

Little Waldingfield Parish Council

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Approved Minutes of the Council Meeting held on Tuesday 30 January 2024 in the Parish Room.

Present: Cllr Tim Sheppard (Chair), Cllr Matt Foster (Vice Chair), Cllr Robert Wheeler, Cllr Tina Impett, Cllr Chris White (Acting Clerk)

Attending: BDC Cllrs Margaret Maybury & Paul Clover and 1 Member of the Public.

1. Apologies and approval of absences.

Apologies were received from SCC Cllr Phillip Faircloth- Mutton.

2. Declarations of Interests by Members and Requests for Dispensations.

None

3. Approval of Minutes of the Previous Meeting held on 09 January 2024.

The Minutes of the previous meeting held on 09 January 2024 were approved by members and signed by the Chair.

4. Reports by County Councillor and District Councillors.

The District County Councillors full report can be found at Annex A to the minutes.

Cllr Wheeler questioned the contention that congestion and air quality were not issues in the town centres.

DCC Clover explained what was meant was that there was no evidence that the introduction of car parking charges would reduce congestion or air pollution levels.

DCC Maybury reported that Suffolk County Council had produced a new leaflet explaining what assistance people can apply for to help with the current cost of living crisis. It was agreed to publicise the leaflet on the website and notice board.

5. Public Forum.

There were no items raised by members of the public.

6. Routine Correspondence

Members did not raise any issues requiring further action in regard to the Routine Correspondence received.

7. Clerks Report

Members reviewed the Clerks report (Annex B) and concluded no further actions, other than resolving the outstanding issues, were required.

8. Planning Applications.

Members noted that the appeal against the refusal of planning application DC/22/01614 (Land behind The Grange, Little Waldingfield had been dismissed. The Chair observed that the decision of the Planning Inspector was robust and gave weight to the up-to-date Neighbourhood Plan policies.

9. Finances

The list of outstanding payments was presented by the RFO, and members approved the following payment: Westcotec Ltd, £9384.00 for new Speed Indicator Devices.

10. Governance

a. Report on Freedom of Information Policy review.

Cllr Impett reported that the policy required updates to the Clerk's details but was otherwise sound. The Clerk will update the Policy and upload it to the Council website.

b. Review the LWPC Internal Controls checklist and confirm date/personnel for 2023/24 check.

Members agreed that no changes were to the checklist were required and Cllr Wheeler would carry out the 2023/24 check with the Clerk before the next meeting.

c. Consider if any changes are required to LWPC Litter Pick Risk assessment.

Members reviewed the Annual Litter Pick Risk Assessment, and it was approved.

d. Consider if any changes are required to LWPC Risk Assessment.

Members reviewed the LWPC Annual Risk Assessment. The Clerk informed that there were additional risk factors added in regard to the move to full online Banking. Members approved the amended Risk Assessment.

e. Consider if any changes are required to LWPC's Standing Orders and Financial Regulations.

LWPC's Standing Orders and Financial Regulations were reviewed. The Clerk informed Members that there had not been any promulgated amendments to either document since the last review.

f. Agree date and draft agenda for the Annual Parish Meeting.

Members approved the draft agenda for the Annual Parish Meeting and the date was set for Thursday 02 May 2024 at 7:30pm in the Parish Room. The agreed agenda is at Annex C to the minutes.

11. Highways & Footpaths.

a. FPWG Update.

Cllr Wheeler updated Members on recent work done by the Footpath Working Group, and aspirations for the future. The full report is at Annex D to the minutes.

b. Consider support and further suggestions for improvements to 753 Bus Service.

c. Consider methods to improve pedestrian access to Lavenham Road.

d. Consider final design and cost of replacing Village Gates.

Items 11b, c, & d required advice from SCC Phillip Faircloth-Mutton who was unable to attend so further progress could not be made. The Clerk will seek to obtain the relevant information via email.

e. SCC & DCC Locality Budget support for Speed reduction measures.

