

BARNINGHAM PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Barningham Annual Parish Meeting held on Wednesday 1st May 2024 at 7.00pm in Barningham Village Hall.

Present. N Martineau, L Hebert, C Hammond, J Chalmers, Y Martin, C Bull, J Spicer & six members of the public.

1. Apologies for absence B Baxter

2. Minutes. Minutes of the meeting of Wednesday 17th May 2023 signed and approved as a correct record.

3. Matters arising from the minutes. There were no matters arising from the minutes.

4. Report from Parish Council Chairman: Carol Hammond

Another very busy year for Barningham Parish Council, working for our village community, as always, in co-operation with our Suffolk and West Suffolk Councillors, Joanna Spicer and Carol Bull respectively. Extra thanks to our team, some still in full-time work. We are really appreciative of your contributions.

It turned into one of our busiest years within a few months due to the weather and its effects on our environment.

The Green and Natural Village Areas

Work schedules were planned with our Tree Contractor, Peter Kerry and his team regarding Aggie's Piece, the work needed on trees, hedges and relevant greens in the village. Currently there is a problem in the Churchyard regarding a poisoned tree which is under review, being the West Suffolk Council's responsibility.

Liaison with the Norfolk Rivers Trust continues regarding the future for Aggie's Piece, its drainage and the best use to make of the area which has poor drainage in and around. It was explored further to try to map out where the current drains are and who is responsible for them. The ditches and hedges ownership at Aggie's still need clarification. Councillor Baxter and myself have had two meetings there with The Suffolk Highways representative and Norfolk Trust Team. The work is ongoing.

This all became even more relevant from September onwards with the bad weather worsening the local flooding especially in Bardwell Rd. Many meetings were had with the County Highways, all Councillors, local residents and landowners to try to find the solution, reduce risks and identify the problem areas.

Our Village Caretaker, Steve Wilson, is a valued team member and helps to identify problems in the village, such as trim overgrown hedges where appropriate, as well as litter problems, tidying up generally where social areas have unsafe litter left, such as broken bottles. He does relevant repairs where possible and reports regularly on his finds.

For information regarding Community Support available to those who need it plus a social chat, with refreshments, the Rural Coffee Caravan attends Barningham when possible and will be found either at the village hall or near the village sign green.

There were reports from August 2023 and on a few other occasions since, of Anti-social Behaviour in the village. The church which is usually open for most of each day was shut for a while due to litter, the organ and sound system being interfered with as well as the candles available for prayer and the Visitors Book scribbled in. All was reported as before and the Church open hours revised during school holiday time. Work has been done to update the Cemetery Regulations so that they meet currently expected Eco-friendly targets including the sensitive management of Memorial Wreaths etc. A couple of serious incidents in the village were dealt with by the Police.

There was a Defibrillator Training Session held in June 2023 which was attended fairly well. This month there has been a maintenance update done on it done by the staff at the Spar as the Parish Council share this responsibility with Blakemore.

The Neighbourhood Plan is in its final draft having had a couple of reviews in August last year and February this year due to changing of the timescale and content areas in The Local Plan. When

meetings were not possible they were done by Zoom with the team and consultant to amend, set the focus and personalise. Meetings were held to put the amendments in place. There is a new Chief Constable and there will be new officer teams policing 50 new areas. The aim is for a public meeting as soon as possible.

In October and November, the Chairman, Clerk and a PC member attended two very important conferences. In October was The Suffolk Constabulary Forum to explain the complete reorganisation of Suffolk Police due in December 2023. The theme was 'To Redesign The Local Police Operational Model To Keep Suffolk Safe.' Each area will have the same team all the time so they really know the local area and the problems.

In November the Chairman and Clerk went to the SALC Conference with another clerk in Ipswich. Themes were Climate, Towns and Net Zero. The Head of Planning and Environment firm Birketts stated there will be a new National Development Management Policy starting from December 2023 - Levelling Up/ Regeneration and Biodiversity. Design Codes will be mandatory, Neighbourhood Plans should be simpler.

Highway maintenance will be run by the biggest company in the UK – MILESTONE. A new Dragon Patcher machine will be available for roads.

2024 - January - there was contact with the Police requesting clarity regarding an Armed Police Unit present at night in a domestic garden.

