

PARISH COUNCIL MEETING

Held on Thursday 11th July 2024, commencing at 7.30 pm. in the Village Hall.

Full reports and supporting documents can be found on the Parish Council website under Meetings, July 2024 Meeting Pack. Paper copies are also available.

Present:

Chair: Cllr Janice Muckian. Cllrs: Alison Bourne, Frank Domoney, Irene Mitchell, Chris Robinson and Michael Sherman. Six members of the public.

Opening Statement by the Chair:

The Chair began by welcoming everyone and introduced herself explaining to all present that this meeting is being recorded for the purpose of minute taking only and that after the minutes have been approved the recording will be destroyed. The Chair reminded all that this is not a public meeting, but a meeting of the Council held in public. Members of the Public were respectfully asked to maintain silence during the Council's deliberations and not to approach the Councillors. Councillors were requested not to engage with Members of the Public when Council is in session. All were asked to ensure that their mobile phone was on silent.

1. Apologies and approval of Absences

The Clerk explained that Councillors Lamont, Morrey and Ranzetta had sent their apologies.

2. Declarations of Interest

Cllr Mitchell declared an interest in the Planning Applications concerning 32 Prentice St.

3. Requests for Dispensations

The Clerk reported that none had been received other than those previously reported.

4. To approve as accurate minutes of the 6th June 2024 meeting of the Council

The Chair introduced the minutes which have been on the Parish Council website for two weeks.

Motion: to approve as accurate the minutes of the 6th June 2024 meeting of Council.

Proposed: Cllr Sherman

Seconded: Cllr Robinson

Decision: The minutes of the 6th June 2024 meeting of the Council were approved as accurate with no votes against. Cllr Domoney abstained having not been present at that meeting.

5. Public Participation Session

The Chair reminded Members of the Public of the protocol for this session. Those who wish to ask a question or make a statement have three minutes. Matters raised must concern business on the agenda or local matters. If a question cannot be answered tonight Members of the Public should contact the Clerk with their name and contact details and will receive a written response within 28 days.

A Member of the Public expressed concern about the damage to the neighbouring properties which might be caused by the proposed installation of a light in the alley which connects Pump Court to the Market Place. He was particularly concerned about the trenching required along the entire length of the alleyway. The Clerk explained that this light was the last light to be installed as part of the original installation plan and had been in progression for many years. The Clerk agreed to obtain further information from Suffolk County Council and report back.

A Member of the Public expressed frustration concerning the work by Gigaclear in the Market Place, the length of time being taken, the poor colour matching, unresolved trip hazards and disruption to the businesses. The Chair sympathised but explained that the PC had no jurisdiction over Gigaclear and urged the Member of the Public to contact the Gigaclear Customer Engagement Manager.



A Member of the Public expressed concern that about the size of the trees near Normans Way. The Clerk asked the Member of the Public to contact him after the meeting to try and ascertain who is responsible for the maintenance of the tree.

A Member of the Public expressed concern about the idea of the PC paying Babergh to not introduce car parking charges. Car parking, he said should be paid for by users and should not form part of a compulsory tax on residents. Residents, he said, should not pay Council Tax to help businesses which do not pay Council Tax. Local Neighbourhood Plans and National Strategies he explained are working towards combatting the Climate Emergency by emphasising pedestrians over the car, subsidising parking he suggested was contradictory to this agenda. He questioned whether such a subsidy could be subject to legal challenge. A village poll he said could be detrimental to the harmony of the village. He concluded by saying that Councillors are elected to make decisions and that this Council should do so with the concept of fairness at the heart of its thinking.

A Member of the Public began by expressing his agreement with much of the concerns raised by the previous speaker adding that he was concerned that the estimates of donations which would contribute to any subsidy paid were overstated and the increases in precept required consequentially understated. He added that he considered it risky to rely on donations to pay for contractually committed costs.

