



STRATFORD ST MARY PARISH COUNCIL

Clerk to Parish Council: Faye Hall
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Chairman: Bill Davies

MINUTES of the Bi-Monthly Meeting of Stratford St Mary Parish Council held at the Village Institute, Stratford St Mary at 7.30pm on Monday 13th March 2023.

PRESENT:

Cllr W Davies (WD) – Chairman
Cllr R Barrell (RB) – Vice Chairman
Cllr B Such (BS)
Cllr N Woodard (NW)
Cllr D Robinson (DR)
Cllr P Alexander (PA)
Cllr G Francis (GF) (co-opted in at meeting)

IN ATTENDANCE:

Faye Hall (FH) - Clerk
District Cllr John Ward (JW)
2 Members of Public

01.03.23 Present and apologies for absence

Cllr Davies welcomed everyone to the meeting and advised that apologies had been received from County Councillor Georgia Hall.

02.03.23 Declarations of interest and dispensations:

(1) To receive declarations of interest from councillors on items on the agenda.
None.

(2) Receive written requests for dispensations for disclosable pecuniary interests (if any).
None.

(3) Grant any requests for dispensations as appropriate.
None.

03.03.23 Minutes

The minutes of the Parish Council (PC) meeting held on 9th January 2023 were approved as a true record and were signed by the Chairman. Proposed by NW and seconded by RB and all in favour.

04.03.23 To consider applications to fill vacancies within the Parish Council

The Chairman welcomed an expression of interest from Gareth Francis who had been a Parish Councillor a couple of years ago and wished to be on the PC again.
A proposal to co-opt Gareth Francis as a Councillor was made by DR, seconded by LS and all in favour. Gareth Francis signed the Declaration of acceptance of office form and was invited to be seated with the other Councillors.

05.03.23 Matters arising from the minutes of the last meeting

(1) Lost Footpaths Langham

A letter was welcome received by the PC from Mr Warburton of Langham Hall confirming that they are happy to create permissive access for pedestrians along the farm tracks which have been highlighted on the map (attached to the minutes for reference). Mr Warburton was present at the meeting and welcomed by WD. Mr Warburton advised that permissive access was the right solution and is happy moving forwards to be approached directly with any questions / issues that arise. He advised that on occasions it may be necessary to withdraw the permissive access but that dates for events etc will be shared so villagers are aware. DR expressed the PCs thanks for this solution and pleasure that villagers can use these paths. DR and Mr Warburton agreed to work together to publish a piece in the Quartet and a piece for the Annual Parish meeting in April to publicise this information.

(2) Relocation of dog waste bin Upper Street / New litter bin for Millennium Ave and old litter bin relocation to Strickmere on grass verge opposite Tenterfield

BS reported that there is no update on the movement of these bins, unfortunately the maintenance man that the PC had found to undertake these tasks and others has resigned without completing any work.

The dog waste bin in Upper Street needs to be relocated nearer the road and the new litter bin purchased is to replace the current litter bin on Millennium Ave with the old bin on Millennium Ave to be relocated to Strickmere – exact location is being looked at by the PC.

BS proposed to seek a contractor to carry out this work and other work that needs to be undertaken in the village. BS to revert.

(3) Coparts site Gun Hill – Discuss if issue have improved.

This is a continuing issue with traffic from the Copart site at Gun Hill coming through Stratford St Mary. BS reported that the situation has not improved and in fact seems to have gotten worse. A letter was sent to Copart on the 03.10.22 by the clerk asking if they could encourage companies to use the Ardleigh A12 route rather than coming through Stratford and Copart responded to advise that a notice / memo had been sent out to all their customers asking them to use the alternative Ardleigh A12 route and that all employees and sub-contractors would also be advised. Clerk to send another letter.

RB also raised that low loader vehicles have been seen parking early morning at the Black Horse car park so restricted hours are not being met. Clerk to write to Colchester City Council and Nigel Chapman who is the Dedham councillor for this to be raised.