A local family who sadly lost their teenage son in a car accident locally in February are liaising with the Parish Council regarding memorial ideas on Bishops Croft.

Another local family, who also lost their son in a car accident have made a donation for the upkeep of the cemetery.

In March, after many years of hard work and service to the Parish Council Anthony Steer resigned. We are sorry to lose him but wish him all the best for the future.

Great news, after having two vacancies on our council we are happy to welcome a new member, Yvonne Martin, who has lived here for a few years and wish to get more involved and joined us for recently for the Keep Barningham Beautiful Litter Pick on 20th April. Some families came too.

There was very little litter which was good. Great refreshments thanks to our clerk.

5. Report from Suffolk county Councillor: J Spicer

I would like to thank the chairman, members and clerk of the Parish Council for inviting me to attend their meetings over the last year. I am fortunate to be able to work closely with Carol Bull as we try to navigate the different responsibilities of our two councils.

The county council has had a challenging year as we meet our statutory responsibilities caring for vulnerable older people, those with disabilities, children, special education and young people.

About 79% of our total annual expenditure is on these services which are provided 365 days a year.

This year we have had to make difficult decisions over the level of council tax and we are making some significant savings involving service cuts and reducing staff numbers. Meanwhile we continue to ensure we have adequate budgets for the fire and rescue service, highways, trading standards, the environment and climate change, school support and libraries. The total budget for 2024-25 is an increase of 8.6% to £752.8million.

Since October 2023 the council has had a new contract for highway services with Milestone and we are cautiously pleased with how repairs and resurfacing is progressing.

We are currently consulting on the proposal from Government for a "Devolution Deal" for Suffolk which will bring investment in Suffolk of £480million over the next 30 years. In return for this new money and devolved decision making we will be required to have a directly elected leader of the county council from May 2025.

The big concern for Barningham in the last year has been the flooding at Bardwell Road. This first started last October but reached serious levels after Christmas. This has resulted in property damage, considerable inconvenience, many stranded cars and eventually a road closure. I am relieved that SCC highways took your problem very seriously and many visits were made over several weeks to pump away water and clear the ditches. But it now needs SCC drainage experts to investigate the cause and come up with a plan. We are waiting for this to happen.

I have been working with the parish council on improvements to the entrance to the village from Bardwell and Coney Weston. New signage is now on order and we are looking at other traffic calming options including a "gateway"

Joanna Spicer, County Councillor, Joanna.spicer@suffolk.gov.uk

6. Report from District Councillor: C Bull

This year has been a very different year from my perspective as there has been a change of administration following the District Council elections in May last year and this has resulted in me no longer being a Cabinet Member and at the heart of things. It is very difficult to take a back seat as it were. Our new Administration is made up of a coalition of Labour and Independent councillors and one Lib Democrat and one Green. A large percentage of these are first time councillors which has had its challenges in relation to their expectations and understanding of the role but working relationships are being developed for both councillors and officers.

I have however retained my seat on the Development Control and Licensing Committees as well as the Grant Working Party although I no longer chair the latter. I am also now on the Environmental and Sustainability Working group.

Development Control is a monthly, generally a full day, commitment plus occasional site visits and masses of reading. One application that has been of great interest locally has been the Jaynic application at Shepherds Grove in Stanton for a vehicle recycling plant. This attracted enormous opposition from Hepworth and many other local villages partly because of the additional traffic pressure on the A143. Against officer recommendation for approval it was rejected at Committee and is now likely to go to appeal.

The Licensing Committee generally meets quarterly and recently reviewed the West Suffolk Council's Hackney Carriage Fares Consultation for 2024 and is also consulting on our Street Trading Policy. In addition to this there are frequent meetings of licensing sub-committees to consider licensing applications which cannot be decided by officers because for example there are objections or where there have been breaches.

The *Grant Working Party* is responsible for the allocation of grants from the Community Chest Funding which the Council establish each year to support community groups, charities and voluntary organisations across West Suffolk. This year the committee considered 96 applications and just over £465,000 has been allocated to a wide variety of organisations to set up projects. These cover such things as: helping to reduce social isolation; supporting victims of sexual abuse and violence; teaching life skills; advice on managing money and tackling debt and support for food banks. We cannot fund all the applications we receive but where organisations are not successful we offer information and support in seeking funding elsewhere.

