

LAYHAM PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of the Council
held at 7.30pm on Wednesday 25 November 2020 via ZOOM

Present: Charlotte Britton - Chairman (CB)
Jane Cryer - Clerk (JC)
John Curran (JDC)
Bill Paton (BP)
David Pratt (DP)
Elaine Pye (EP)
Sheila Roberts (SR)
Michael Woods - Vice Chairman (MW)

In attendance: Gordon Jones - Suffolk CC (GJ)
John Ward - Babergh DC (JW)
Steve Laing - Parishioner (SL)
Nigel Pye - Parishioner (NP)

Apologies: None

20.11.1 APOLOGIES

See above.

20.11.2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

DP and MW both declared a non-pecuniary interest in agenda item 20.11.8.2, as Chairmen of the Village Hall Management Committee and the Playing Field Management Committee respectively.

20.11.3 PUBLIC FORUM

SL thanked everyone who had taken part in the autumn tidy-up and said he would be in favour of the PC entering the Keep Britain Tidy network awards. With regard to agenda item 20.11.11, he suggested that Stoke Road might be considered for designation as a Quiet Lane, explaining that the PC had tried several times in the past to have the 30mph speed limit extended without success; this might help the cause, especially as it linked with the No 1 Cycleway through to Lower Raydon and Shelley. SL also commented on the high cost of maintaining security at the old Babergh offices in Corks Lane, which had been empty since Babergh moved to Ipswich three years ago. He asked JW if there was a breakdown of the costs so far, and whether these would be taken into consideration when the asset was sold. JW said Babergh would be redeveloping the site itself, not selling it. In response to a question from EP, JW confirmed that the redevelopment would be for housing, and that the car park would also be redeveloped.

NP said he was grateful to members of the Parish Council for giving their time and helping to make Layham a better place in which to live. He wished to offer some constructive comments on financial matters - although he believed all financial proceedings were above board, he was concerned that the Parish Council might be leaving itself open to criticism given the high level of general reserves; members had noted this and planned to address the issue over the coming months. NP went on to say that the Local Government Ethical Standards report to the Parliamentary Committee on Standards in Public Life had recommended that councillors with pecuniary and / or non-pecuniary interests in an external organisation should not be involved in discussions or votes regarding their own organisation, although this was not yet law. The Chairs of both the Playing Field and Village Hall Committees had been members of the budget working party, but both had declared a non-pecuniary interest (see above). With regard to the allowances to the Village Hall, the Playing Field and the PCC, NP suggested that councillors should question whether the organisations actually needed the money, and should also ask how that money would be spent (*see also minute 20.11.8, below*).

20.11.4 ADJOURNMENT TO RECEIVE WRITTEN REPORTS FROM OUTSIDE BODIES

20.11.4.1 District Council report

A written report had been circulated prior to the meeting, a copy of which is filed with these minutes. The winners of the 2020 Innovation Awards had been announced on 3 November; these included two Hadleigh businesses - Ferguson's Deli (High Street) and Challs International (Most Innovative SME). Following the recent spike in Covid 19 cases in Hadleigh, the rate was now falling. In response to a question from JDC, JW said the new tiers which would come into force following the end of lockdown on 2 December were likely to be decided on a regional basis, but this had not yet been confirmed. All local councils were currently looking at the implications of the Spending Review. In response to a question from MW about tree planting, JW said the funding available did include an element for maintenance.

20.11.4.2 Suffolk CC

A written report had been circulated prior to the meeting, a copy of which is filed with these minutes. With regard to the pandemic, GJ said current data did not show a wider community spread beyond Hadleigh. A meeting had been held with Public Health England and a further meeting would take place on 26 November. With regard to financial support for people having to isolate, GJ said information had been widely circulated to the public, although those isolating were not automatically contacted. The link to follow for further information was:

https://www.northgatenes.co.uk/pls/pwslive/f?p=CADPWS:SIP:11219030688025:INITIALISE:NO:SESSION:APP_LA_CODE,APP_SRV_CODE,APP_TEXT_LANGUAGE,APP_TRANS

With regard to the Spending Review, GJ said there would be around 7000 fewer households paying council tax in 2021-22. SCC had announced funding for tree planting and protecting hedgerows and verges; GJ would send the link to JC for circulation. He said the initiative had been announced in October and there had already been considerable interest. With regard to broadband coverage, SR was concerned that Overbury Hall Road was in the 2% of Suffolk that did not currently benefit from superfast broadband. EP said the village was also a 4G blackspot; in Boxford a mast had been installed on public land so that all providers could benefit. On a point of order, BP cautioned against raising personal issues during PC meetings.

