

A meeting of the Parish Council took place on Monday, 10th January 2022 at 7.00pm in the Village Hall.

Present: Cllr. Fleming, in the chair, Cllrs. Abu-Hejleh, Clark, Cushing, Stangoe, Thomas, Whitmore, the clerk and five members of the public. Cllr. Mallinder attended until 7.45pm, and Cllr. Reid from 8.10 to 8.25pm.

Apologies: None.

Declarations of Interest: None.

Adjournment for Parish Forum:

Mrs Clements, tree warden, was invited to give a report. She had attended a meeting on 6th December regarding the Rendlesham and Tunstall Forest 10 year plan, and was reassured that the schemes to clear fell were only what had happened within the forests over the past years, taking small areas at a time, and considerable replanting will be undertaken mostly with conifers, but also suitable broad leaved trees. The areas designated to the RSPB and Natural England as suitable habitat for nightjars and woodlarks will not be replanted. Areas in and around Eyke due to be felled in the next four years are a couple of small ones adjacent to Woodbridge airfield, and one at the back of Nelson Potter. Plans were available for clarification.

Regarding help from Hollesley Bay residents to work on the copse, Mrs Clements is still waiting to hear about a start date.

Minutes: Those of 8th November 2021, having been previously circulated, were taken as read, agreed and signed as a correct record.

Matters Arising:

1. Village Hall. Mr Weavers was invited to speak about this. Apart from a few finishing touches, the kitchen is complete. The next phase will include replacing the windows, doors and the porch and major work reconfiguring the toilets, with a new access and disabled toilet. The stage is to be removed, possibly in February/March, but for the moment leaving the interior wall. The hall will be usable, with the stage end blocked off, and perhaps with the provision of portaloos, while the toilets are being upgraded. There are numerous leaks in the roof, and it will be cheaper to replace the whole thing rather than repair it. This is planned for July/August.

Cllr. Clark confirmed that the hall is now usable from now, as long as hirers are aware of the effect of ongoing work, and can be used for Jubilee events if required. A £14,500 grant has been received from DEFRA. She pointed out that around 1300 to 1400 hours of voluntary labour has been supplied on the project, saving around £30,000. There has been a great deal of time and effort put in as a community, which bodes well for the future, and setting the hall up as a Community Hub.

Cllr. Mallinder was then invited to give his report.

He reported that last year's focus had been on nature, but the pressing issue this year is wide ranging environmental matters, from encouraging more wildlife to looking at ocean health. Managing waste is a big issue and the drive will be to sort more at home, as happens in the Westcountry.

He expressed concern over highways and planning management and urged robust responses. Regarding Sizewell C, he is concerned that the organisations involved do not work together, for example in using the railways to carry freight to the site. This is a problem in the wider world, as well.

In answer to a question from Cllr. Clark, he confirmed that there would be funds available for the purchase of suitable benches for the hall.

2. Traffic issues. The detailed response from SCC had been circulated to councillors, and confirmed what is already known, that Bentwaters traffic exceed the limits set down, but the council has no plans to mitigate any aspect. Cllr. Cushing was concerned that this stonewalling effectively stops any action which needs to be taken forward.

Cllr. Mallinder felt that the reply from SCC was important, and the information could be used in any planning application response, in Eyke and its neighbourhood, and suggested involving Cllr Reid each time, so that a response to East Suffolk is informed by input from SCC. The ongoing concern is that small applications, while not increasing traffic movements hugely, when put together cause significant extra traffic.

He offered his support to Eyke and other parishes.

The clerk reported that she had submitted a response to the Lorry Route Review, based on the Parish Council's previous concerns, and in consultation with Cllr. Reid. The concerns she listed were: road safety, speeding, damage to verge or road width inadequate, weight and Bentwaters.

3. New fencing on the rec. Work on this has now started. The undergrowth has been cleared and much of the old fencing removed. The clerk had received a query about the removal of habitat, but this was mostly brambles which would re-establish over time. Cllr. Cushing suggested that an outside contractor be approached for a quotation to cut the rec about 3 times a year, to keep it as a popular amenity, and stop brambles from encroaching further. The area in question is about 5 acres. The clerk will look into this.

4. Bus service though the village. Cllr. Reid has looked into this, and a reply has been received from Simon Barnett at SCC. Plans for changes are currently on hold because of collapse in numbers due to the pandemic, but all plans will be under review this year and when funding is agreed, there could be some improvements after April.

5. State of side roads and potholes in the village. The clerk had publicised the use of the online reporting tool, and had reported the very noisy manhole cover in The Street. This is not currently considered a priority. Quite specific locations are required, and it was agreed to write to SCC and copy in Cllr. Reid, regarding the Ufford bend junction, where there is the hazard of sand and debris, and also the bottom of White Woman's Lane.

Reports:

Suffolk County Council. Cllr. Reid reported that the budget will be presented for scrutiny this month, under challenging circumstances including covid, and a continuing rise in demand on all aspects of the service. There will be a 2.99% increase in Council Tax, made up of 1.99% general council tax, and 1% to fund adult care.

An electric taxi bus service is now running to Snape Maltings, reducing the need for a car and helps deliver on the commitment to sustainable transport. On this front, too over 10,000 LED streetlights have been installed across the county.

Deben Ward Joint Parishes Meeting. This was attended by Cllr. Cushing and the clerk on 25th November, and featured a presentation by Governor David Daddow, from HMP and YOI Hollesley Bay, who talked about the preparation of the residents for release. The meeting provided a platform for discussion of common issues, and some possible solutions. The next meeting will be on 24th March at Sutton Heath.

Other matters:

1. Sale of The Elephant & Castle. A non-binding expression of interest in purchase has been registered with East Suffolk Council, which will expire on 30th May 2022. Cllr. Fleming felt that the parish council should not be part of this. It was agreed that the clerk would consult with Marie Grace, who had spearheaded the registration of the pub as an Asset of Community Value, to suggest that all those who had signed the original request, should be consulted to see if they wished to go ahead with preparing a bid. Concern was expressed that it had not been possible so far to obtain a sale price from the vendor.

2. Queen's Platinum Jubilee. It was agreed that a note would go in the next newsletter, asking for suggestions of events to mark the occasion over the first weekend in June. Cllr. Clark confirmed that the hall would be available. It was also suggested that Eyke School is approached to see what their plans are.

Finance:

1. Draft budget. Councillors had received a copy of this. With figures based on this year's precept, the income would be £9325, and expenses £8463, allowing for a 30% rise in electricity and other small allowances for inflation. Cllr. Clark thought a 50% rise in electricity would be more appropriate. The bill for the new fencing, which will be £6318 plus vat will eat into the current funds, so it was felt that a significant increase is required. Cllr. Cushing suggested a rise of £600, which would be roughly £4.00 per household per year. This was agreed. The precept for the year will therefore be £9915.00.

2. Account balances (at 3.12.21) Community Account: £14114.87; BPA: £8601.67; Rate Reward: £118.63.

3. Cheques to be agreed: Zoom Annual Payment: £143.88; Mrs Pooley: salary, 3rd quarter; £582.60; HMRC: 3rd quarter: £145.60. The bill for the fencing has not yet been received, but expected soon, and councillors agreed the payment of £6138 plus vat.

4. The clerk also confirmed that the Direct Debit has been set up with BT for the Village Hall wifi and associated expenses. The first payment of £47.98 should now have been taken, which includes setting up costs.

To receive items for information:

As Cllr. Clark will be away in March, she requested an earlier date for the next meeting. This was agreed for Monday, 28th February, at 7.00pm in the Village Hall.

The meeting closed at 8.40pm.