

WHISSONSETT PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of Whissonsett Parish Council held virtually at 7.30pm on Monday 11th January 2021.

Present: Cllr Sally Dye (Chair)
Cllr Bruce Andrews (Vice Chair)
Cllr Cathrine McGee
Cllr Charles Holloway
Cllr James Daniels
Cllr Caroline Edge

District Cllr Trevor Carter
County Cllr Mark Kiddle-Morris
Sheryl Irving (Clerk)

1. Welcome and apologies for absence.

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting, C/Cllr Kiddle-Morris will be attending later in the meeting.

The Chairman reminded Council of the vacancy and the need to fill it as soon as possible. Cllr Edge was aware of someone who may be interested and will follow this up.

2. To receive any declarations of interest.

There were none received.

3. To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 10th November 2020.

Cllr Dye proposed that the minutes be accepted as a true record of the meeting, this was seconded by Cllr Holloway and agreed by Council. The Chairman will sign the minutes in due course.

4. Open Forum for Public Participation.

There were no members of the public present.

5. County & District Councillors Reports.

D/Cllr Carter reported that Breckland staff were either on furlough or dealing with Covid related matters, hence other issues were quiet. However, he was pleased that Whissonsett Village Hall had received their grant funding for the kitchen refurbishment, which he had supported. He went on to report the following.

The Green Britain Centre in Swaffham has been sold but this will bring some employment to the town.

There has been a Covid outbreak in both the chocolate factory and Morrisons at Fakenham and these are being dealt with as per procedures.

A public consultation regarding the Norwich Western Link was due to take place in June 2021, following by a planning application.

There is a new police station in Swaffham.

Finally, the C/Cllr reported seven instances of fly tipping in the local vicinity over Christmas, which had all been dealt with.

6. Planning Issues

a) Decisions to note.

There were no decisions to note.

b) Applications to consider.

There were no applications to consider.

c) To receive an update re the appeal to the Secretary of State in respect of the following application:

3PL/2020/0107/F - 1 & 2 Sunnyside London Street Whissonsett, Two new 3-bedroom dwellings.

Council noted there was no update in respect of this appeal.

7. To consider any Highways matters.

a) To receive an update re matters previously reported.

- Mill Lane – Highways Land – C/Cllr Kiddle-Morris is taking this matter forward.
- Mill Lane – resurfacing works lifting – C/Cllr Kiddle-Morris is taking this matter forward.

This item will be dealt with once the C/Cllr joins the meeting.

b) To receive a report regarding the SAM II sign.

Cllr McGee had circulated a report to council members showing data taken from the SAM II sign, from various locations in the village. Council were pleased to note that there were few issues regarding excessive speeding and the sign appeared to be effective. The maximum speed recorded was 37.4mph.

c) To consider any new issues.

There were no new issues raised.

8. To consider issues relating to the Play Area.

a) To consider matters arising from the 2020 Play Area Inspection Report.

Cllr Edge reported that she had not been able to make any progress on the issues raised. However, they were all minor and the play area remained safe.

b) To consider any other issues.

Council noted that the play area can remain open during the current lockdown, with the appropriate signage in place.

9. To receive an update regarding the maintenance of parish council trees.

a) To receive an update regarding ongoing tree works.

The Chairman reported that four quotes for works to the Beech Tree had been received, with a vast difference in the prices. Works for complete felling, crown reduction or felling but leaving a 5 - 6m monolith for habitat had been requested, although it was noted that reducing the tree to crown height would weaken a beech tree and only postpone eventual felling.

Council noted that some of the contractors were not willing to fell the tree without positive evidence of the disease and Council agreed the need to confirm the disease was in the tree before any decision could be made, as they did not wish to fell the tree if it was not necessary. Unfortunately, the laboratory where a sample could be tested appeared to be furloughed at present, as they did not reply to any requests for a test but this will continue to be chased up.

Council also noted that, although the inspection had highlighted that the disease could result in the sudden failure of the tree, this was unlikely to happen in the next twelve months, thereby giving Council time to make a decision.

Cllr Daniels proposed that a decision be delayed until such time as the existence of the disease could be confirmed, this was seconded by Cllr Andrews and agreed by Council.

b) To note the final report regarding the Church Close Tree.

Council noted that the report advised no further action and the matter was now closed.

At this point in the meeting, C/Cllr Kiddle-Morris arrived.

c) To consider any other issues.

An oak tree near to the Church had been highlighted as having branches in need of maintenance but a recent inspection revealed that an unknown person had cut the branches in question and tidied up below the tree. That being the case, there were no safety issues and no further works were required although Council agreed to discuss the need to remove the wood at the next meeting.

An Ash Tree on New Road was suffering from dieback but this is not on parish land. C/Cllr Kiddle-Morris will ask the Highways Boundaries Team to investigate ownership.

