

LAYHAM PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of the Council
held at 3.30pm on Wednesday 29 July 2020 via ZOOM

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

In attendance: John Ward - Babergh DC (JW)

Apologies: Gordon Jones - Suffolk CC (GJ)

20.7.1 APOLOGIES

See above.

20.7.2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

20.7.3 PUBLIC FORUM

No parishioners were present.

20.7.4 ADJOURNMENT TO RECEIVE WRITTEN REPORTS FROM OUTSIDE BODIES

20.7.4.1 District Council report

A written report had been circulated prior to the meeting, a copy of which is filed with these minutes. JW said the latest round of applications for discretionary business grants would close on 7 August; the whole scheme would finish at the end of August. He confirmed that Babergh would be able to balance its budget for the current year, but would need to call on reserves in order to do so. In response to a question from CB, he said small businesses were not eligible for discretionary grants as the criteria stated a business had to sit within the rateable value. With regard to the Marquis planning application, JW said an extension until 7 August had been granted for the applicant to submit revised information (heritage, landscaping, sustainable urban drainage system). There would then be a further consultation period. In response to a question from BP, he said the usual period was 21 days, but he would confirm that this would be so for the revised application.

20.7.4.2 Suffolk CC

A written report had been circulated prior to the meeting, a copy of which is filed with these minutes. With reference to the comprehensive COVID plan, JDC wondered whether parish councils would have any involvement, eg through emergency planning. JC would ask GJ and report back.

20.7.5 REPORTS FROM COUNCILLORS

20.7.5.1 Playing Field Committee

MW's report was noted. The playing field and play equipment had remained open during the pandemic; the committee had taken the view that Layham was a small community and people had been observing social distancing guidelines. JW said the government had advised some parks to close, but the majority had now reopened; he said it had mostly been left up to parents to decide whether their children should use play equipment. SR commented that there were signs on the gates to the playing field and perhaps there should also be signs on the items of play equipment; JW would forward an appropriate sign to JC. With regard to the felling of the cricket bat willows, SR asked what would happen to the piles of wood left in the conservation area. MW said when the

trees were felled, the wind had been in the wrong direction making it impossible to burn the trimmings as usual. This could be done in the autumn, or the wood could just be left to rot, which was good for wildlife. MW reported that the annual inspection of the playing field equipment had identified a further £600 worth of repairs was necessary (eg new swing seats). In response to a question from CB, MW said the Playing Field Committee usually met once or twice a year; it was hoped to be able to meet in September.

20.7.5.2 Defibrillators

JDC had carried out a survey of all the defibrillators; some had required new pads and/or batteries. These had now been installed so that all equipment was up to date. Spare sets of pads were held.

20.7.5.3 Green Team

SR said parishioners were using the litter picks when out walking; she would be happy to keep the ones currently housed in the playing field shed so that people could collect them from her. She would keep a log of who had them and ensure that they were sanitised before and after use; she would draft some text for a community email. It was agreed that the Green Team should decide on future activity and report back to full council as appropriate. SR said small groups or working parties could be formed on an ad hoc basis to carry out specific activities, rather than having a formal team in place. A date for an autumn litter pick would be decided at the next meeting.

20.7.6 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

It was proposed by MW, seconded by DP and agreed unanimously that the minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 24 June 2020 should be accepted as an accurate record, and signed accordingly.

20.7.7 ACTIONS FROM PREVIOUS MEETING

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

20.7.7.1 Overgrown vegetation

The overgrown vegetation along the pathway from Upper Layham to Hadleigh had been partially cleared, but remained an issue.

20.7.7.2 Picnic table

JC confirmed that the picnic table at Blacksmith's Corner had been added to the PC's insurance and asset register. MW suggested that thank-you notes should be sent to those responsible for its installation, and the Queen's Head charity for funding it; this was agreed.

20.7.7.1

20.7.8 FINANCIAL MATTERS

20.7.8.1 Internal audit report

The internal audit had once again been carried out by SALC. The auditor's report and recommendations were noted; JC would keep councillors updated on progress.

20.7.8.2 2019/20 AGAR - Section 1, Governance Statement

It was proposed by DP, seconded by JDC and agreed unanimously that Section 1 (Governance Statement) should be approved and signed by the Chairman and Clerk/RFO.

20.7.8.3 2019/20 AGAR - Section 2, Accounting Statements

It was proposed by CB, seconded by SR and agreed unanimously that Section 2 (Accounting Statements) should be approved and signed by the Chairman and Clerk/RFO. JDC expressed concern that the reserves quoted were misleading, as the total included funds held for the Village Hall, the Playing Field and Layham Local History Group, as well as the PC itself; JC said this was clearly shown on the bank reconciliation, a copy of which was sent to the auditors.