20.11.5 REPORTS FROM COUNCILLORS

20.11.5.1 Speeding

The report from the working party was noted. The owners of houses close to the proposed locations of the poles had confirmed they were happy; they would be asked to confirm this in writing so those letters could be forwarded to SCC Highways together with the location details; JDC would liaise with JC. Following a suggestion from Highways, JDC had contacted a Norfolk-based company which supplied SID devices; the specification was similar to that already obtained but the devices were considerably more expensive, so the recommendation from the working party was to proceed with the original proposal. CB thanked JDC and BP for progressing this initiative.

20.11.5.2 Autumn tidy-up

SR's report was noted. She was grateful to Babergh's Public Realm team who had been extremely helpful in providing resources. CB thanked SR for organising the day, and everyone who took part.

20.11.6 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

It was proposed by JDC, seconded by MW and agreed unanimously that the minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 28 October 2020 should be accepted as an accurate record, and signed accordingly.

20.11.7 ACTIONS FROM PREVIOUS MEETING

Most of the actions were either ongoing or were on the agenda. There were updates on the following:

20.11.7.1 Internal audit report recommendations

JC would bring an update to the January meeting.

20.11.7.2 Village sign

There was nothing new to report. In response to a question from EP, CB said the PC was keeping a watching brief on this initiative in order to be able to offer support if appropriate.

20.11.7.3 Walking from Upper Layham to Hadleigh

MW and GJ had met to look at the footpath alongside the B1070, following which GJ had sent a report to SCC Highways with recommendations. Councillors were grateful to GJ for his assistance.

20.11.7.4 Reporting issues to SCC

SR had reported several issues online and gave an update:

- the gutters in Hadleigh Road near the Rugby Club would be cleaned;
- the footbridge near the Mill would be repaired;
- the potholes on Overbury Hall Road near the Kennels would be repaired;
- the tree roots across the pavement in Mill Lane were not considered to be a priority. GJ had looked at this during his site visit with MW and would follow up on this issue; however, the footpath alongside the B1070 (see above) was his first priority.

MW said SCC had acknowledged that the blocked drain in Church Lane was their responsibility. With regard to the kerbstones near the Rugby Club, BP wondered whether this was a design issue. SR said traffic and water had destroyed the verge so the kerbs were no longer fit for purpose. She suggested asking SCC to reinstate the verge. It was noted that this section of the road was actually in Hadleigh; JC would continue to liaise with the Town Council when the new Clerk was in post. EP said Footpath 1 required attention and could perhaps be looked at when the footbridge was repaired; she would report this online; there were also some issues at Bullocky Fen.

20.11.7.5 Emergency Plan

JDC had produced a briefing sheet based on the meeting held in 2019; once all the new ELVs had been confirmed, he would send it to them.

20.11.7.6 Village Hall Management Committee

A request for volunteers would appear in the December issue of the Hadleigh Community News. CB said the Events Committee had discussed the issue at its recent meeting; in response to a question from EP, she said the committee had organised some events in the village, eg the Christmas Fair, but was not an official body. The future of the VHMC would be discussed at the January meeting.

20.11.8 FINANCIAL MATTERS

20.11.8.1 RFO's report

EP queried the payment to the PCC; JC explained that this was the allowance for the year 2020-21, as agreed the previous year. It was proposed by DP, seconded by JDC and agreed unanimously that the finance report for 25 November 2020 should be approved and payments of £2,313.13 were authorised.

20.11.8.2 Budget & Precept for 2021/22

A draft budget had been circulated before the meeting, together with notes and recommendations from the working party.

- Allowances - with regard to future allowances to the Village Hall, Playing Field and PCC, SR said that she saw no reason to cease paying the allowances, given the current level of reserves. However, EP felt strongly that they should demonstrate a need for the money. MW said the Playing Field Committee had been careful over the years, but the mower would soon need replacing, which was likely to cost around £5000. In addition, some of the play equipment would soon have to be replaced - two of the items were more than fifteen years old. The small piece of new apparatus purchased recently had alone cost £6000 and, due to enhanced Health & Safety requirements, the surfaces also needed to be upgraded. EP repeated that, as this was public money, the PC should know what the money was intended to be used for, and business plans should be submitted. JDC said the PC was aware of how the money was being spent; with regard to the VH and PF, the PC kept the money on account and settled invoices against it - this was confirmed by JC. With regard to the PCC, DP explained that the community payback team responsible for maintaining the churchyard and burial ground had not provided equipment; the PCC had therefore had to purchase its own and had confirmed that the grant from the PC covered the purchase of mowers, strimmers and a shed in which to keep them.

