

DRINKSTONE PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes

Minutes of the meeting held on Monday 2nd December 2013 in the Village Hall

Present

Cllrs A. Clarke (Chair), S. Cousins, C. Harbutt, T. Moss, C. Munford, P. Nolan, the Clerk SCC/MSDC Cllr P. Otton and thirteen residents.

1 -Apologies for Absence

An apology was received from Cllr Goldstaub and the Police.

2 – Declarations of Interest

None

3 – Cllr Otton’s Report

Suffolk County Council

- The Council is going through a budget consultation period over next year’s budget. A MORI poll has recently been carried out to find out what services are most important to Suffolk residents.
- In September, Trading Standards successfully prosecuted four businesses who were carrying out illegal activities.
- Thurston Community College recently held a 40th Anniversary celebration. Many past students and teachers were present at a 40th birthday party.
- Consultation has opened on the Care and Support Bill. This involves changes to care costs for adults. If the bill gets passed it will hopefully mean the end to people having to sell their homes to pay for care costs.
- The Council has held further meetings with BT over the implementation of faster Broadband – a new map has been issued with details of coverage. For full details visit www.betterbroadbandsuffolk.com The Council has also asked the Government for more money for the project.
- The Environment Agency has produced a new flood risk map. Full details can be found on the EA website
- Cllr Otton said she was dismayed by the amount of time some residents were left without a phone line following the storms of late October. Drinkstone was not the only village to be left without a service and this has been taken up with BT.

Mid Suffolk District Council

- The question Cllr Otton raised with the port-folio holder on issuing affordable homes has not been addressed; it appears that she does not understand the concerns. The question will be raised again at full council.
- Cllr Otton is trying to ensure that the Council sets up a planning policy for applications to install wind and solar farms. At present there is no policy and applications are dealt with on an individual basis.

- A new housing advice service has been set up for older people with housing issues. For further details contact judith.owen@orbit.org.uk

Cllr Otton concluded her report by wishing everyone present a Happy Christmas and a successful 2014

4 – Police Report

The Clerk read a written report from Community Police Officer Annelly Miles: -

- No crimes were recorded in the village for the month of November
- Police have recently issued guidance to village halls on how to deal with safely booking out their premises. There have been instances (particularly in Norfolk) where halls have been hired and then damaged as a result of more than the normal number of people turning up to the event. The details have been passed to the village hall committee.
- Suffolk Constabulary together with its partners will be running a Keep Suffolk Safe campaign on the run up to Christmas. This will be widely publicised on local radio.
- Sgt Kieron Pederick has recently taken over as Team Leader for the South Suffolk Neighbourhood area.
- Last weekend the local police team were successful in seizing a number of cannabis plants and a quantity of cash following a tip off from local people.
- A male driver was recently charged with being abusive to the Elmswell Community Speedwatch Team. He was found guilty and ordered to pay £620 in court costs and £20 victim surcharge.

5 – Open Forum

The Chairman opened the meeting to public questions –

1. Local Development Certificate Application for business premises in Tostock Road
Several residents were in attendance at to the meeting to register their opposition to the application for a Lawful Development Certificate for the car business adjacent Rookery Meade Farm, Tostock Road. All of the residents complained about the nuisance driving and testing of cars at the site. Several residents have complained to Mid Suffolk District Council about the business but their response to complaints has been very disappointing. It is known that the building was erected as an agricultural building and has a chequered history. In the late 90's it was briefly used to repair HGV's and school buses, however, that business was forced to close when an enforcement notice was served by the Local Authority. Since then it has been used to store farm vehicles and John Clarke's son used it to renovate vehicles (a hobby – not a business). The farm and associated buildings was split up and sold in 2011 following the death of both Mr Clarke and his son. Since then, the current applicant has gradually moved in and started to operate from the site. It is known that a number of complaints have been made and the Police have also been called out occasions. Residents asked for support from the Parish Council for their opposition to the application. Cllr Otton said that she was disappointed to hear about the poor service from the Local Authority and she agreed it was not acceptable.
2. Playing Field and Adjacent “Cheese Wedge”
Two residents representing a small group of parents in the village put forward a suggestion that the “cheese wedge” should be retained and turned into part of the playing field. They said that they felt it could be cleared and maintained and made into a useful area and

extension to the playing field. To sell it off cheaply would be a waste as there was genuine interest in keeping and maintaining that piece of land. The group of parents are willing to put a working party together to clear the land and make it more accessible.

In return the parents would like to see an improvement in the facilities for teenagers on the playing field. The current play equipment is suitable for younger children and there is limited facility for teenagers. The parents would like to see something done to keep the older children safe and occupied. Firstly, they suggested that new football posts and nets are erected. The current posts are too big and they have no nets attached making football difficult to play. They would also like to have a small skate ramp/tarmac strip installed so that children can again play safely away from the road. The parents have costed out these items and estimate that new nets/posts would cost around £500-£600; and the tarmac strip around £545. They also said that they would be prepared to fund raise towards raising some of the money for the project.

The Chairman thanked the parents for their comments and said that these suggestions would certainly be considered and that it would be several meetings before a decision would be made.

6 – Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on Monday 4th November were approved and signed by the Chairman as a true record.