The Certificate of Exemption was also signed by the Chairman and the Clerk/RFO.

20.7.8.4 RFO's report

It was proposed by JDC, seconded by DP and agreed unanimously that the finance report for 29 July 2020 should be approved and payments of £1,924.57 were authorised.

20.7.8.5 Section 106

The bulk of the outstanding S106 funds available had been used for the new play equipment and gates to the conservation area on the playing field, leaving a balance of around £500. Babergh had agreed that this could be used to part-fund the purchase of bark chippings to increase the depth around the base of play equipment; the balance of the cost would be met from Playing Field funds.

20.7.9 PLANNING

20.7.9.1 DC/20/02588- Long Ponds, Rands Road

There were no objections to the application for change of use from agricultural land to residential.

20.7.9.2 DC/20/01290 - Beck Cottage, Overbury Hall Road

The application for the erection of a replacement dwelling following demolition of the existing dwelling and outbuildings had been approved.

20.7.9.3 DC/20/02291 - Land rear of The Leys, Rands Road

The application for change of use from agricultural land to residential had been approved.

20.7.10 CASUAL VACANCY

There had been no request for an election and therefore the council was now free to co-opt. It was agreed that the vacancy should be advertised on the noticeboards, the website and via the community email. JC would ask applicants to supply a brief biography. The closing date for applications would be Wednesday 12 August, with interviews being held on 17 and/or 18 August; JC would check availability of the Village Hall as it was hoped to be able to interview candidates face-to-face rather than via Zoom. A working party comprising CB, BP and JDC would conduct the interviews, and would meet in advance to consider applications and possibly draw up a shortlist, depending on the number of applications received; JDC would circulate some possible dates. CB said it was important to look at the existing skills set of councillors and identify any gaps. In response to a question from BP, JC would check whether the requirement to live within a 3-mile radius of the parish referred to the edge or the centre of the village.

20.7.11 SPEEDING

JDC had researched various options for a SID device and the information had been circulated to councillors with the agenda papers. The cost of a unit from Elan City, an established company who had provided equipment for neighbouring villages, was £1891.05 (plus VAT) and the posts from Suffolk CC were £190 each. His proposal that one device and two poles should be purchased was seconded by CB and agreed unanimously, subject to agreement with SCC about location(s). JDC and BP would take this project forward.

20.7.12 SCC COMMUNITY SELF-HELP SCHEME

Following the period of lockdown, it was agreed that the working party comprising CB, MW and SR should meet to discuss restarting the project. CB would circulate some dates and the working party would report to the next meeting.

20.7.13 VILLAGE SIGN

The proposal from a parishioner was noted. MW welcomed the fact that people were keen to see improvements to the village, but commented that the review carried out in 2019 had not identified that a village sign was a priority. He was also concerned about the cost, although the proposal stated that anonymous donors had agreed to fund it. CB said she felt the Parish Council would need to be involved as there would be ongoing costs - eg maintenance etc. If the PC was going to support the project, Upper Layham should be included as the PC represented the whole village of Layham. BP said he would be happy to meet the parishioner to discuss the project in more detail, and would report back to the August meeting.

20.7.14 NEW STREET SIGN - POPES GREEN LANE

A request from a parishioner for a road sign indicating Popes Green Lane had been forwarded to the PC by Babergh, who wished to know if the PC would be prepared to fund it. It was agreed that more information was required before a decision could be made; JC would contact Babergh and report back to the next meeting.

20.7.15 CLERK'S CORRESPONDENCE

20.7.15.1 Marquis planning application

Following the PC's official submission to Babergh, the applicant's agent had contacted JC to query some of the points made. JC would draft a reply and circulate it to councillors for comment.

20.7.15.2 Litter

JC had received several complaints concerning the dumping of garden waste, concrete and other rubbish in Gardener's Close. She had contacted Flagship and requested that they make a site visit; the problem had also been reported to Babergh and an Environmental Health Officer would be writing to residents. It was agreed that the PC should keep a watching brief on this issue.

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

None.

20.7.17 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

It was agreed to revert to the original schedule of meeting dates for the remainder of the year:

- Wednesday 26 August
- Wednesday 30 September
- Wednesday 28 October
- Wednesday 25 November

The August meeting would be at 7.30pm; a decision would be made at this meeting on the timings of future meetings. All meetings would be held via Zoom until further notice, in line with current legislation.

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