6. Chairman's Announcements

The Chair began by thanking everyone who attended the car parking meeting saying that the range of views expressed demonstrated what a difficult position the PC is now in due to the decisions of Babergh District Council. She spoke of her appreciation of the patience shown by all those who wished to speak at such a busy meeting. She explained that Car parking is the main agenda point for tonight's meeting, to ensure that it can be fully discussed, after consulting with the Clerk, it had been decided to defer consideration of Grant applications to next month's agenda.

The Chair informed Councillors that finally the power supplies to the two phone boxes have been disconnected. The Clerk has notified the contractor and we await their removal for refurbishment.

Gigaclear, she said, continue their works with her understanding being that a number of residents have been in contact with their Community Engagement Manager to address a few issues.

The Chair informed Councillors that in respect of the 20 mph scheme the PC has heard nothing further and does not expect to hear until August. Work on LNP2 to incorporate the Examiners comments into the Plan is, she said, ongoing.

The Chair explained to Councillors that following a query from a member of the public with regard to bus stops together with the Clerk and Cllr Morrey she had met with Shane Buffham, Lead Operations Manager for Hedingham and Chambers buses. It had been confirmed that there are six pairs of bus stops. There are five official pairs of bus stops (Preston Rd, The Swan, Tenterpiece, The Glebe and Howletts) however the signage at Preston Rd, Tenterpiece and The Glebe is confusing with only one side of the road clearly indicated as being a bus stop. There are informal stops near the top Co-op, if the bus can stop, it may on request. The Bus Company is seeking, with Suffolk County Council to regularise the informal stops.

7. Local Authority Councillors' Report

The Clerk explained that County Cllr Lindsay and District Cllr Clover are, following the General Election, on leave.

District Cllr Maybury gave a verbal report. She explained that there was little to report as Babergh Council had been in 'purdah' due to the General Election. She invited the PC to submit a claim on her locality budget. This budget is £2,000 per annum to be shared across her area. She spoke of the possibility of obtaining matching funding from Suffolk County Council for various projects and urged the Clerk to contact Cllr Lindsay concerning this. She highlighted the Babergh Council Summer Activity program for children in receipt of free school meals.



8. Proposed introduction of car parking charges by Babergh District Council

The Clerk outlined the possible Options.

The PC could accept the Babergh proposals. Car Parking charges would be levied, in the Church St and Prentice St Car Parks, between 8am and 6pm Monday to Saturday of £1 for the first two hours with a maximum of £2.50 per day. Annual Permits would be available for £250. There would be no concessions for users of community facilities. Blue Badge holders would receive 3 hours free parking.

The next option, known as Option 1, would add charging on Sunday between 8am and 6pm to the charging arrangements proposed by Babergh. However, the cost of Annual Permits would be reduced to £95 and there would be two hours free parking for users of community facilities. Blue Badge holders would receive 3 hours free parking

The final option, known as Option 2, would accept Babergh's offer of a payment from the PC in lieu of parking charges. The likely payment required by Babergh is some £65,000 per annum. This amount would increase each year. Babergh has indicated that some downward negotiation of this payment is possible but the extent of this possibility is relatively minor. The PC would continue to be able to collect donations from users of the car parks and would highlight to car park users that the PC and residents had made a payment to Babergh to maintain car parking free at the point of use. Donations would contribute somewhat to this payment amount but the PC, he said, will probably need to increase the precept by some £40,000 per annum or £40 per annum per Band D property.

The Chair opened the debate commenting that she had been finding the decision increasingly difficult and that whatever decision the PC made was not going to be universally popular. She highlighted the issue of fairness to all residents of the village. She pointed out that should significant donations not be received the increase in Council Tax required of approximately £65 per annum for a Band D property should a subsidy arrangement be entered into was not significantly different to the cost of an annual parking permit under Option 1 of £95 per annum.

Cllr Robinson expressed concern that the payment required to Babergh was uncertain. The Chair replied that Babergh had made it clear that any negotiations would not very significantly reduce the payment and that such negotiations could only take place after the Council had given a firm indication that it was prepared to pay a subsidy. Babergh's financial position, she explained, meant that Babergh is determined to raise a significant amount of money from these changes.

