

DRINKSTONE PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes

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

Present

Cllrs A. Clarke, S. Cousins, M. Goldstaub, C. Harbutt, T. Moss, P. Nolan, the Clerk, MSDC/SCC Cllr P. Otton, PCSO Collette Denny and fourteen residents

1 – Apologies for Absence

An apology was received from Cllr Munford

2 – Declarations of Interest

Cllr Moss declared an interest in planning application 0240/14 – Woodend, Rattlesden Road

3 – Minutes

There were two errors in the draft minutes of the meeting held on Monday 3rd February 2014. Under Planning (item 10) planning application 3156/13 was rejected; not approved as minuted and under Other Business (item 14) the hedge in Rattlesden Road was cut down to the ground; not grubbed out as minuted. There being no other errors the master copy was amended and the minutes were signed by the Chairman as a true record.

4 – Matters Arising

- Second letters were sent to Rev Farrell and Robinson's about the woodland in Chapel Lane - no replies have been received
- The new website for reporting potholes is up and running – it can be found via the Suffolk County Council website
- The planning conditions for plot 105 Cherry Tree Rise have been checked and only the upstairs window is required to have opaque glass.
- Notices on dog fouling and flooding were published in the parish magazine. Mr Smith at Drinkstone House has confirmed that he is looking into the flooding issues from his land onto Gedding Road
- An update has been received from Carmel Driscoll on the car business in Tostock Road. An enforcement notice requiring removal of all cars and the caravan has been issued – the closing date is 17th June 2014. The Chairman suggested that this is reviewed nearer the expiry date to ensure that progress is being made.
- All the broken footpath signs have been reported. The Clerk agreed to pass a message to Highways that the by-road sign has disappeared from The Street.

5 – Open Forum

1. Another lengthy discussion was held on dog fouling. There are still some residents that allow their dogs to foul on the children's play area and both Councillors and residents consider this behaviour unpleasant and dangerous. There appear to be two categories of dog owners in the village; responsible and irresponsible ones. The PC discussed various options including – fencing off the play area; passing a by-law; notices; keeping dogs on a lead while on the playing field. PCSO Collette Denny said it was a common problem in many villages and that the Police will be launching their "Paws on Patrol" initiative later this month in order to combat some of the issues. In the meantime a further notice will be

published in the magazine; some inquiries made with other villages and the item put on the next agenda for further thought.

2. In answer to a question from the floor the Chairman confirmed that no reply had been received from Robinson's. The Clerk agreed to let Mr White have a copy of the letter which was sent. Mr White reported that no further work had taken place on the site.
3. In reply to a series of questions on the "cheese wedge" the Chairman confirmed that although an offer has been received to buy the land no decision to sell has been made. The whole issue of what to do with the land is still very much open to debate and discussion. Various suggestions have been made over the last two-three years since we were aware that the land would be passed on to us. It is still very much the intention to canvas the residents on how to deal with it. If a decision to sell is made it will go to the highest bidder subject to conditions on access etc. A resident said that he thought some of the suggestions were not minuted. The Chairman replied that if the resident felt that the PC was failing in its duty over this and other issues then he should refer the matter to the Standards Committee for investigation. In response to the comment about the residents grandchildren using the Cricket the Chairman said that this was not a personal comment; the issue was that the PC has to have the priority of residents before anyone else. Another resident backed the idea of a wooded area being created for children to play in. The Chair said that if this did happen the hedge would have to be cut back so that the children could be seen. In order to clarify the proposal on the skate strip, the Chairman said that if it went ahead it would be on the Cricket not on the "cheese wedge".

