

DRINKSTONE PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes

Minutes of the Meeting held on Monday 3rd February 2014 in Drinkstone Village Hall

Present

Cllrs A. Clarke, S. Cousins, M. Goldstaub (Chair), C. Harbutt, T. Moss, C. Munford, the Clerk, Cllr P. Otton (SCC/MSDC), CPO A. Miles and twelve residents.

1 – Apologies for Absence

An apology was received from Cllr P. Nolan

2 – Declarations of Interest

None

3 – Minutes

A mistake had been noticed in the draft minutes for 6th Jan 2014 and the master copy had been amended. Under Item 11 – Finance, the increase in council tax figure should read per annum not per month. There being no other errors the minutes were approved and signed by the Chairman as a true record.

4 – Matters Arising

1. As a follow up to the item on emergency planning, Sue Herne has arranged to hold a workshop for parishes who are considering an Emergency Plan. The workshop is on 26th February at MSDC between 9:30 and 13:30. It was agreed that Cllr Munford and the Clerk would attend and report back to the next meeting.
2. Barry Hunter has checked the precept grant figures and has confirmed that the figures sent out on the 24th December are correct and the village support grant has been reduced to £25.
3. Letters have been received back from Rev Farrell and Robinson's Estate Agent regarding the clearing of the land on the late Mrs Hazel's estate. The Chairman said she felt the letter from the estate agent was disingenuous in that he had skated around the real issues and had not given a full explanation of why the work had been done in such a manner. There are also minor errors in the letter. At least twelve major trees have been felled and no mention is made of any replacement planting. The Chairman again stated that despite recent Government comments the Local Development Framework is still in place to protect rural communities and to deter unsustainable development. It was agreed that the Chairman and Clerk would draft a reply to both Rev Farrell and Robinson's.

5 – Cllr Otton's Report

Suffolk County Council

- The Council is aiming at a 0% increase to the Council Tax for 2014/15. However, this does mean that services like libraries; youth offending; schools and rights of way are likely to have reductions in services.
- The new energy from waste plant at Great Blakenham is progressing. The developers have requested that waste from other areas is allowed to be brought in by train to make the plant more viable.

- At a recent meeting at Thurston College; Phil Williams (Assistant Principal) said that most of the work at Beyton School should be completed in time to greet the first sixth form students.
- Cllr Otton has continued to press for repair work to be done in Tostock Road and Park Road.
- A bid of £500 has been proposed from Cllr Otton's Locality Budget towards installing the acoustic panelling in the Drinkstone Village Hall.
- A new website has been set up to deal with pot holes and Cllr Otton agreed to pass details on to the Clerk.

Mid Suffolk District Council

- It looks likely that the Council will be proposing a 1% rise in Council Tax for 2014/15. The grant from Central Government is not likely to be taken. Cllr Otton said she had raised issues with the Finance Department over how the changes to parish grants were handled in the pre Christmas period.

6 – Police Report (Community Police Officer Annelly Miles)

- No crimes were recorded in the village for the month of January
- A new initiative is about to be set up called “Paws on Patrol”. It is to be a joint scheme between the police and local authorities and will encourage dog owners to be vigilant when out walking their dogs. Such issues as suspicious vehicles; blocked paths; fly tipping etc can be noted and reported back. In return owners will receive discounts to dog related businesses. Further details on this scheme will follow at a later date. In the meantime the Dog Trust is continuing to hold events and to offer free micro-chipping to dog owners. For more information contact either Suffolk Police or the Dog Trust.
- The free marking sessions for vehicles with catalytic converters were very successful. 28 vehicles were marked at the Haughley venue and a further 18 at the Gt. Blakenham venue. Further sessions are likely to be held later in the year.
- Mr Rod Curtis has joined the team at Elmswell and is helping with administration and community work.
- The main tasks for the Police team over the next three months will be to target road safety. They will be looking at all aspects from speeding to parking and general road safety. The next neighbourhood meeting is on 9th April at Mid Suffolk DC.

7 – Open Forum

- Mrs Thurlow reported that she had been contacted by John Simpson (Area Highways) concerning the road verge by the bridge in Park Road. Mr Simpson has visited the site and has contacted Mrs Thurlow to ask what can be done to divert the lake from flowing over the road. This needs to be sorted before any further repair work can be done. Mrs Thurlow said she would be investigating what could be done.
- The owner of one of the properties in Gedding Road said she was very disappointed at how close one of the new houses in Cherry Tree Rise has been built to the back of her property. She is now completely overlooked and although she was assured that opaque glass would be installed in the windows this had not happened. The plot in question is 115 – the Chairman said the plans and conditions would be checked to see if anything could be done.
- One resident was highly critical of the Parish Council's handling of the land adjacent to the playing field (commonly referred to as the “cheese wedge”). He is supportive of keeping the area as it is and does not think that it should be sold off. He accused the PC of holding on to too much money. A general discussion then followed on the whole history of the site and where we are up to at this minute in time. The Chairman reminded those present that the PC was entitled to hold on to reserves in order to cover for unexpected expenditure like emergency repairs;

playground maintenance as well as holding a contingency fund for future election expenses. Cllr Cousins confirmed that although the balances are in credit, at least £1700 is earmarked for other expenditure. The Chairman stated that with the District and County Councils cutting back, a further strain is likely to be put on parish expenditure. The gentleman's comments were incorrect and he did not fully understand the picture. All items of expenditure are considered carefully and the main reason for considering disposing of the "cheese wedge" was to free the PC from the expense of maintaining the overgrown site and put the money to good use elsewhere in the village.

