperger, stated when forwarding the above response from the Review, that she remained highly unsatisfied. It was agreed that this response was grossly inadequate as an explanation of the decision-making process, as a rationale for the decisions themselves and in regard to fundamental accuracy - including mis-stating elements of the Council's submission. County councillor Hopfensperger has called for a meeting to be convened with the officers responsible and representatives of the Parish Council. Given that the Council felt that the comments in the response were at such variance with the factual evidence on the ground that it was impossible to gain meaningful understanding from it, this idea was warmly received. It was also resolved to urge C Cllr Hopfensperger, to attend the next meeting.

The Council resolved to carry out its own survey of HGV traffic in the spring, and the matter will remain on the Council's agenda until a satisfactory response is received.

62. Public Forum

No matters were raised.

63. Clerk's Report & Administrative Business

- a. There were no decisions taken under delegated powers since the last meeting.
- b. The Clerk reported that C Cllr Hopfensperger had confirmed that she would cover the initial cost of such speed surveys (see minutes of last meeting) to support the reduction of the speed limit on the northern stretch of the main road through the village.

64. Planning & Environment

a. Planning Application Consultations:

i. DC/22/ DC/22/1956/HH - Old School House, Ingham Road, West Stow

a. Single storey link extension between dwelling and outbuilding, b. forming of first floor balcony/terrace between dwelling and outbuilding and c. internal alterations of the outbuilding.

After brief discussion it was resolved to raise no objection.

ii DC/22/1934/FUL - Land Adjoining Tilhill House, Brandon Road, Culford

One dwelling

In discussion the Council noted that the proposal was outside the settlement boundary and that the size of the proposed house was, in any case, rather large for the site. Furthermore, there would be a tendency for more traffic to be generated at a point in the road where there are already grave safety concerns.

65. Co-option of Councillors

This item was dealt with earlier in the meeting (see above).

66. Amplification of Meetings

The Council discussed this item, arising from a discussion in a previous Public Forum, when it had been noted that provision of amplification would improve inclusion and that a number of councils are introducing this facility. Each Councillor would have a microphone and there would be an additional microphone for any invited speaker (during ward councillor reports and the public forum). The main benefit would be from the point of view of accessibility although it also helps in the management of meetings. The cost would be up to about £1,200 and it was suggested that a trial be conducted at a future meeting and the Clerk stated that he may be able to borrow a system for trial. It was resolved in to proceed on this basis.

67. Maintenance of Benches, Noticeboards and Dog Waste Bins

This item was carried forward to the next meeting when quotations would be made available by the Clerk.

68. Vehicle Activated Sign

The Clerk reported that the design of the signs had been updated and that data was now transferred wirelessly but that this could only be done to an Android device. The cost would be £3,129.00 and includes an additional fixing bracket. Unfortunately the offer of a donation to cover part of the cost had been withdrawn so the whole cost would fall to the council.

In discussion it was felt that anything that militated towards lower speed through the villages should be prioritised and so it was resolved to purchase an additional sign from Westcotec.

69. Finance

- a. **Receipts and payments** - The schedule of receipts and payments was received by the Council and the Clerk highlighted that the nationally agreed pay increase had been implemented in respect of the Clerk. It was resolved to approve the schedule of payments.
- b. **Summary Accounts to 31st October 2022** - The Council received the summary accounts for the period to 31st October 2022.
- c. **Draft Budget for 2023/24** - The Council considered the draft budget papers which provided models for both a 5% and an 11% general increase as comparatives. A question was raised about the provision for an election reserve. The Clerk explained that provision needed to be made in an election year because although contested parish council elections are a rarity they are, nonetheless, a possibility and the cost falls to the Parish Council.

Current reserves were reported to be c £22,000 but expenditure planned for the rest of the year would come off that figure and it is hoped that some of the reserve would be used towards the speed reduction measures being pressed for, through C Cllr Hopfensperger.

The Council resolved to take the 11% version forward to the January meeting for final discussion and it was noted that suggestions for any changes to the draft should be received by the Clerk before the Christmas break, so as to allow for models of those changes to be brought to the January meeting.

70. Councillors' reports and items for future agendas

Cllr Salt highlighted that there had been further accidents in the village and the Clerk had asked individuals and members of community WhatsApp group for detailed information about accidents but nothing had been forthcoming, other than anecdotes. It was noted that although both the police and the County Council say that they keep records of all accidents reported, there have few and no reports of accidents in the past five years. It was agreed that this was very unhelpful because the authorities were relying on grossly inaccurate information.

The Chair thanked the public for their attendance and closed the public section of the meeting. The following business was conducted in camera, due to its confidential nature, under the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960.

71. Staffing

- a. The Council heard that the appointments panel had interviewed a candidate and recommended the appointment of Christine Mason to the Offices of Clerk to the Parish Council and Responsible Financial Officer. The Council resolved, by unanimous vote, to appoint Mrs Mason
- b. It was resolved to authorise the chair to sign the contract of employment (based on national terms and conditions);
- c. It was resolved to authorise the official address of the Council to that of the new clerk
- d. It was resolved to authorise changes to the council's bank mandate with Lloyds, to reflect the appointment of the new clerk.
- e. The Chair moved a vote of thanks to the outgoing Clerk who had given fine service to the Council and this was resolved unanimously.

The meeting closed at 9.04pm

Signed as a true record by authority of the Council

Chair

Date