

# LEVINGTON AND STRATTON HALL PARISH COUNCIL

## MINUTES OF PARISH COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON

WEDNESDAY 5 SEPTEMBER 2018 IN THE VILLAGE HALL AT 7:15 PM

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**Present:** Councillors: David Long, Chairman ('DL'); David Pryke, Vice-Chairman ('DP'); Ian Angus ('IA'); John Bailey ('JB'); Pat Pryke ('PP'); James Ramsay ('JR');  
Parish Clerk: Marian Rose ('MR')  
County Councillor Patricia O'Brien (PO);  
No members of the public attended.

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DL opened the meeting by paying tribute to Jane O'Hear who had sadly died on 9 August 2018, just one year after taking office as Parish Clerk. A few moments silence was held in her memory.

- **VILLAGE FORUM**

No comments.

- **SUFFOLK COUNTY COUNCILLOR'S REPORT**

PO attended and summarised the main aspects of her previously distributed report. She also mentioned that tourism in the region was now worth a reported £2bn.

School GCSE results were improved but PO conceded that, still, they could not be classed as 'good'. PO also referred to the County Council's recently published budget deficit & an over-spend of some £8m. It would be necessary to make some hard decisions to reduce spending & make savings whilst lobbying the Government for increased funding.

IA commented that the police spend 30% of their time on domestic abuse cases. It was felt that Suffolk Police did not get their fair share of Government funding.

PP passed on a comment from a parishioner that all the local recycling centres were closed on the same day (Wednesdays) asking if it would be possible to stagger the closing day. PO promised to ask the question.

She then left to attend another PC meeting.

- **SUFFOLK COASTAL DISTRICT COUNCILLOR'S REPORT**

Susan Harvey was unable to attend & had sent her apologies. Her monthly reports had been distributed previously. It was noted that a grant may be available from her Community Enabling Fund.

The formal business of the meeting commenced at 7:35pm.

1. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Received from Andrew Abram (work).

2. **CODE OF CONDUCT & DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillors were reminded to refer to Suffolk Code of Conduct from time to time and update Register of Interests as required and state any Declarations of Interest as required at individual parish council meetings. None were declared at this meeting.

*Note: Items 3-5 likely to be of interest to residents had been placed high on the agenda to allow any villagers present to then leave if they were not interested in the remaining items.*

### **3. TO CONSIDER RESPONSE TO SCDC DRAFT LOCAL PLAN**

The briefing report from DL was taken as a basis for discussion & it was agreed that this should form the basis of a response to the consultation as it related to aspects of particular interest to our parishes. It was agreed the following points should also be made:

- It was not practicable for unpaid lay persons, such as Parish Councillors, to be able to review the amount of data included in all the supporting documents & sub-reports in the time available, especially during the busy holiday period. This was an inordinately impossible task.
- SCDC's 10% contingency level for development seemed arbitrary & unexplained leading to potentially unreliable & untrustworthy figures;
- The link between employment needs & housing did not appear to be adequately substantiated & even illogical;
- Adhere to the PC's tenet that there should be no development between the Seven Hills Crematorium & Trimley;
- Although some modest number of new houses may be acceptable at Red House Farm, the suggested number (20) in a relatively small area would represent a 26% increase in the number of houses in Levington & would be too large an increase.

### **4. OTHER PLANNING MATTERS**

The following were noted:

- a) DC18/3917/FUL – Walk Farm change of use – Stratton Hall Farms: The PC Planning meeting had been held on 22 August 2018. Almost unanimous decision to oppose. SCDC decision was awaited.
- b) DC18/2619/FUL – Plot adjoining Walnut Tree Cottages – Derek Eley: PC had been supported. SCDC had approved this on 13 August, with conditions.
- c) DC17/5106/FUL – Red House Farm change of use – Darren Vincent: PC supported & SCDC approved but, in their letter of 9 April, had quoted the permission was for 20 tents, not 5 as in the application. The Clerk had raised this with SCDC. SH had notified the PC that the agent & applicant was to be sent a letter stating the permission is for 5 units only. Copy of the letter has been requested but not yet received. Clerk to monitor this.  
This error had also made the PC aware that the planning portal (on the SCDC website) was not always a complete record of correspondence on a case as the erroneous letter appeared to have been removed.
- d) DC/18/2277/FUL – Garden Cottage extension – Eminson: PC had raised no objection. SCDC had approved the application, with conditions, on 12 July.
- e) DC/1803/FUL – Gunshed – erection of storage building & workshop - Eye Marine Ltd: PC did not object but had conditions. SCDC granted permission with conditions on 31 May.
- f) The planning protocol sheet given to the lead Councillor on all new planning applications would be reviewed. JB agreed to suggest additional follow-up points for inclusion.

### **5. SCDC BOUNDARY REVIEW/DISTRICT COUNCIL MERGER**

Councillors were referred to a report issued by DL & IA following the meeting they had attended on 22 June 2018. This explained the effect the merger of the District Councils will have on ward business. There had been a further consultation, but the PC had submitted no further comments.