Members thanked DCC's Margaret Maybury and Paul Clover for their kind donations of £500 & £400 respectively from their Locality Budgets towards the costs of the new Speed Indicator Devices. The Clerk will contact the Suffolk County Councillor in regard to possible support from him.

12. Community Emergency Plan.

a. Consider report from surrounding parishes Wildfires and Community Emergency Planning Meeting.

b. Review draft Emergency Plans from Groton & Edwardstone and discuss content of plan for Little Waldingfield.

Members reviewed the report from the last meeting and the draft Emergency Plans. Following discussions on establishing an emergency response team and potential emergencies that could affect residents, the Chair agreed to draw up a draft local plan to present to the next Wildfires and Community Emergency Planning meeting. It would then be discussed at the next Council meeting along with feedback from the Emergency Planning meeting.

13. Consider D-Day June 2024 celebrations.

Cllr Impett informed members about the discussions held by the Playing Field Committee regarding D-Day celebrations. Members agreed to support the following suggested celebrations to take place on the Playing Field:

- i. A popup pub from 7:00pm on 6 June 2024.
- ii. Beacon lighting ceremony at 9:15pm.
- iii. Film screen showing original film footage.
- iv. Provision of Fish & Chip van (06 June also being national fish & chips day)

Cllr Foster volunteered to provide the beacon. It was further agreed to promote the event extensively through all available outlets.

14. Consider 2024 BMSDC Tree and Wildflower Scheme.

Cllr Impett informed members that many of the Jubilee commemoration trees on the playing field had not survived. Members agreed the trees could be replaced using the Scheme and they supported the idea of planting a community orchard and establishing wildflower areas on existing grass verges. It was agreed that Cllr Impett would liaise with the Playing Field Committee in relation to the positioning of a community orchard and wildflowers areas, and also to identify suitable grass verges and seek residents' views on planting them with wildflowers.

15. Questions to the Chair.

Cllr White raised an issue regarding possible alternative locations for the SID devices as, by law, they could not operate in the same place continuously for more than a month. He had met with Sudbury Town Warden and three potential locations had been identified; however, all would need either a new pole or replacement of the existing pole to carry the device, which would involve a cost to the Council. The Chair suggested that photographs of potential locations and costings be presented at the next meeting.

16. Date of next Meeting.

The date of the next meeting was set for Tuesday 05 March 2024 in the Parish Room.

The meeting closed at 9:20pm.

Annex A to LWPC Minutes 30 January 2024.

PAUL CLOVER/MARGARET MAYBURY DISTRICT COUNCILLOR'S REPORT

Babergh Cabinet proposal to introduce car park charges in the town centres of Lavenham, Sudbury and Hadleigh update

The petition against introducing new parking charges now stands at around 5,500 with many more hard copy petition forms to be collected at the end of the month. This is way past the 1,000 signatories required to take this proposal to full council debate on 20th February. On appeal at last cabinet meeting the senior leadership team have agreed to extend consultation to the parishes who use the car parks, therefore Little Waldingfield should receive an invitation by the end of this week. In the event this does not occur, please contact Mark Emms, Director of Operations for Babergh.

It is important to note that the Cabinet are split on this proposal as are full council members. Cabinet members who oppose the parking charges have been informed they cannot vote against the proposal. This is not the case; the petition mechanism means they can vote as they choose following debate. The fact remains that the implementation of car park charges was agreed by a previous administration and the Cabinet were looking to introduce these charges without debate by the full council or consultation with all of the parishes affected. We believe this to be undemocratic.

The published subsidy figure to run the car parks has been given as £427k. Inside this is £300k of business rates, a substantial proportion of which goes back to Babergh DC. Some of the other figures are round figure guesstimates, therefore it is difficult to have informed debate. In 20/21 the subsidy figure was £185k. We have asked the reason for such a substantial increase and not received an answer. We are seeking clarification on what the nett figures are.

In the wider context, staff costs at BDC have increased by £3.4m in the last 3 years. £8.23m in 20/21 to £11.613m in 23/24.

