

# LEVINGTON AND STRATTON HALL PARISH COUNCIL

## MINUTES OF PARISH COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON WEDS 1 MARCH 2017 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');  
Acting Parish Clerk: Marian Rose ('MR');  
County Councillor Patricia O'Brien ('PO');  
District Councillor Susan Harvey ('SH');  
2 members of the public.

The Chairman opened the meeting by explaining that Lucy Buckle had been taken ill earlier in the day & thanked Marian Rose for agreeing to step in as Clerk for the meeting. There were no objections.

- **VILLAGE FORUM**

There were no comments.

- **SUFFOLK COUNTY COUNCILLOR'S REPORT**

PO attended & presented the attached report.

She added that she had said to the Police & Crime Commissioner that rural communities would like to see more police visibility such as marked cars going through villages.

She had also reported to him that, in her opinion, there was no real leadership during Orwell Bridge closures. In response to her question asking if high-sided vehicles could be banned while cars be allowed to cross the bridge, the police claimed it would be difficult to implement this arrangement. The Parish Councillors voiced their support for her suggestion.

SCC had treated over 110K miles of roads this winter.

In reply to a Councillor's question PO stated that she was unaware of any decision or discussion regarding the locations of any gypsy & traveler transit sites but promised to make further enquiries.

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

SH attended & presented the attached report.

She added that the Deben Swimming Pool in Woodbridge was to be refurbished after which it would look very different.

She was gradually wading through the planning White Paper.

It was gratifying to note that the SCDC Planning Department appeared to take note of comments made by Parish Councils. SH commented that she felt that SCC Highways did not always respond effectively to planning issues raised with them.

She was supportive of constituents' views on the Felixstowe beach hut fees issue saying that she felt SCDC had handled the matter very badly.

The Innocence Farm Scoping Opinion consultation had apparently been leaked to the press which had resulted in the DC receiving objections from many people who were not among the statutory consultees.

DP pointed out that this land was shown as 'agricultural' in SCDC's current core strategy document but that, from meetings of the Port Liaison Group he had attended, Bidwells, the agents for Trinity College (the land owners), appeared to act as if the status of this land had been changed & he speculated that they had been given support for this although

this had not been made public. SH confirmed that, as far as she was aware, there had been no such indication made to them. Although she conceded that, when the last Local Plan was issued, there had been a very late inclusion of wording which stated that development to support the Port's activities would be supported. The Parish Councillors questioned if SCDC had the expertise to make judgements on the business case made by the Port or by Trinity College.

SH confirmed she did not know how long this would be in the consultation/'planning' stage.

She also explained that at this stage she needed to appear to remain open minded so that, if it came before the SCDC Planning Committee, she could not be accused of being pre-determined.

She felt there was a danger of owners of larger tracts of land drip feeding planning applications for comparatively low numbers of houses, say 50 or 100, where there would be no requirement for them to build schools or otherwise improve the local infrastructure.

### **The formal Parish Council ('the PC') meeting was then declared open.**

#### **1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

None

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

There were no declarations made.

#### **3. TO SIGN AS A CORRECT RECORD THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF 17 January 2017.**

The draft minutes presented were approved.

#### **4. MATTERS FOR REPORT FROM THE LAST MINUTES (not covered elsewhere on the agenda)**

- Item 10: the risk assessment for the beacon evening planned for April 21 had been approved & a supply of gas secured.

#### **5. PLANNING**

The following was noted:

- *DC/16/4757/FUL: Erection of a single storey 33Kv electrical switch house with a new access - Stratton Hall Drift, Levington:*  
The PC Planning Committee had not supported the application & had given their reasons to SCDC, who had worked with the co-operation of the applicant to respond to the PC's concerns & mitigate the impact of the new build;
- *DC/17/0495/TPO 1 No Beech within woodland area -Trickers Wood Levington:*  
to crown lift by up to 3m, in the interest of highway safety (removal of deadwood did not require consent); this application was submitted by the PC in February 2017. A decision was awaited.
- *DC/16/3283/FUL Proposed erection of replacement storage/workshop building & new vehicular access - storage land, Felixstowe Road, Levington:*  
The application had been resubmitted & differed in several areas from the earlier one. The PC had asked for certain assurances regarding usage of the site. A decision was awaited.