(4) ETRO's Lower Street

No updates received – Clerk to chase.

(5) Speeding tractors from PG Rix Farm – update


PC agreed to defer to next meeting for continuation of monitoring.

(6) River Garden – Willow tree

BS confirmed that the Willow tree has now been chopped done and that a really good job was done.

There are 3 pieces left from the other tree that was chopped down – 1 piece is routed trunk and the other 2 pieces are loose tree trunk. PC agreed to contact Bland Landscapes to discuss removal. Brian to action.

06.03.23 To receive reports for information:



Councillors had submitted their most recent reports which had been circulated by the Clerk and are available on the Parish Council website and District/County websites.

District Councillor John Ward (JW) - JW wanted to highlight that the budget for Babergh has now been approved and that council tax has increased by £5.30 for a band D property. JW also wanted to reiterate that photo ID is required this year at the polling stations to vote. If you don't have any form of photo ID then you can apply online for a free voter authority certificate. JW noted that the Kings Coronation was on the agenda to be discussed - he advised that he can give a locality grant if anything is needed in the celebrations for the children in the village. PA advised that mugs are looking to be purchased for the children so he will revert to JW to confirm. JW advised that he will be out campaigning for the election, distributing leaflets and advised that he will be standing as an independent candidate.

Member of public asked JW about the 6% increase for the Police and Crime Commissioner and asked what we would see for this increase. JW advised that all departments have had government funding cut so they have to look at their own resources to provide services. JW advised that he has no control over the Police and Crime Commissioner so could not provide any further comment.

County Councillor Report - WD advised that in the absence of the County Council Georgia Hall he had received an email with the following points:

Footpath going past the Anchor – still chasing to try and sort this out with the Anchor owner as there is still a permissive sign on this footpath.

Flooding on the Dedham Road – this is still in hand but is going to take a while to resolve. They are requesting that downstream ditches are cleared by private landowners to allow water through the existing gullies and off the highway in the first instance. The plan is then to increase the number of gullies or kerb off lets to gather more water before it reaches the Hay Barn and Haywards Cottage.

Police/Neighbourhood watch report – WD advised that he is not aware of any crimes reported since the last meeting.

NW reported that there have been a couple of incidents where people are knocking on front doors and then running away.

07.03.23 Public Discussion

Member of public asked if the Chairman would allow him to speak under Item 17.03.23 – WD agreed.

Local landowner advised that there will be a planning application to refurbish a cottage at the entrance to the estate at Gun Hill and refurbishment to the gate and repair to the flint walls and railings finished. He has concerns about the pavement that has collapsed and asked the PC whose responsibility it falls under for repair. PC advised that the pavement falls under Dedham so to contact Essex County Council. PC agreed that they would support the pavement being repaired as it would improve disable access and be good for dog walkers.

08.03.23 Planning Applications

None received.

09.03.23 Correspondence received since the last meeting:

Letter received from Dedham Vale AONB and Stour Valley project asking for a donation. PC agreed to defer to Mays meeting.

Several residents have emailed to ask to participate in the Thermal imaging survey – DR confirmed that the Thermal Imaging Camera is booked for 3 weeks in April and so far around 10 people have been in contact expressing their interest to participate. GF has volunteered to assist DR in carrying out the survey. There has been some interest from residents in Higham so DR is checking with the survey company to see if it can be extended to cover this area.



VAT return has been done. Noted

Letter received from HMRC with log in details to access the PAYE account. Noted

Email from a resident asking for clarification as to where the dog waste bin in Upper Street/School Lane junction is being relocated to. WD has reverted on email to the resident.

10.03.23 Finance

(1) To approve the expenditure since the last meeting.

The expenditure sheets had been circulated to Councillors prior to the meeting. Proposed by BS and seconded by NW. **Decision** – expenditure of £11,290.76 from 10.01.23 to 13.03.23 was approved by all.

(2) Monthly cashflow analysis against agreed Precept.