Further to the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny committee, no real clarity has been given as to the strategic vision behind the implementation of car park charges. The senior leadership team have refused several calls for an impact assessment such charges would have upon local economies. Comments range from 'there will be no impact' to 'you can increase footfall by taking traffic out of town centres, so people spend more money'. Research papers from amongst others such as Deloitte, on traffic management in town centres show this not to be the case and that the car community can be reduced by up to 30%.

Claims have been made about the need to ease congestion and improve air quality, but these are demonstrably not real issues in these town centres.

The constitution states that monies derived from the provision of parking services can only be used towards the delivery of those services. However, the Council leader and Chief Executive are stating that this will not necessarily be the case and that derived income could be used elsewhere. In which case, the implementation of car park charges simply becomes another tax for our residents to bear.

To sign the petition against car parking charges either go to the Babergh DC website, type 'petitions' in the search bar, click on the first result, then scroll down to 'view current petitions or contact me, Paul Clover, for a hard copy document. We are grateful for all support in this matter.

Corks Lane, Hadleigh development

At Council on Tuesday 23rd February, we asked questions on items within the agenda, particularly the Treasury Return which does not hold details on the Babergh Growth account which is dealing with the redevelopment of Corks Lane (the previous BDC headquarters).

Review of Governance system

Lastly, in 2022 it was brought to council that a governance review of the Cabinet versus Committee system would be held. This has not happened and it is being pursued.

Annex B to LWPC Minutes 30 January 2024.

Clerks Report 30 January 2024			
Minute	Item	Action	Done
09 November 23 meeting			
10b	Councillors to set up dedicated LWPC email accounts.	Confirmation from Cllr Impett (tinaiimpettLWPC@btinternet.com) Awaiting confirmation	✓
11b	Speeding Action Plan - Speed Indicator Devices	SID's delivered and installed under existing service agreement. New SLA will be agreed in for 24/24 FY	✓
11b	Speeding Action Plan -Village entrance 'gates'.	Item added to January agenda for review and discussion with SCC Cllr.	✓
11c	Pavement extension and CIL Funding	Added to 30 January meeting agenda for further discussion.	✓
11f	BMSDC Trees, Hedgerows, & Wildflower Scheme: possible locations	Item deferred to additional meeting on 30 January 24	✓
09 January 24 Meeting			
4	Village email shot re parking charges petition	Email sent 17 January	✓
4	Letter to BMSDC objecting to parking charges	Draft sent to Councillors - 1 reply received - amendments incorporated and letter sent.	✓
5	Damaged wall Croft Lea - Report to BDC	Reported to BDC building control. They replied it would be inspected. Awaiting further update.	
6	Police camera van for LW & Community Policing	New Community Policing Model has been introduced. Will contact Sudbury area Community Policing Team and	
7	Councillors LWPC Email address.	Awaiting confirmation from Cllrs Foster & Wheeler.	
7	Dog Bin installation Archers Farm	Will be installed in near future	
9e	Email Precept demand to BDC.	Completed and acknowledgement received.	✓
10b	Community Emergency Planning - Clerk to circulate notes and specimen plans for Cllrs to exchange ideas at next meeting.	Notes circulated to all Councillors	✓
11(b)	753 Bus service improvements - email SCC & DCC with update on discussion and request for information at next meeting.	SCC & DCC's contacted. Item added to 30 January agenda	✓
11d	Pavement extension towards B107 - Further information for discussion at next meeting	Added to 30 January agenda	✓
11e	Village gates - Information on whether Highways will replace broken gate.	Further enquiry sent to SCC	✓
11f	Locality budget funding for speed reduction measures. Inform SCC & DCC it's on agenda for next meeting.	SCC & DCC's informed this will be on 30 January agenda.	✓
11i	Hedge & Verge cutting The Street before litter pick - Clerk to contact local contractors	Awaiting replies from contractors.	

Annex C to LWPC Minutes 30 January 2024.

Little Waldingfield's Annual Parish Meeting 2024.