6 – Cllr Otton's Reports

Suffolk County Council

- The Council has accepted the government grant of £2.9 million which will result in a zero increase to their section of the 14/15 council tax bills
- The Women's Cycle Tour Race 2014 will be passing through Rattlesden and Felsham on Sunday May 11th.
- Councillor Otton has asked that the drains are given priority following the recent bad weather.
- Despite offering to help financially with installing a barrier on the Cherry Tree Rise footpath the Highways are reluctant to support the idea
- The Council has received more money to deliver high speed broadband – there are still some "black spots" not able to connect.
- Further consideration is being given to the enforcing of 20mph zones in vulnerable areas

Mid Suffolk District Council

- The District Council has refused the Government grant and this will have the effect of increasing their part of the council tax bills by 1.7%
- Councillor Otton has nominated a team of volunteers in Rattlesden for a Community Achievement Award – they have worked in all weathers to clear the river bank
- Zoey Banham has been appointed a Locality Support Officer
- There has been no decision over the future of a joint HQ for Mid Suffolk/Babergh despite recent press coverage
- Hastoe Housing Association has been given the go-ahead to build four new affordable homes in Rattlesden

7 – Police Report – PCSO Collette Denny

- No crimes were recorded since the last meeting
- There has been an increase in the theft of catalytic converters particularly in the Elmswell/Haughley area. Police are planning another free marking day at Lamberts Service

Station, Bacton on 22nd March between 9am and 12 noon. In reply to a question from Cllr Clarke, Collette said that they were not carrying out any other specific vehicle tests while marking the cars

- Weather incidents have kept the local team very busy over the last few weeks. Hopefully the worst of the high winds and heavy rain are behind us – the advice to motorists is to drive appropriate to the conditions.
- The new “Paws on Patrol” scheme will be launched at Needham Lake on 23rd March between 10am and 2pm. All dog owners are invited to the event to find out how to join and to meet supporting businesses who are backing the initiative.
- Road Safety is the priority for the safer neighbourhood team over the next three weeks – speeding, parking and cycle safety will be looked at. The next meeting is Wednesday 9th April – 7pm at MSDC, Needham Market.
- One resident reported a crime which occurred last Sunday. Some diesel was stolen and a horse was moved from a stable to a field. He said that it was not reported because the person concerned had lost confidence in the police. Collette said that if crimes are not reported there is no hope of catching the offenders and urged that all crimes are recorded.

8 – Cherry Tree Rise Footpath

David Fawcett – Assistant Area Highways Manager has been out to look at the Cherry Tree Rise footpath and doesn't think that installing a pavement barrier to address the problem of skateboarders is the most appropriate solution for the following reasons:-

1. There is significant cost
2. The problem is likely to be a transient one whereas installation of barriers is permanent
3. The installation may impact buried services
4. The barriers would have to be set back 450 millimetres to allow clearance from passing vehicles; so narrowing the width of the pavement
5. The barriers would obstruct other pedestrians so causing a nuisance to them as a result of activities by someone else
6. They are unsightly and add to street clutter, detracting from the rural character
7. Skateboarders could injure themselves on impact with the barrier. So getting rid of one risk creates another
8. They present additional maintenance burden on budgets already stretched. There is limited resources to deal with more pressing issues
9. It would be better for advice to be given by parents or police to raise awareness of the dangers of using skateboards near the highway.

The Chairman said it was disappointing that Mr Fawcett had used cost above safety as his number one objection; especially as Cllr Otton had offered access to her highway fund. Mr Wilmshurst reported that a barrier had been installed successfully on a footpath in Botesdale and at the Chairman's suggestion he agreed to pass the info on to Patrick Scrivens. PCSO Collette Denny said she would be more than happy to visit the youth club to give a short talk on playing safely – this is already something that she and Annelly carry out in schools. It was agreed that the Clerk would contact Sheila Beswick to see if something could be arranged.

9 – Village Survey

A draft survey form was distributed to Councillors with sample questions on how to gauge village opinion on the future of the “cheese wedge”. It was suggested that a map is included so that people are fully aware of the location and the wording needs to be fine tuned. This will be carried forward to the next meeting and handed out so the residents can comment

10 – Finance

The current account stands at £1932.10; deposit account 1 at £2653.40; deposit account 2 at £5.27 and VAT owing at £100.68, giving a total balance of £4691.45. The VAT refund has just been received and paid in.

The allotment account stands at £618 05

The following invoices were approved for payment – Clerks fees £202.32 (Jan – Mar 2014); Postage stamps £26.40 and A4 paper £5.00

The Chairman suggested that more stamps are purchased as they are going up again at the end of the month. Further thought should be given to using only second class; although Cllr Cousins said she liked to use first class for cheque payments

It was agreed that a new copy of Local Council Administration by Charles Arnold Baker should be purchased from SALC – the old copy is now out of date following recent changes in legislation.

