WATTISFIELD PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE PARISH COUNCIL MEETING

THE UNITED REFORMED CHAPEL, WATTISFIELD

MONDAY 17th July 2023 AT 7.30 PM

(Draft until approved and signed)

PRESENT:

Councillor Geoff Wade (GW) Chair

Councillor Mick Elflain (ME) Vice Chair

Councillor Cynthia Penn (CP)

Councillor David Dyer (DD)

Councillor Ann Telford (AT)

Councillor Rick Meyer (RM)

IN ATTENDANCE:

County Councillor Jessica Fleming (JF)

District Councillor Richard Winch (RW)

Mick Elflain acted as Clerk and took the minutes.

Also, present; Martyn Dove (MD) representing Village Hall Committee and 31 members of the public.

1. PUBLIC FORUM

The Chairman made a statement about the history of the recreation ground and the village hall, highlighting the PC would look after the trees and the Village Hall Committee were to look after the building and ensure the grass was cut regularly. This was detailed in the lease and was the legal position. MD made the point he has only 2 people on his committee and because of the poor state of the building it’s difficult to have events inside, very little income generated. Govt. Covid grants of £18K had been used to keep the hall going, the costs being £8K per year. Following the questionnaire distributed to the village last year, there were 44 returns of which half wanted rewilding and half to retain a sports field. MD said he decided to keep half the field long and retain short grass on the remaining section. GW said the PC who own the land were not consulted on this step but should have been. GW explained the limited budget of the PC who could not afford to give out large grants of thousands of pounds for building repairs. The cost of cutting the grass was discussed. The actual fee was disputed and does need clarifying. MD said he could not afford the £300 per month he suggested it costs to cut the grass, however, agreed the PC had not been approached for help. *(Note: MD has now clarified the cost, 2 cuts per month, £160 in total.)* There were many comments made by members of the public who were present which ranged from considering the rewilding essential to the opposite, being unable to play football properly. There was an extensive discussion with repeated calls from many of the public for a compromise solution involving keeping the edges in a wild state but restoring the majority of the playing field to short grass.

It was agreed, the recreation ground would all be cut, the Village Hall Committee should produce a plan drawing of the area desired to be designated ‘rewilded’ and this plan needs the approval of the parish council. The focus of the group should be on the building itself; parishioners need to help and join the Village Hall Committee who should apply for grants to help maintain the building. The PC could possibly help by borrowing money cheaply for major work.

At this point, approximately 20.30 hrs. most members of the public left the meeting.

1. REPORT FROM AND QUESTIONS TO DISTRICT AND COUNTY COUNCILLORS

JF presented her report which included: support for energy costs (Warm Homes Suffolk), digitalising Suffolk Archive documents by the Ancestry company, the Fire & Rescue Service taking back in-house the call-handling facility due to IT problems and West Suffolk (new) Hospital, Community Engagement Group.

RW presented his report which included: Shepherds Grove traffic management, joint response involving Walsham le Willows parish, Solar farms, Mid Suffolk response, Grant for charging points for vehicles and holding meeting remote from Ipswich headquarters.

1. APOLOGIES

None

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None

1. REQUESTS FOR DISPENSATIONS

None

1. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 19th June 2023 were approved with one amendment.

1. MATTERS ARISING FROM MINUTES

None

Chair agree to hear item 9 next, Wattisfield Village Hall & Recreation Field

Chris Allen was present and outlined the current position with the Working Group looking at the future of the village hall. He has organised a meeting of the group on 4th August to update on who is doing what task. PC members might like to attend this meeting.

The next stage is to pay the £4K architects fee to progress the three options for the village hall. Once done these will be displayed for parishioners to consider. It was agreed at our next PC meeting, we would discuss and decide if the payment would go ahead for the architect work.

ME said SALC officer (Jim Friend) had been in touch to discuss liaison with village hall/refurbishment project, GW would contact him direct.

GW will arrange the hay-cutting of the whole recreation ground, as agreed at our last meeting.

1. ADMINISTRATION
   1. ME was nominated at the Interim Proper Officer for the council, all agreed.
   2. ME detailed the application received for the clerk’s post. This was discussed and agreed ME will organise meeting with applicant soon.

1. WATTISFIELD VILLAGE HALL

See item above.

1. FINANCE

Payment of the following debts was approved; Hire of hall £90, Staff salary June £212.87, HMRC P30 bill £159.60, Clerk’s expenses Mar-Jun 2023 £285.74.

1. PLANNING MATTERS
   1. Two decision notices have been issued by MidSuffolk Planning relating to properties in Bobby Hill.
   2. Planning item 22/06352 relates to a water pipeline and associated installations, running from Bury St. Edmunds to Colchester. Cllrs. Considered matter and decided they have no comments.

1. CORRESPONDENCE RECEIVED
   1. AT mentioned some correspondence concerning the lifting of the canopy of a tree on the green outside the Anglican church. GW said this would be reviewed this autumn as part of the 3 yearly tree assessment (correspondent informed).
   2. A Notice of Vacancy had been posted on the village noticeboard. If no requests are made to have an election, the PC will be able to co-opt one of the applicants to the parish council. To be discussed at the next PC meeting.
   3. Diss MCC have made a donation to the PC and apologised for the disruption caused by the limited parking available at their recent (July 5th) motocross event. £500 donated and letter of thanks sent.
   4. AT & CP detailed some recent complaints, bins being left out repeatedly (ME will forward to MidSuffolk DC to action), and vehicles parked on pavements and grassed areas (ME will leaflet local residents).

1. QUESTIONS TO THE CHAIRMAN
2. AT asked if we might send an automated response to members of the public who wrote to the clerk/PC, acknowledging their communication. ME agreed he would look into this.

ii) ME agreed to supply information to Cllrs. About whom had applied to join the parish council.

iii) It was noted that the deadlines for comments on recently notified planning applications had passed.

1. DATE OF NEXT MEETINGS

The date of the next Parish Council meeting was confirmed as Monday 21st August 2023 at 7.30 pm.

Meeting closed at 21.50hrs.

Mick Elflain – Interim Proper Officer - Wattisfield Parish Council

Contact details; email, wattisfieldpc@outlook.com