No comments.

(3) Monthly cashflow reserves.

No comments.

(4) To consider applications for funding received before and after publication of agenda.

Agreed to defer discussing donation request under Item 09.03.23 to Mays meeting.

(5) Discuss keeping all the precept monies in the Parishes current account.

Agreed to defer to discuss at Mays meeting. Due to current issues with Santander it was proposed to look at other banks to see what accounts they may offer. Clerk to action

11.03.23 CIL (Community Infrastructure Levy)

The CIL report for the year 2022/23 was examined, agreed and signed by WD and RB.

12.03.23 Internal Audit

To agree to appoint Julie Lawes to carry out the internal audit for year end March 2023. LS proposed, DR seconded and in favour.

13.03.23 Asset register review

All agreed to update asset register at the next meeting in May. Clerk to action the tidy up of the layout of the asset register.

14.03.23 GDPR review

PC all agree that there is a privacy and freedom of information policy on the website, but a GDPR policy is the next policy that needs to be looked at being created. All in agreement for the Clerk to look to adopt a NALC GDPR policy and circulate to councillors for comment. DR also raised that the Parish Council should have a complaints procedure in place.

15.03.23 Grounds Maintenance

Agreement to renew the grounds maintenance contract with Vertas – proposed by LS, seconded by BS and all in favour.

16.03.23 Chairman's Comments



WD advised that he attended the Town and Parish Liaison meeting which was well Attended.

There is a new defibrillator in the village which is outside the Chapel so that means there are now 2 in the village.

WD has received a phone call from a member of the public with regards to a request for a bench or tree in memory of a relative. PC discussed and proposed the River Garden, by the tree that was planted for the Queens Jubilee and possibly the church yard are suitable places for a bench to be placed. BS to check if another bench can be placed at the River Garden and will revert.

WD thanked everyone for their contributions over the last 4 years on the PC and wished everyone well and looked forwards to seeing anyone that was standing again and thank you to those who are not standing again.

17.03.23 Institute Charity

Correspondence received from Steve Kite (SK) with regards to the revised constitution not being adequate to legally protect trustees and proposal to amend.

SK attended the meeting and raised that the Institute Charity Constitution needs amending – whilst looking at amending the constitution some anomalies have been found. The PC are Custodian Trustees therefore they do not own any assets for the Village Institute, if they do then it doesn't appear that the Trustee's manager anything. Assets are declared by both the Institute Charity and the PC which is then doubling up on insurance policies which may then be invalidated if any claims are made. There is also a conflict of interest as WD is both Chair of the PC and Chair of the Institute Charity. WD confirmed that he is happy to stand down as the Chair for the Institute Committee. DR raised as Custodian Trustees the PC have no insurable interest and if any accidents were to happen then insurance could be invalidated. In 1996 Birkett Long solicitors advised that as Custodian Trustees the PC has no role in the day to day managing of the property including the assets and its finances.

BS proposed that a sum of money could be agreed each year to be paid to the Institute Charity to assist. PC all agreed that a new constitution needs to be prepared and asked SK to come back to PC with a proposal and a list of assets.

NW expressed his interest in taking over as treasurer for the Institute Charity.

18.03.23 Street Light painting/maintenance

BS advised that there had been an agreement for 6 lamp posts to be painted on the lower half only but proposed that these 6 now be included with the other 12 lamp posts to be fully painted in light that we no longer have a maintenance man.

Clerk has obtained a quote from Highways of £132 plus VAT for each lamp post to be painted, DR also obtained a quote for this work to be carried out which was double the price. 18 lamp posts to be repainted - NW proposed, DR seconded and all in favour to go ahead with the works and appoint Highways to carry out. Clerk to action.

19.03.23 Kings Coronation

Village Life have circulated in the local magazine and on a leaflet, what is planned for the Kings Coronation in May. PA advised that Village Life are arranging presenting the children in the village with something to mark the occasion and the PC have already agreed to donate £500 towards the Kings Coronation.