- *DC/16/4682/FUL erection of willow boundary fence - Hill Cottage Church Lane Levington:*  
The PC Planning Committee had not supported the application as Councillors had concerns over the roadside section of the fence. A decision was awaited.
- *DC/16/2314/FUL - 17 Red House Walk, Levington:*  
The applicant had appealed against SCDC's decision to refuse this application. The Planning Inspector had recently dismissed the appeal.
- *DC15/4107 - Solar Farm at Walk Farm, Stratton Hall - time extension:*  
Nothing more had been heard from SALC regarding the legality of accepting the community benefit payment offered by Quintas Energy (formerly Light Source). Quintas had confirmed to the Clerk that funding was only payable on the conditions in the deed - clause 2.3 which establishes 'that the contribution shall be payable within 2 months from the concurrence of either:
  - an extension to the planning permission term of 5 years (25 to 30 years); or
  - an agreement between the operator and the landowner to extend the lease for an equivalent term.'
 Councillors felt this response was still unclear & the Clerk was asked to confirm with them that the funds were still available to the PC should it wish to claim them, despite the fact that more than 2 years had elapsed.  
It was also agreed that JR should telephone Messrs Pretty, the Solicitors used by SALC, to seek a definitive legal opinion on the validity of accepting the community benefit payment.

## **6. INNOCENCE FARM**

The PC had received a request for a Scoping Opinion, from SCDC submitted by Bidwells the agents for Trinity College, for what will be a large port-related commercial development. Although this was in the parish of Trimley St Martin, it would be very close to our boundary: any noise and light pollution would affect many and especially those living closest to this proposed development.

A public meeting had been held on 23 January 2017 at which it was clear that all were opposed to development at this location.

The PC did not support the use of this 'greenfield' site for logistics use & had responded in detail to the SCDC' letter.

Earlier in the day, there had been a pre-meeting with other PCs affected to decide what issues if any should be raised with SCDC Planning Manager Philip Ridley. It had been stressed that it was important to try to prevent the submission of a planning application & avoid talking too much about potential planning details. It was also commented that members of the public, who may be able to make a significant contribution, should be invited to contribute, even if not a Councillor.

## **7. VACANCY**

The resignation of Nick Hopkins in 2016 had left a vacancy on the PC. The necessary statutory notices had been placed on the notice boards to advertise the vacancy & there had been no calls for a formal election.

Levington resident Andrew Abram had expressed an interest in offering himself for co-option. The Chairman had met with Andrew to discuss matters.

Andrew had been present at the meeting as a member of the public & he confirmed that he was willing to be considered as a Parish Councillor. DP proposed that he be co-opted & this was seconded by JB. His co-option was unanimously agreed. The formal Declaration of Acceptance was duly signed & Andrew took his place at the table to take part in the remainder of the meeting.

The Clerk would contact SALC to arrange a 'New Councillor' training course.

## 8. FINANCE REPORT

The following were noted:

- (a) Bank balances as at 1 February 2017 (reconciled to bank statements to 31 December 2016);
  - Current account: £6,419;
  - Deposit account: £4,217;
- (b) Income received since the meeting of 17 January 2017:
  - Newsletter subscriptions £6.00
- (c) Income anticipated before the next meeting:
  - c£18 - Newsletter subscriptions;
- (d) Payments made since meeting of 17 January 2017 & approved at that meeting and/or budgeted:
  - Lucy Buckle - Clerk's Salary & Expenses £328.72;
  - Marian Rose - Clerk's Salary & Expenses £47.94;
  - Pat Pryke £106.45 re January newsletters;
- (e) The following payments due to be made before next meeting were approved:
  - Clerk's Salary & Expenses to 21 February £647.79 gross of tax) inc exps;
  - HMRC £296.20 re PAYE & NIC from the December salaries.

## 9. PROJECTS

### a. *Gate to Church Field:*

The new gate had been ordered but not yet delivered with the correct inscription. A bid had been submitted to the Community Conservation Fund for £500 towards the costs of the new footpath to the new gate. A decision was due on 15 March 2017. It was agreed that 2 elm trees, by the proposed new path, which were dying, should be cut down to be replaced by appropriate hedging or fencing.

### b. *Bridge Road verge:*

IA was waiting for a formal response from UKPN & OOCL – delayed due to staff holidays. This item was therefore carried forward to the next meeting.

## 10. CLERK CONTRACT & POLICIES

The employment contract for the new Clerk was unanimously approved. The process for calculating the Clerk's annual leave was also agreed & amounted to 32 hours per year. This would be shown separately on the Clerk's payslip & be paid on a quarterly basis.

The following PC policies were also approved by a majority vote:

- Anti-harassment & bullying;
- Capability;
- Disciplinary procedures;
- Disciplinary rules;
- Equal opportunities;
- Grievance procedures;
- Sickness policy;
- Whistle blowing.

It was agreed that all these policies be reviewed annually & that the Clerk be consulted to confirm the policies remained appropriate & workable.

DL was thanked warmly for the tremendous amount of work he had done to prepare these documents on the PC's behalf.

#### **11. DATA PROTECTION**

The new policy was approved with the proviso that it be reviewed annually. It was suggested that, at the next review, a change be made to the wording at item 13c, re bullying, to cover the contingency of an allegation of bullying being made against the Clerk or the Chairman.