Cllr Mitchell said that Option 1 represents a tailored solution for Lavenham providing a high degree of protection for community services and regular users of the car parks. Option 1 would also increase the level of monitoring of illegal on-street parking since the same team would be responsible for both on and off street parking. Option 1, she explained, would however lead to a reduction in the level of donations currently received which would lead to a reduced ability of the PC to financially cope with unexpected costs. She expressed concern about Business Owners supporting subsidy arrangements saying that none of them pay Council Tax. Business Rates she said are not receivable by the PC. The PC and therefore Council Tax payers she said already pay to support the village economy highlighting the £15,000 per annum paid to maintain the village toilets. She said she was astonished that none of the business owners had offered a donation. She concluded by highlighting the number of residents (16%) who do not own cars and the number of residents (600) who live closer to the shops than they live to the car parks adding that donations are falling in both real and absolute terms. Cllr Mitchell explained that in due course she would like to move an amendment to the motion concerning Option 2.

Cllr Sherman expressed concern that the precept is already high and that many, particularly the elderly struggle to pay the current amount. Residents he said should not subsidise the parking for visitors. The businesses in Lavenham he said were not local businesses, only two businesses were local, the others their owners commuted to Lavenham. He expressed concern that should the PC run into any unexpected costs in future that the Council Tax would rise to completely unacceptable levels. He concluded by pointing out that the Suffolk norm is to pay for car parking. The Chair reminded Councillors that there were quite a number of locally owned businesses, certainly more than two.

Cllr Domoney remarked of the absence of discussion of a Residents Parking Scheme. The Chair responded that consideration of such a scheme was not a subject of this meeting. Cllr Bourne emphasised the unfairness of increasing Council Tax on non-car owners to subsidise car parking.



The Chair asked the Clerk to read the three motions. Cllr Mitchell proposed an amendment to the third motion so that it read: 'That this Parish Council enter into negotiations with Babergh Council to finalise the level and period of subsidy required to halt the implementation of car parking charges and that the full subsidy will be raised from the precept'.

Cllr Robinson commented that this amendment would remove any opportunity to ask local businesses or the Farmers Market to contribute and would remove the opportunity for residents to have their say. The Chair replied that the Farmers Market had been contacted and had not replied and that no local business had so far offered any contribution at all.

Cllr Mitchell interjected asking Cllr Robinson, via the Chair, what he considered to be a fair arrangement and why. Cllr Robinson responded that he was in favour of asking businesses including the Farmers Market to contribute and robust negotiation with Babergh to reduce the required increase to the Precept. Cllr Mitchell responded that with the falling level of donations the burden will fall on Council Tax payments.

Motion: to approve amendment to the motion 3 as suggested by Cllr Mitchell

Proposed: Cllr Mitchell

Seconded: None

Decision: The amendment proposed by Cllr Mitchell was not supported.

The Chair explained to Councillors that Motion 3 implied and intended to say that the result of the poll was binding but did not quite say so. The amendment was to add 'Should electors vote to support the subsidy Council will enter into a subsidy arrangement with Babergh' to the end of the proposed motion.

Motion: to approve amendment to the motion 3 as suggested by the Chair

Proposed: Cllr Muckian

Seconded: Cllr Bourne

Decision: Cllrs Robinson, Bourne and Domoney voted in favour and Cllrs Mitchell and Sherman voted against. Amendment passed.

Motion: That this Parish Council not enter into negotiations with Babergh Council to change in any way the proposed scheme of car parking charges. In particular Sunday will remain free of charges. Note: The only negotiation with Babergh Council will be to fulfil motion 8b passed at the Council Meeting of 6th June 2024 'that should Babergh Council introduce charges in the Church St and Prentice St Car Parks the Parish Council will ask Babergh Council to introduce the same charges in the Water St Car Park conditional on concluding satisfactory negotiations with Babergh Council to use those funds to enhance the proposed mitigations and/or contribute to the maintenance of the Water St Car Park'.