**Venue: - The Parish Room, Church Road, Little Waldingfield
on Thursday 02 May 2024**

DRAFT AGENDA

- 1. Welcome by the Chair of Little Waldingfield Parish Council**
- 2. Agreement of Minutes of the Previous Annual Parish Meeting on Tuesday 23 May 2023**
- 3. Matters Arising from the Previous Annual Parish Meeting on Tuesday 23 May 2023**
- 4. Report by the Chair of Little Waldingfield Parish Council**
- 5. Report by Babergh District Councillors**
- 6. Report by Suffolk County Councillor**
- 7. Report by Community Policing Team**
- 8. Report from the Footpath Working Group**
- 9. Report by a Representative of the Playing Field Committee**
- 10. Report by a Representative of the Parish Room Committee**
- 11. Report by a Representative of Little Waldingfield Charities**
- 12. Report by a Representative of the Little Waldingfield History Society**
- 13. Public Forum**

Annex D to LWPC Minutes 30 January 2024.

Report to Little Waldingfield Parish Council from the Footpath Group.

The Parish Council has requested a summary of the work undertaken by the Footpath Group (FPG) as regards a strategy to improve the footpaths as well as a summary of the results of the questionnaire sent to LW householders who agreed to participate.

The Parish footpath network evolved over many centuries to accommodate the need of locals to travel to work, church, markets, and school as well as pubs and shops. All this before motorised transport was commonplace. There has been rationalisation post war to the network due to declining use with landowners typically applied to SCC to have them struck off.

The FPG was formed to see if a better network could be created as well as overseeing the maintenance of the existing network. This was originally mandated to the PC by SCC, but over the years became less of a priority in the PC remit.

An improved network can be described as one which provides better amenity, as many walkers use them for exercise and dog walking. There are some in the village who do use the network for school and shopping, but these are few and far between.

To the north of the village road, the network could be described as "out and back" with no circular routes. These originally evolved to connect locals to Lavenham (FPs 2&4).

To the south of the village road the paths are more user friendly in providing circular walks, however, there is a lack of connectivity between Gt Waldingfield FPs 4&7.

Two amendments to alleviate the shortfall within LW would be to both:

- Create a connection between FP 2&4 along the north side of the brook below the playing fields. Currently a permissive right of way exists which could be terminated at any stage.
- Continue this connection over land through which part of FP 2 runs.

The FPG haven't taken discussions with landowners any further until a planning decision is reached on Holbrook Hall. It is understood the new owners would like a rerouted FP to provide better access for the village to the proposed hotel. There are legal/admin costs to formalising a footpath amendment, (approx. £4k) however, SCC and the hotel owner might find a way to achieve this aim. We cannot promote the rerouting of FP2 until this is achieved and a circular connection along the brook/copse secured.

The connection between Gt Waldingfield FP 4&7, as a permissive right of way, would need the consent of the landowner who owns the field to the south of Hole Farm along the Box tributary and the owners of Hole Farm, as well as cooperation with GW PC.

We do have a lesser priority to establish a permissive right of way heading NE from where FP4 crosses the brook, connecting with Wash Green Road, following the brook and terminating close to Nethergate Hall. This extension would provide a route to Lavenham and Brett Leigh via Abbots Hall, avoiding the busy and dangerous Lavenham Road. Consent from the landowners would be required, and no detailed discussion has taken place at this stage.

The Survey also showed good support for the above proposals, while other requests/observations relating specifically to FPs and not already in hand were:

- Provision of more dog poo bins generally and specifically opposite Archers Farm

- Gravel laid on muddy places (*landowners have previously been approached to fill with earth*)
- That any improvement to the footpath network would not improve access to the closest bus stop in Great Waldingfield.

Other results of the survey/questionnaire:

- While we don't precisely how many households received the questionnaire, there was an average response. There didn't seem to be strong demand for car sharing.
- Several participants suggested the extension of the pavement passing SRL onto the Lavenham road. However, as the village road, on both sides in places, has been laid in a cutting, the construction would be difficult and expensive and would probably require cooperation with adjoining landowners.
- There were also several comments about overgrown hedges encroaching on pavements generally.
- There was also a complaint about the blocking of the pavement along The Street by parked cars.