#### **12. QUIETER LANES**

There had been a proposal that the PC apply for 'Quiet Lane' status for the road from the lower end of Church Lane to Stratton Hall Drift. The cost to the PC would include approximately £500 for the appropriate signage and the cost of a public meeting necessary to seek residents' approval for the scheme.

During discussion, Councillors raised the following issues:

- pedestrians, horse riders & cyclists have particular problems with speeding traffic along this stretch;
- it was suggested that the proposal be extended to the level crossing at Stratton Hall as there was no footpath for walkers to use;
- the PC did not have budgeted funds to cover these costs;
- there was some doubt as to the effectiveness of such a scheme in practice;
- it was not clear if the public meeting of residents required unanimous support;
- Police/SCC Highways' views on the matter were not known.

A vote was held and, by a majority (2 abstentions), it was agreed to support the proposal. However, it was agreed that, before a public meeting was called, the following be clarified:

1. Obtain the views of the police & SCC Highways.
2. Ascertain if unanimous support or a simple majority was required at the public meeting.
3. Identify a funding source for the £500+ to cover the signage etc – such as from PO's Locality Budget or SH's Community Enabling Fund.

#### **13. PARISH COUNCIL MEETING PROCESSES**

JB's paper on his suggestions for ways in which the PC meeting practices could be improved had been circulated to Councillors. After a brief discussion it was agreed that it would be unfair to consider the issue without the Clerk being present to give her views. It was not a matter which needed public debate & therefore it was agreed that an informal meeting of Councillors & the Clerk be held & that this should include a general review of the PC's procedures now that she has been in post for a few months.

#### **14. DISTRICT COUNCIL MERGER**

The PC had responded to the consultation on the proposal to merge Suffolk Coastal DC with Waveney DC. Their concerns centred on the likely reduction in the number of District Councillors forming the new DC & the number of constituents for whom each District Councillor would be responsible. To date, there had been no response from SCDC to the PC's letter.

## **15. CORRESPONDENCE**

All correspondence (unless of a very routine nature) had been circulated to Councillors at the time of receipt/issue. The list attached was reviewed & noted.

## **16. REPORTS FROM COUNCILLORS**

### **a. Trees and Church Field warden:**

- 3 quotes had been obtained to carry out the tree work previously identified as necessary during a professional arboreal survey. It was agreed that Tree GP be asked to carry out the work at the quoted cost of £240, plus VAT. The firm was known to IA & he was happy to recommend their work.
- A sycamore tree had fallen during the recent Storm Doris at a property next to Trickers Wood & this gave some concern for the health of a similar tree in the wood. It was agreed that the ivy surrounding its trunk be cut back so that the tree could be assessed.
- The overgrown bramble in Pilots Way was again raised. It was agreed that a local resident, known to have suitable cutting equipment, be asked to help with reducing the bramble bush.

### **b. Village Hall:**

- The PC has been allocated a third filing cabinet in the storage room. This includes one for the emergency equipment. It was agreed that IA, DL & DP should all hold keys to this cupboard.

### **c. Sir Robert Hitcham's Almshouses:**

- Nothing to report.

### **d. Local Public Transport:**

- PP had nothing to report as the local service continued to work well.

### **e. Coasts, Heaths & Footpaths**

- The board walk had been very recently been repaired by SCC & the Clerk was asked to thank Martin Williams the Rights of Way officer for his prompt help with this.
- It was thought that the broken bridle way sign had not yet been repaired.
- There had been recent reports of drones flying low over the Creek. The land owners had confirmed they do not allow drones to fly over their land. Suffolk Coasts & Heaths had referred the issue to Natural England who had reported that they now intended to prepare a Suffolk protocol to cover such events. Meanwhile an article would be placed in the PC newsletter to alert residents to the above.

### **f. Nacton Primary School:**

- Nothing to report.

### **g. SALC**

- Nothing to report.

### **h. Port Liaison Group**

- Nothing to report other the references to Innocence Farm proposed development mentioned above.

**i. Police SNT**

- IA had circulated a report of the meeting on 28 February. There was an issue over lorries parking overnight in laybys on the A14. This may have arisen from an attempt to prevent them parking in Felixstowe town. There was some discussion as to whether this should be raised with the Port of Felixstowe but Councillors agreed that it was not appropriate for the PC to pursue.

**The formal business of the meeting was declared closed at 10:10pm.**

**Approved by:**

**Date**

**POINTS FROM POST-MEETING VILLAGE FORUM:**

- IA raised the problem of illegal litter dumping in Levington Lane (to Bucklesham from the Old Felixstowe Road). He has asked SCC Highways to confirm if they will allow the road to be obstructed to prevent vehicular access (though pedestrians, cyclists & horses would still be permitted). Their response was awaited. He had also approached the land owner who has agreed that a 'PRIVATE' sign could be placed at the entrance to the driveway to Keepers Cottages.

The meeting was closed at 10:15pm.