- A short discussion was also held on the new footpath at Cherry Tree Rise. Incidents of near misses from children on skate boards have been reported and the matter has been referred to the Highways. The Highways are investigating and the situation is ongoing; the Clerk and Cllr Otton agreed to chase this up.

8 – Playing Field and Adjacent Land

- The residents of 4 Cherry Tree Rise have submitted a second offer for the "cheese wedge". The offer is based on an independent valuation and survey by John Casson Survey Services. The offer is in two halves, one for just the section behind their house and one for the whole "cheese wedge". The Chairman stated that she considered the best option would be to survey the wider village before any decision is made.
- Eleven families have now submitted their names forward to the Clerk and have volunteered to clear the "cheese wedge". No plans have been drawn up to indicate where the skate board strip is to be installed. A resident has registered opposition to any skate park being built on the "cheese wedge".
- There have been further complaints about dog fouling on the Cricket. One resident has suggested that dogs should be banned completely if owners cannot clean up after their animals. Various options were discussed and it was agreed that a reminder should be inserted in the parish magazine of what a serious health hazard dog fouling can be to children.

9 - Finance

The current account stands at £2122.10; deposit account 1 at £2653.22; deposit account 2 at £5.27 and VAT owing is £100.68 giving a total balance of £4881.27

The separate allotment account stands at £618.05

The following invoices were approved - £140.00 Drinkstone War Memorial Institute (Hall Hire); £10.00 Drinkstone History Group (Website Fees) and after a short discussion it was proposed by Cllr Goldstaub and seconded by Cllr Clarke to reduce the annual donation to Citizens Advice to £40.00 A further short discussion was held on the final precept figure for 2014/15. It was proposed by Cllr Goldstaub and seconded by Cllr Clarke that the final figure is set at £3297 plus accepting the £25 grant giving a total of £3322 – this will equate to a 2% rise in annual parish council tax.

10 – Planning

- No new planning applications this month
- MSDC has approved planning application 3156/13 – Erection of detached garage/studio and alterations to dwelling at The Paddocks, Gedding Road
- It was noted that there are still cars parked at the business in Tostock Road. Nothing has been heard from Mid Suffolk since the withdrawal of the application for a Lawful Development Certificate before Christmas. It was agreed that the Clerk would ask Mid Suffolk for an update.

- A letter has been received from Suffolk County Council regarding a diversion to footpath 8, near Hill Farm. Councillors considered the proposals and raised no objections to the diversion; this should make the path safer to use.

11 – Drainage – Gedding Road

The recent wet weather has highlighted a drainage problem all along Gedding Road. Cllr Clarke has walked the length of the road to determine where the problem lies. Some of the ditches are open, others have been covered over and it would appear that many of these have silted up. Cllr Clarke has spoken to the Area Highways Manager and he confirms that it is the responsibility of the landowners to keep their ditches clear. The Highway Authority has no budget for what is considered a low priority risk. It was also noted that further up the Gedding Road the water is flowing out of Drinkstone House Lake and running over the road. It is believed that this is also down to a blocked drainage pipe. It was agreed that an article should be placed in the magazine and a note sent to Drinkstone House to make people aware of the situation.

12 – Village Litter Picking

Sarah Carter from Mid Suffolk District Council has been in touch regarding spring litter picks. Mid Suffolk are keen to support any village litter clean-ups. It was agreed to defer this item till the weather improves.

13 – Correspondence

MSDC – Open Space and Recreation Facilities Questionnaire
 Letters from Rev Farrell and Robinson’s Estate Agent re Mrs Hazel’s estate
 The Local Councillor
 Glasdon Products
 Clerks and Councils Direct
 Magpas – Appeal for funding

14 – Other Business

- The Parish Council has sent a letter of support to Mid Suffolk for the Village Hall’s grant application for acoustic panelling.
- The faulty road surface in Park Road has been reported to Highways.
- The grubbing out of a hedge in Rattlesden Road has been reported to Mid Suffolk
- Cllr Munford reported that a number of footpath signs are down and agreed to pass on the information to the Clerk.
- The Clerk agreed to report a pot hole in Cross Street.
- It is understood that the contactors working in Rattlesden Road are installing cables for BT

There being no other business the meeting closed at 9:45pm

Date of next meeting Monday 3rd March 2014

These minutes will be validated at the next meeting.