At this point, Council returned to item 5 (C/Cllr's Report) and item 7 (Highway Issues).

The C/Cllr had provided a written report on County matters and this is attached. In addition, he reported that the Government was strongly urging County to adopt a new Code of Conduct and this will likely filter down to parish councils in due course.

Cllr Edge provided photos of a drain on London Street which had burst and continued to flow for several days after the period of heavy rain prior to Christmas. The C/Cllr will request a camera check of the system.

The C/Cllr reported of the continued absence of a Highways Engineer in this area, although this was now being recruited. This situation made any works difficult to progress. Both issues at Mill Lane continued to be on hold but it was hoped to progress as soon as the Engineer was in post.

The Chairman thanked the C/Cllr for his input and he then left the meeting.

10. To consider any maintenance and other issues relating to village areas.

A complaint regarding dog mess at Church Close had been received and Council agreed to investigate the possibility of a new dog bin at that location but noted the difficulties there may be in finding a location where Breckland will empty a bin, as they must be sited on Breckland land.

11. To receive an update regarding the grass contract for 2021 and payment schedule.

Council were pleased to note the previous contractor had agreed to continue for the revised price, as discussed at the previous meeting, but requested three payments per year, rather than the two set out in the tender. Council agreed this request and the contract will be drawn up.

The Chairman reported that the final invoice from 2020 had included an additional £200 for hedge cutting which had not been approved. However, since speaking to the contractor, she now advised a revised payment of £100 for the additional work, which did resolve a long-standing issue. Cllr Dye proposed payment of £100, this was seconded by Cllr Holloway and agreed by Council.

12. Correspondence

Council noted the following survey but declined to comment.

- Transport East survey to help shape the future of transport in the East of England

At this point in the meeting, D/Cllr Carter left the meeting, the Chairman thanked him for his input.

13. Finance & Governance Matters

a) To receive a financial statement for the year ending 31st March 2021.

The financial statement was noted.

b) To consider a draft budget and set the precept for the year ending 31st March 2022.

As the costs for any major tree works were yet unconfirmed, Cllr McGee proposed that the precept remain at £13,000, this was seconded by Cllr Edge and agreed by Council.

c) To note the closure of the 'Allotment to Former Highway Surveyors' Charity'.

The Chairman reported that correspondence had been received from the Charity Commission re annual returns which had not been provided for some years. This charity land had been sold some years ago, with the monies used for the first refurbishment of the play area, and the charity closed, although the Charity Commission had not been notified at the time. The Charity is now officially closed.

d) To approve the following payments

Cllr Dye proposed approval of the following payments, this was seconded by Cllr Holloway and agreed by Council.

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|--|------------------------------|
| • Clerk (Salary/Allowance – Dec/Jan & HMRC Refund) | £286.58 |
| • Grass Contractor (Hedge cutting) | £100.00 |
| • Play Area Inspection | £144.00 (paid on 11.12.2020) |

14. To note the meeting dates for 2021.

Council noted the meeting dates for 2021.

- Monday 8th March
- Monday 10th May (Annual Meetings)
- Monday 12th July
- Monday 13th September
- Monday 8th November

15. To receive any new items for the next agenda.

There were no further new items for the agenda.

16. To note the next meeting will be held at 7.30pm on Monday 8th March 2021.

Council noted the date of the next meeting and the meeting closed at 8.47pm.

Signed:

Date:

County Councillor for Necton and Launditch Division
Report January 2021

Budget:

The Council will set its budget for financial year 21/22 at a meeting to be held on 22nd February. The settlement from central government is broadly neutral; there has been a small increase in the Rate Support Grant and the Rural Services Delivery Grant but a reduction in the payment from new homes bonus. Despite this the Council will set a balanced budget which maintains the current level of services. However, inevitably there will be an increase in council tax; a 1.99% increase in the general rate and a 2% increase in the adult social care precept (up to 3% is permitted). As with all local authorities the Council must set a budget which is balanced over a 3-year period; the projection for 22/23 is for a tax rise of 2% plus 1% for adult social care.

Grass Cutting:

As reported in November the Councils mandatory consultation on the budget for 21/22 included a proposal to reduce the highways verge cuts on both C and U roads from 2 to one cut per year. In response to the consultation 63% of respondents agreed with the reduction, this will obviously be the subject of debate at the council tax setting meeting in February.

Members Code of Conduct:

In 2019 the Committee on Standards in Public Life requested the Local Government Association (LGA) to produce a model elected member code of conduct. The draft LGA model code was issued for consultation between 8th June 2020 and 17th August 2020. The final version of the LGA Model Councillor Code of Conduct has now been issued. The NCC Standards Committee will consider its adoption on 18th January. Governments has indicated that all councils should adopt the code with or without minor amendments so that a standard code applies across all elected local councils.

Mark Kiddle-Morris.

Member for Necton and Launditch.

Norfolk County Council.