An email was received from one of the tenants at Rattlesden Road allotments requesting allotment funds to buy materials to control the weeds inhibiting the hedge growth along the roadside. The tenant drew attention to the tenancy agreement clause 5 which states that the PC is responsible for paying for repairs to hedges. Cllr Clark stated that he thought the work could be done using organic mulch and agreed to speak to the tenant.

11 – Planning

The following planning application were considered –

0052/14 – New application for erection of garage and alterations to dwelling at The Paddocks, Gedding Road (following rejection of 3156/13). Cllrs raised no objections provided the trees and hedges were not pruned too drastically and met with the Tree Officers approval.

0240/14 – Erection of two storey extension (following demolition of existing conservatory) to Woodend, Rattlesden Road. – No objections (Cllr Moss was not included in decision process)

0383/14 – Revised alterations to Whitefield Barn, Park Road – No objections provided the Listed Buildings Officer is happy with the proposals and the work that has already been done.

There are no MSDC decisions to report this month

12 – Parish Council Notice Board

The Clerk reported that the PC Notice Board is now in very poor condition. The recent bad weather has deteriorated the board even further – the Clerk has inspected the board and it may be possible to refurbish it. It will need a new backing board; new posts and an overall rub down and re-varnish.

Internet research to replace it with a board the same size reveals costs of £800 - £1000. Cllr Cousins has spoken to a joiner who advertises in the parish magazine and he has produced an estimate of £600 to re-furbish existing board and £1,180 to build a new one from scratch. It was agreed to get further estimates before reaching a decision. The village hall committee is also looking at put up a sign at the roadside and have passed on further names of suitable contacts. It was also agreed to give some thought to the location and whether the front of the village hall car park is the best place for the board to be located. Further thought will also be given to dedicating the board as a World War II memorial.

13 – Community First Responders

The Clerk reported that the area organiser for Community First Responders had been in touch. They are keen to recruit new volunteers in the Drinkstone area and would like to come along to a meeting to show the PC and any residents interested what they do and how they operate. This was approved and they will be invited to attend the next meeting.

14 – Correspondence

Emergency Planning

The Clerk attended an Emergency Planning Seminar at Mid Suffolk on 26th February and returned with a folder full of information on how to set up a village emergency plan – this information will be circulated to all Councillors. The Clerk said the course was well attended; with representatives from Hesselton and Woolpit, who are also thinking of writing a plan. The seminar was presented by two emergency planning officers and a member of staff from the Environment Agency. You need between 4 – 6 people to write and develop a plan and this should ideally include some people like ex police/military or anyone with emergency procedures experience. We would also need to get the village hall on board as you have to have a nominated rest centre and the hall is the obvious choice for that.

Other Correspondence

Mid Suffolk Citizens Advice – Thank you letter

Zurich Municipal

Ipswich and Suffolk Credit Union

Arthrocare Appeal for funding

Emergency Planning Information

Email from Mr Wilmshurst requesting financial information

15 – Other Business

- Cllr Cousins reported that Mr Cross's fence at the far end of the "cheese wedge" is in very poor condition – she suggested that the Clerk drops him a note bringing this to his attention.
- Cllr Cousins asked whether we should wait till autumn again for the play inspection or whether to ask for it to be brought forward to before the school holidays. The inspections were delayed last year in order to bring them in line with Babergh. Cllr Otton said she would make inquiries as it makes sense to have the inspections prior to the holidays.
- Cllr Nolan reported that he had seen a playground with an area specifically fence off for dogs; where owners could clear up after them – this might be worth looking at.
- Park Road is flooded again and the signs have disappeared – Clerk to report to Highways.
- The Clerk reported that UK Power Network is coming to upgrade the transformer in Rattlesden Road and replace some of the support poles on 14th March. There will be some disruption to traffic and power supplies.

There being no other business the meeting closed at 10pm

Date of next meeting Monday 7th April 2014

These are draft minutes and will be verified at the next meeting