Proposed: Cllr Sherman

Seconded: Cllr Domoney

Decision: All Councillors except Cllr Domoney voted against this motion. Motion was not supported.

Motion: That this Parish Council finalise the concessions to the proposed scheme of car parking charges, as set out in Option 1, for implementation by Babergh Council. There will be no further public consultation, this Parish Council will not subsidise free car parking in the village. This Parish Council will negotiate with Babergh Council to fulfil motion 8b passed at the Council Meeting of 6th June 2024 'that should Babergh Council introduce charges in the Church St and Prentice St Car Parks the Parish Council will ask Babergh Council to introduce the same charges in the Water St Car Park conditional on concluding satisfactory negotiations with Babergh Council to use those funds to enhance the proposed mitigations and/or contribute to the maintenance of the Water St Car Park'.

Proposed: Cllr Mitchell

Seconded: Cllr Sherman

Decision: Cllrs Bourne, Mitchell and Sherman voted in favour and Cllrs Domoney and Robinson voted against. Motion passed



9. Motion that the Parish Council request Suffolk County Council to share the details of all Parish Council controlled chargers with Connected Kerb for them to arrange an initial survey.

The Clerk explained that this motion was really about whether the PC wishes Suffolk County Council to take over its EV charging points. He outlined the current situation with respect to which Chargers are switched on and which not and the current costs of operating those. Council he explained makes an annual loss of approximately £400 on the Chargers.

He explained that Suffolk has approached the PC with an offer, funded by a Central Government grant, which will give the PC a modest income stream, assist with the switching on of the remaining chargers and protect the PC against any future maintenance, repair or replacement costs for the Chargers. The fee receivable is £100 per bay per year for the first seven years of the contract and a fee for the entire contract term (ie until 2041) of £1 per 100kw sold. The Clerk suggested that the PC is not an expert manager of EV Chargers and is unable to achieve economies of scale.

Cllr Mitchell asked if the PC will receive the fees for PC owned Chargers in Prentice St which are legally on Babergh land. The Clerk responded that Suffolk are working with Babergh and that he has informed Suffolk of the land owning peculiarities and that those details are yet to be finalised. He said that even if those finalisations were not in our favour the PC would have reduced its longer term financial liabilities and could no longer lose money each month on the Chargers. Cllr Mitchell agreed those were the major considerations.

Proposed: Cllr Bourne

Seconded: Cllr Robinson

Decision: Approved unanimously

10. Planning Applications for Consideration

The Clerk informed Cllrs that no decisions had recently been received from Babergh Council contrary to the PC's recommendations.

DC/24/02747

The Grove 5 Lady Street Lavenham Sudbury Suffolk CO10 9RA

Variation of Condition 2 (Approved Plans and Documents) of Listed Building Consent Application DC/24/00360 dated 03/04/2024 - Re-build collapsed section of boundary wall along Barn Street; and repairs to remaining standing length. Reduce garden ground levels, where possible, retaining cover to tree roots. Removal of 1No. tree (under separate application).

The Council reviewed and approved the original application. This application responds to issues found during investigation and discover of further damage to the wall. This application, like the previous one is taking a sensitive approach to prevent minimum disruption to the wall and trees.

Motion: that Application DC/24/02747 be recommended for approval

Proposed: Cllr Robinson

Seconded: Cllr Sherman

Decision: Approved unanimously.

DC/24/02715

Pippins Bridge Street Road Lavenham Sudbury Suffolk CO10 9SH

Application for works to a tree protected by TPO WS240/G - Crown reduce 1No Maple (T1) by up to 1.5m, back to pruning points leaving it the same size as the other two trees (6m). Routine maintenance to a tree protected by a Tree Preservation Order

Motion: that Application DC/24/02715 be recommended for approval

Proposed: Cllr Mitchell

Seconded: Cllr Robinson

Decision: Approved unanimously.



DC/24/02725

Pedlars Way Bears Lane Lavenham Sudbury Suffolk CO10 9RT

Notification of Works to Trees in a Conservation Area - Pollard 1No. Ash (T1) reducing branches by up to approx. 2m.