## **6. TO SIGN A CORRECT RECORD OF THE MINUTES FROM 10 MAY 2018**

Following a minor correction to the wording item 11 (Reports from Councillors), the Minutes were duly approved as a correct record and signed.

## **7. MATTERS TO REPORT FROM LAST MINUTES (NOT COVERED ELSEWHERE ON THIS AGENDA)**

A review & update of the Church Field Policy was due and it was agreed that, if ready, to agenda this for the November PC meeting.

## **8. TO CONSIDER THE APPOINTMENT OF A NEW PARISH CLERK & RESPONSIBLE FINANCE OFFICER**

MR was thanked for her help following Jane O'Hear's ('JO') illness & sad death.

MR had taken the role from 19 July 2018 & her temporary appointment was ratified, under the same contract terms as JO. It was noted that her hours worked had exceeded the usual basic level of 8 per week, owing to the need to cover the back log (as supported by her submitted timesheets). This additional work was approved.

Former Clerk Lucy Buckle ('LB') had volunteered to take over the role once again & Councillors agreed she be appointed with effect from 19 September 2018. It was agreed that she be paid at scale 21 & be incremented in 2019, subject to appraisal. A contract, on terms similar to those for JO, would be offered.

MR was asked to work closely with LB in the hand-over & also to prepare the budget for 2019/20 in readiness for the November PC meeting where a preliminary assessment for the required precept would be reported, as she was more familiar with the financial transactions in the year to date.

## **9. FINANCE**

The following was noted:

- a) Bank balances at 31 August 2018 (reconciled to bank statements to 31 July 18):
  - Current account: £4,823;
  - Deposit account: £6,902.
- b) Income since the last PC meeting:
  - £55 extra donated by villagers for retirement of Tony Curtis the former postman (paid out to him on 13 August).
- c) Income anticipated before next meeting:
  - £3,825 - precept 2<sup>nd</sup> instalment due 1 Oct 18;
  - £176.57 – VAT refund for y/e 31 Mar 2018 (Return submitted 22 Aug);
  - £15,000 - Community Benefit Payment from Quintas Energy via Octopus Investments. The documents were ready for signing to claim this payment & legal opinion supported the premise that accepting his payment was without prejudice. The documents were duly signed & would be returned to Octopus for counter-signature. It was agreed that a separate bank account should be opened to hold this sum once received.
  - Possibly a few newsletter subscriptions @£6 each.
- d) Payments made since the last PC meeting & approved at that mtg and/or budgetted:
  - Cllr David Long £97.65 for May Newsletter printing;
  - Cllr Pat Pryke £10.08 for postage for May Newsletters;
  - Jane O'Hear £588.38 for salary & expenses for May & June, net of PAYE;
  - PC Doctor £35 for check of PC Laptop & back up program;
  - Tony Curtis £55 further retirement gift (see item 9b above).

- e) Payments due to be made before the next meeting & requiring approval:
- Salary for MR for July & August: £797.19 (including expenses reimbursed);
  - SALC £19.99 for Clerk's guide book;
  - Came & Co £312.38 for annual insurance renewal due 1 October 2018;
  - Heelis & Lodge £80 for internal audit (see item f below)
  - PKF Littlejohn re external audit £200 + VAT,
  - Cllr Pat Pryke for Sept newsletters – this may be more than the usual charge of c£110 as there would be more pages in this edition;
  - Cllr David Long c£15 for poppy wreath from British Legion.
  - Cllr Ian Angus £173.99 reimbursement of costs (mainly for the gate) – item 11b below also refers – this item was not approved as more detailed figures regarding the total cost of the project was required. Clerk to review the schedule with IA before the reimbursement would be authorised.
- f) Internal Audit 2017-18:  
This (clean) report provided by Heelis & Lodge in May was noted with satisfaction;
- g) External audit 2017-18:  
The report from PKF Littlejohn, received on 4 September, was noted. Their comment regarding the length of time the public notice should be displayed was noted for future reference.  
It was agreed that, for 2018/19, an audit exemption would be applied for, if the income & expenditure was still below the relevant limits.
- h) PAYE:  
HMRC had written stating that the PC was in credit by £173. The Clerk agreed to investigate the history of this, if it was practicable so to do. Meanwhile, SALC had advised not to pay any more PAYE to HMRC until this issue was resolved.

## 10. BROADBAND UPDATE

The plethora of emails from various parishioners was noted. On behalf of the PC, MR had made enquiries of the SCC Broadband team & had forwarded their response to Councillors on 3 September. The issue would be diarised to follow up later in the year.

IA reported that one idea, still at an embryonic stage, was for wifi connection equipment to be sited on the St Peter's Church tower (not visible from the ground), allowing line of sight connectivity, possibly as far as from the Village Hall to the marina. This was a matter for the Church authorities but the Councillors noted the suggestion with interest.