7 – Matters Arising

- The blocked drain outside The Old Rectory has been cleared. The Highways have stated that the drainage system that runs along the frontage of the houses in Gedding Road is a private system and the responsibility for maintenance is down to the land/property owners.
- The hedge at Doiley Waters has been cut back.
- Patrick Scrivens has now said that he thinks the new footpath on Cherry tree Rise may be too narrow to put up a barrier. He is coming out to Drinkstone again on the 10th December to discuss the problem.
- The District Emergency Planning Officer – Sue Herne, has agreed to attend the January meeting to talk about setting up an emergency plan.

8 – Playing Field and Adjacent Land

An offer has been received from the new residents of 4 Cherry Tree Rise to purchase the “cheese wedge”. All of the Councillors felt that the offer was too low bearing in mind the increase to the value of the property if the purchase was made.

In fairness to the public view expressed earlier in the meeting under Open Forum it was suggested that the residents concerned get together a working party and formulate an action plan on how they intend to convert the “cheese wedge” and make improvements regarding the older children’s play equipment. This should include plans and costings of how they would like to see the land developed.

It was agreed that at this stage the Parish Council would - 1. Go back to the interested purchasers and say the offer is too low. 2. Investigate the insurance costs of adding on the extra land and the new equipment and 3. Await the report from the working party.

9 – Finance

The current account stands at £2506.92; deposit account 1 at £2652.86; deposit account 2 at £5.27 and VAT owing is £100.68. Giving a total balance of £5263.73

The separate allotment account stands at £618.05

One invoice was approved for payment - £62.50 Old Parsonage Garden Services (grass-cutting) MSDC has written to advise that the litter/dog bin clearance charges for next year will increase by £5 per annum per bin. As we have 8 bins in total this will mean an increase of £40 in expenditure. The revised estimated precept for the year 14/15 is £3340

The final figure for next year cannot be confirmed until Mid Suffolk has issued the Tax Base figure for the coming year. This is expected shortly which means that the precept will be presented to January meeting for approval. The Chancellor is expected to make an Autumn Statement on 5th December and he may issue guidance on capping Council Tax and the introduction of referendums for Councils that exceed the limits.

Cllr Cousins said that she had compiled a very tight budget and there would be little or no spare cash for extras in the coming year.

Allotment Rents

The Parish Council then considered the allotment rents for the coming year. Since the PC took over the running of the allotments the rents have remained the same. During that time water bills have gone up by 18%. It was proposed by Cllr Clark and agreed by all that the small plots go up from £5 to £6 and the larger plots go up from £10 to £12. This will be effective from 1st April 2014. Anglian Water announced today that they are not going to increase the water bills above inflation rate for the coming year.

Cllr Clark suggested that the Council should also consider in the future charging a “land rent” as all of the money received from the rents is currently going towards paying the water bills.

The Clerk stated that as an allotment holder she thought most tenants thought they were already paying a land rent.

10 – Planning

1. 3156/13 Proposal for erection of detached garage/studio and alterations to dwelling at The Paddocks, Gedding Road. No objections were raised to this application

2. 3172/13 Lawful Development Certificate for land and buildings adjacent Rookery Meade Farm, Tostock Road and use of land for stationing a mobile home.

Having listened carefully to the comments made under Open Forum by the residents who are against this application the PC was unanimous in its opposition to a Lawful Development Certificate being issued. The design and layout of the site is totally inappropriate for a business of this type. The site is very narrow leaving limited vehicular access and no room for vehicles to turn around. The building was erected as an agricultural barn and should never have been allowed to be used as anything other than that. Councillors were aware that the site was sold when the farm was split up following the death of both Mr Clarke and his son. Since then this business has gradually moved itself in illegally. The matter was first brought to the PC’s attention in September when Cllr Harbutt brought it up on behalf of local residents. The Clerk wrote to planning enforcement at the time and asked them to investigate. The business has certainly not been in existence for ten or more years and the PC question the use of the LDC application as a short cut to legalising the business. With regard to the caravan; Drinkstone is a village in the countryside with limited development and the PC do not approve of siting living accommodation beside the barn.

3. Land Adjacent High Barn – Concern has been expressed to the Parish Council from residents in Chapel Lane about the clearance work at High Barn, Chapel Lane. The property was recently sold and developers have started to clear the site. The Clerk has established that the dwelling is listed and there are no Tree Preservation Orders the site. The development of the dwelling will have to be subject to a planning application before any work can be done however there is a large woodland area adjacent to the property and it is feared that the trees may be cut down unnecessarily. Peter Holborn (one of the village Tree Wardens) has been out to look at the site and advises that the woodland does have a high amenity value providing both character and backdrop to the residential area. It can reasonably be argued that the woodland is under threat as there is nothing in place to prevent pre-emptive felling. It was agreed that the Clerk should contact David Pizzey at Mid Suffolk and ask for an emergency TPO to be put on the site in advance of the expected planning application. **Action: Clerk**

11 – Correspondence

MSDC – PC Workshops – Precepts

MSDC – The Community Team

MSDC – Understanding Community Right to Buy

MSDC – Mapping Community Assets

MSDC – Neighbourhood Planning Application - Elmswell

Notes from the Parish Liaison Meeting at Mid Suffolk on 27th November

There being no other business the meeting closed at 9:08 pm

Date of next meeting Monday 6th January 2014