Pollarding a tree is quite extreme but should allow the tree to re-grow a better shape.

Motion: that Application DC/24/02725 be recommended for approval

Proposed: Cllr Bourne

Seconded: Cllr Robinson

Decision: Approved unanimously

DC/24/01661 and 01662

Mole Cottage 32 Prentice Street Lavenham Sudbury Suffolk CO10 9RD

Householder Application - Provision of off-road parking space, part demolition of existing wall and construction of dropped kerb

This application will affect the appearance of this listed property. However, given that other properties on this street have similar driveways in principle we could not object to this proposal, but further information should be provided in a Design and Access Statement detailing the effect on the listed building and the wall.

Note that the existing wall is of a very old construction but does not appear on the Historic England Listing.

Suffolk Highways has lodged a holding objection requesting information on dropped kerbs and visibility splays.

Motion: that Applications DC/24/01661 and 2 be recommended for approval subject to the approval of Suffolk Highways

Proposed: Cllr Bourne

Seconded: Cllr Robinson

Decision: Approved unanimously, Cllr Mitchell abstained having declared an interest.

12. Clerk RFO Report:

Lorry Signage: Suffolk have started final design and we wait to see if they ask us for a further money, not likely to be significant but frustrating. Meeting with Suffolk County Cllr Paul Wells in late July.

Small discount agreed for purchase of SID, delivery timetable is only a few days so now organising Paul Holland to install and then will order.

Jubilee tree plaques purchased and received, Church plaque handed over, First Meadow plaques will be installed shortly.

Portaloo will be hired for First Meadow for the summer. Two replacement dog bins will shortly be ordered.

1st Meadow Bridge, waiting for the preferred contractor to return from holiday so that we can finalise the spec and price and bring to Council.

Insurance: two quotes are being pursued to include Fidelity cover.

The National Association of Local Councils has revised its model Standing Financial Regulations, the Clerk is considering these and will bring a revised version to Council for approval.



Received: The reports prepared by the Clerk containing the May and June 2024 Accounts.

Noted from the Report: The Clerk explained that the variances to Budget were unbudgeted car parking donations and minor savings on a number of expenditure lines. The only adverse expenditure variances were in the area of Community Events including Grants. £500 had been spent helping the Community Council buy and fit an Emergency Generator point in the Parish Hall and £600 had been spent on the plaques for the Jubilee trees. The cost of the plaques had been largely covered by a District Council Grant from Cllr Maybury received in an earlier financial period.

Cllr Mitchell asked if the cost of the Emergency Generator could be charged to Neighbourhood CIL. The Clerk replied that was a possibility.

Cllr Mitchell asked if the Donations Income was below the previous year. The Clerk confirmed that this was the situation.

Motion: to approve the accounts for the month ended 31 May 2024.

Proposed: Cllr Robinson

Seconded: Cllr Sherman

Decision: Approved unanimously.

Motion: to approve the accounts for the month ended 30 June 2024.

Proposed: Cllr Sherman

Seconded: Cllr Robinson

Decision: Approved unanimously.

Received: The report prepared by the Clerk listing the May 2024 Receipts and Payments.

Noted from the Report: The Clerk explained the larger amounts and how the report ties up to the Bank Statements. No receipts or payments required further explanation.

Motion: to approve the Receipts and Payments for the month ended 31 May 2024

Proposed: Cllr Robinson

Seconded: Cllr Sherman

Decision: Approved unanimously.

Received: The report prepared by the Clerk listing the June 2024 Receipts and Payments.

Noted from the Report: The Clerk explained the larger amounts and how the report ties up to the Bank Statements. No receipts or payments required further explanation.

Motion: to approve the Receipts and Payments for the month ended 30 June 2024

Proposed: Cllr Mitchell


Seconded: Cllr Sherman

Decision: Approved unanimously.

Date of next meeting

Thursday 8th August 2024 7.30 pm in the Village Hall.

The meeting closed at 9.36pm.


J. A. Muckrain
8/8/24