## 11. PROJECTS:

- Pilots Way tree canopy:  
DL drew attention to his circulated report of 10 August & quotation from The Tree GP, for the work to reduce the height of the canopies of the row of beech trees. This contractor had previously carried out work in the Churchyard & in Trickers Wood, when he had provided the lowest quotation.  
By a majority it was agreed that the work be done, as quoted, & MR was asked to contact the contractor accordingly.
- Church Field Gate:  
IA had submitted a claim for reimbursement of £173.99 for approval. However, the costing schedule for this project was reviewed & was found to be incomplete. Thus authority for reimbursement of these further expenses was not given. MR was asked to work with IA to produce a more accurate, up to date, schedule.

The fence to the right of the bench was queried & IA confirmed that this was to prevent anyone slipping off the raised edge on that side.

It was also commented that it was important in projects such as this that the progress be constantly monitored & each stage agreed & carried out in accordance with that agreement.

- Notice board at Red House Farm:  
This board had been removed temporarily while the Vincents carry outwork to the entrance to their farm. DL thanked the team who had arranged this & Mr & Mrs Willstead who were storing the Notice Board meanwhile.
- Village website:  
MR reported that she had not been able to maintain the website but that Onesuffolk had helped by posting the agenda for this meeting. She was aware that further data needed to be posted to be fully compliant with the Transparency Regulations. Councillors would ask LB is she would be able to update the website as part of her duties. . An alternative would be to accept an offer from Onesuffolk to maintain it for the PC at £10 per month (inc VAT). This proposition was put on hold until LB could be contacted to confirm if she was able to do this (if unable to do so a slight adjustment to the agreed hours may be necessary).

## **12. WWI COMMEMORATION**

The arrangements for the events on 11 November to commemorate the end of WWI were noted (DL report of 28 August referred).

It was agreed that the risk assessment for similar previous events was appropriate & that the most important factors were the need for torches & sensible footwear.

MR agreed to contact The Ship to invite them to contribute to the day, if they chose.

## **13. LOCAL HIGHWAYS ISSUES UPDATE**

MR had submitted a webmail request for SCC to complete the white lining on the Old Felixstowe Road (aka the old A45), following the re-surfacing work. This was yet to be carried out.

## **14. FORESHORE DEBRIS & BEACH CLEAN**

The results of the 2017 beach clean had been circulated to Councillors.

This had prompted a question concerning polystyrene debris from the marina. But the Marina replied to PC enquiries saying volunteers had done a clear up in the spring & claimed there was no current build up. There was to be a beach clean on 15 September when the location would be re-checked.

## **15. WORKS TO STRATTON HALL LEVEL CROSSING**

The PC understood that the level crossing at Stratton Hall was to be closed from May until August 2019 'to facilitate the commissioning of the new level crossings between Ipswich and Felixstowe'. In response to MR's enquiries, Network Rail had provided a statement. The project was in its early planning stages & a spokesman had agreed to attend the PC meeting on 7 November to update Councillors & villagers to explain the reasons for the closure & what plans they were putting in place for local traffic.

It was suggested that this may be worth mentioning at the next Port Liaison meeting as the work was part of the rail line improvements for the Port of Felixstowe.

## 16. CORRESPONDENCE

It was noted that Councillors were sent all communications received by the Clerk unless clearly not relevant such as police messages re missing persons or adverts for street furniture etc.

## 17. REPORTS FROM COUNCILLORS

- a. **Tree and Church field warden**  
Nothing to report other than Pilots Way as noted in item 11 above.
- b. **Village Hall**  
No meetings held & nothing to report.
- c. **Sir Robert Hitcham's Almshouses**  
IA reported that there was a new resident in number 4 who worked at a local school. The AGM had been held. The quinquennial report was due soon.
- d. **Public Transport**  
Nothing to report.
- e. **Coast & Heaths & footpaths**  
The report of the annual Stour & Orwell forum attended by DL was noted.  
An email from IA to SCC Rights of Way leader, Martin Williams was also noted.
- f. **Nacton School**  
Regular newsletters continued to be received during term time.
- g. **SALC**  
DL had attended the last area meeting in June & had circulated his report. The new Chief Executive was Sally Longmate.  
The next area meeting would be on Monday 17 September 2018. IA agreed to attend.
- h. **Port Liaison Group**  
The exchange of emails in June, re the effect of Brexit on the Port, were noted.  
There was as yet no known date for the next meeting (usually held in September or October). PP would make enquiries. She & DP would attend, if free.
- i. **Police/SNT:**  
The crime statistics up to June (the most recent available) had been downloaded from the Police website & had been circulated to Councillors.  
There had been no reply to the Clerk's request for information about a burglary in Church Lane.  
The SNT was being reorganised again with PCSOs being phased out. Officers would not be any more visible as a result of the restructuring.

*The meeting was then declared closed.*

**VILLAGE FORUM** (Opportunity to raise issues not necessarily on this agenda)

No comments.