JDC said he felt strongly that the PC should continue to support all three organisations, especially during the current difficulties. BP suggested asking the organisations for a summary of expenditure during the last twelve months and a forecast for the next twelve months; it was agreed that there would be a further discussion at the January meeting.

- **Donations** - EP suggested that a donation should be made to the Hadleigh First Responders instead of SARS. In response to a comment from JDC that the PC had given HFR £500 for their new vehicle last year, she said they still had ongoing running costs. MW said SARS were specialist volunteer responders who assessed for the ambulance service at the scene. They carried life-saving equipment and drugs not carried in ambulances; anyone in the village might be grateful for their services at some point. It was proposed by EP, seconded by SR and agreed unanimously to give £100 to the Hadleigh First Responders, in addition to the donation to SARS of £50.

It was proposed by CB, seconded by JDC and agreed (with one abstention) to accept the draft budget and maintain the precept at £11,000.

20.11.8.3 Internal auditors

It was proposed by DP, seconded by MW and agreed unanimously to reappoint SALC as internal auditors for 2020/21.

20.11.9 PLANNING APPLICATIONS

20.11.9.1 DC/20/01517 - Marquis of Cornwallis

It was noted that Babergh had requested additional expertise from Essex County Council. The consultants had said they could not support the application as it was as they needed more detail. It was agreed that there was nothing to add to the PC's previous submissions.

20.11.9.2 DC/20/03776 - Acer View, Potts Lane

It was noted that the discharge of conditions had been approved.

20.11.9.3 DC/20/04614 - Antrim House, Upper Street

It was noted that the change to wall materials had been approved.

20.11.10 LOCALITY GRANT

MW said the original idea had been to have maps printed for each household, but the working party had also considered the possibility of a free standing map on a post. In response to a question from EP, JC provided a breakdown of costs. With regard to the map itself, EP said it would need to be high definition format, which would be an additional cost as it would require specialist software. She had done some research and obtained quotes from a local timber merchant and print shop; she agreed to share the information with MW. It was proposed by DP, seconded by JDC and agreed to proceed with the application; however, if it was decided to proceed with the Quiet Lanes initiative (see 20.11.11, below), some changes to the map might be necessary.

20.11.11 QUIET LANES SUFFOLK

The working group's paper had been circulated. MW said that, unfortunately, the working group had not been able to agree unanimously on the recommendations. JDC said he felt it was a good idea in theory but questioned what it would achieve, as people tended to disregard speed limit signs; however, it was noted that this was not intended to be a traffic-calming initiative but more a way of indicating to drivers that there could be walkers, cyclists and horse riders using the lane. JDC said particularly long lanes might require repeater signs instead of just a sign at either end in order to be effective. In response to a suggestion that one or two lanes should be put forward initially, to test the water, EP said lanes could not be added later; she suggested putting more forward for assessment, rather than fewer. The only costs to be met by the PC would be for signage, although there could be additional costs if traffic surveys were necessary. The five lanes proposed by the working group were:

- Shelley Road from 'Blacksmith's Bench' southwards to the next road junction before reaching Shelley Church;
- Stoke Road from 'Blacksmith's Bench' all the way westwards to the parish boundary, then left and left again;

- The road joining the Stoke and Shelley Roads and mostly forming the boundary with Shelley;
- Overbury Hall Road from the junction with Potts Lane near the Hadleigh boundary all the way south via Overbury Hall and Shepherd's Farm to the junction at Cobbler's Corner;
- Water Lane from the B1070 to Mill Lane.

It was proposed by DP, seconded by SR and agreed unanimously to put these lanes forward for assessment. It was noted that there would be an opportunity for a final decision on whether to proceed when the lanes had been assessed and the actual cost implications were known.

20.11.12 KEEP BRITAIN TIDY AWARDS

SR proposed that the PC should consider becoming a member of Keep Britain Tidy - this would be decided at a future meeting and the PC could then consider applying for the awards next year. Her proposal was seconded by CB and agreed unanimously.

20.11.13 CLERK'S CORRESPONDENCE

JC had received a report that the grit bin at the top of Rands Road had been overturned; this had now been addressed and the bin was still full of grit. She would arrange for a replacement shovel.

20.11.14 CLERK'S REPORT ON URGENT DECISIONS SINCE THE LAST MEETING

None.

20.11.15 FUTURE MEETINGS

The schedule of meetings for 2021 was agreed. The next meeting would be at 7.30pm on Wednesday 27 January 2020, via Zoom.

* * * * *