20.03.23 30 MPH stickers for wheelie bins purchase

DR advised that a notice was placed in the Quartet and there are some stickers left – If anyone would like any then please contact the Parish Clerk.

21.03.23 Thermal Imaging survey

Please see Item 09.03.23

22.03.23 Renewal of the tenancy for the River Garden



Still awaiting confirmation from NWL for the acceptance of the 5 year lease proposal.

23.03.23 Stratford St Mary, Millennium and River Gardens:

Ongoing maintenance – Clerk to contact Rob Baker to confirm that he is happy to continue with grass cutting.

BS confirmed that himself and his wife are happy to carry on with working on the Millennium Garden. GF volunteered to work with BS when required. BS advised that following a hot summer, several shrubs have been lost and need to be replaced. PC in agreement to increase budget for Millennium Garden maintenance to £150. WD thanked BS and his wife for all that they do on the gardens.

24.03.23 Appointment of Charity Trustees. Stratford St Mary Community Trust and Dedham Educational Foundation.

As BS and NW are standing down as Councillors BS asked if the PC would like to replace them on the Stratford St Mary Community and Dedham Education Foundation as trustees. PC all agreed that you don't need to be a member of the PC to be a Trustee. Agreed to defer to the May meeting so PC can decide nominate BS and NW as Trustees and notify them accordingly.

25.03.23 To consider the purchase of a new speed sign for the village.

RB advised the PC that the current speed sign is weak and has asked WD to look into the possibility of purchasing a new one. WD to revert.

26.03.23 Electric Pylons campaign

PC agreed to publish all information regarding the Electric Pylons on the PC website Including any information received from the National Grid.

27.03.23 Footpaths

Please refer to 05.03.23 (1) for update.

28.03.23 Trees

PC discussed arranging to purchase a plaque for the tree planted for the Queens Platinum Jubilee with a maximum price of £50 being paid. NW proposed, PA seconded and all in favour. WD to arrange.

29.03.23 Village Institute

Email received from a concerned resident with regards to the Village Institute car park – some hard plastic mesh is breaking and lifting causing a potential trip hazard and a health and safety issue. Also the edges of the mesh in other areas are starting to lift. BS has reported this issue to Suregreen who have responded and offered to supply pins to pin the mesh down. There is concrete under the mesh which is overspill from the building so the mesh cannot be pinned. BS has emailed Suregreen back and is awaiting further advice. BS to chase and revert. Clerk to revert to the concerned resident to advise that the PC are looking into this matter and are awaiting feedback from the supplier. Clerk also to revert with regards to the other questions raised by the resident.

30.03.23 Emergency Committee

PC do not have an Emergency Committee – there is a list of emergency telephone numbers which have now been updated on the PC website.



DR proposed a course that was coming up – What Councils can do about emergency planning if anyone would like to register to participate in this.
BS advises that the Emergency plan is still published but no longer references to an Emergency Committee.

31.03.23 Elections on 4th of May 2023

PC would like to encourage anyone that would like to be a councillor to apply. More information can be found on the Babergh Council and Electoral Commission website along with Nomination forms. Please contact the Clerk for any assistance required.
Adverts for new Councillors to be put on the PC Facebook page and website.
WD has volunteered to take all nomination forms to the designated places for submission.
Photo ID is also required at the polling stations this year – RB suggested to put a flyer with this information on with the letter for the APM that gets distributed to the village.

32.03.23 Matters to be brought to the attention of the Council

Issues with dogs off the lead on the field
Horses using public footpaths
Maintenance of website

33.03.23 Confirm date for the next meeting:

The next meeting is the Annual Parish Council meeting to be held on 15th May 2023 at 7.30pm at the Village Institute.
The Chairman thanked everyone for their contributions and attendance meeting closed at 9.36pm.

Annual Parish Meeting to be held on 24th April 2023 at 7.30pm at the PARISH ROOMS, UPPER STREET, STRATFORD ST MARY.