The purpose of the *Environmental and Sustainability Working Group* is to review the progress that West Suffolk Council has made in delivering its action plan and move to Net Zero and to make recommendations to Cabinet in relation to protecting and enhancing the environment in the future. The reverse vending machines mentioned later are an example of an initiative suggested by this group.

The Council's strategic priorities going forward are now:

- The provision of affordable available decent homes;
- Environment resilience;
- Sustainable growth;
- The development of thriving communities.

To highlight a few of the things that have been achieved in relation to these strategies over the last year I would mention :

Flood Recovery Grant - Like other authorities in Suffolk, and with the assistance of ARP and Suffolk County Council, we have paid 32 of the Government's flood recovery grants to households badly affected by Storm Babet. The grant provided a cash payment of £500 each and an exemption from Council Tax for three months.

Local Plan – We are now at the third consultation stage of the plan prior to it being submitted to the Secretary of State. A planning inspector will then be appointed to hold an examination in public. It has been a long rigorous process but hopefully once adopted will enable us to provide appropriate housing in the appropriate places in the future.

Street Trading Policy - Street Trading covers a wide range of outdoor retail and catering activities undertaken in public streets. It includes flower sellers, ice-cream vendors, fancy goods, souvenir stalls and a variety of hot and cold catering activities such as burger vans. The Council is due to review its street trading licensing policy but before it does, it wants to hear from street traders, businesses, events organisers, town and parish councils, residents and other stakeholders on some of the issues which could potentially be covered and addressed in the new policy. The new policy will be formed with the new strategic priority of sustainable growth in mind.

UK Shared Prosperity Fund – This is a central pillar of the UK Government's Levelling Up agenda and provides £2.6 billion of funding for local investment by March 2025. The Fund aims to improve pride in place and increase life chances across the UK investing in communities and place, supporting local business, and people and skills. West Suffolk Council has been allocated £1,943,467 over three years through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund.

Capital Sports Fund – £14,700 from its UK Shared Prosperity Fund has been allocated by the Council to increase participation and further enhance activity. Grants of between £200 and £1,000 are available to organisations across West Suffolk. Applications are now being processed and successful bidders will be notified shortly.

Environmental Resilience – The council has developed a broad action plan to achieve Net Zero emissions by 2030 and work has already been completed to decarbonise a number of buildings using the £1.4 million secured from the Governments' Decarbonisation Fund. It also continues the commitment to the £9 million investment for our Net Zero Emissions by 2030 journey and proposes an additional £2.75 million into the fund which will be utilised to improve the energy efficiency and incorporate renewable energy (electricity and/or heat) into council buildings; electric vehicle fleet (EV) investment to replace small vehicles on fleet with EVs when replacement falls due and expansion of our West Suffolk Solar for Business scheme.

I am pleased to say West Suffolk has become the first council in the country to get behind an initiative to increase recycling and support local businesses. The council has teamed up with Love Newmarket Business Improvement District (BID), The Guineas Shopping Centre, Abbeycroft Leisure, Eastern Education Group, Our Bury St Edmunds BID and Trovr to deliver four reverse vending machines. Trovr reverse vending machines use a smartphone app to incentivise recycling through points-based rewards which can then be spent in local businesses. The goal is to increase recycling rates and reduce litter. The new reverse recycling machines can be found outside The Guineas Shopping Centre, Newmarket Leisure Centre, and West Suffolk College. A fourth machine will be installed in Bury St Edmunds town centre once a site has been secured. This is part of our Strategic Priority for environmental resilience and if successful then more sites will be looked at across West Suffolk.

Grass Cutting Review - The Council owns or is responsible for a significant amount of public open space in the district amounting to over 500 hectares and the service has been facing some significant, coinciding challenges over recent years hence the need for review. Town and Parish councils were consulted as part of this. As a result of this review a number of changes have been implemented including updating some machinery and employing additional staff.

Finance

All that has been achieved and is planned for the future is the result of prudent and efficient financial management which has enabled us once again to deliver a balanced budget, something many other councils are struggling to achieve. This allows us to maintain our standards of service.

- 4.3 million black and blue household waste bins emptied;
- 2495 determined planning applications;
- 839 food safety inspection carried out;
- 236 West Suffolk households assisted with adaptations to their homes through disabled facilities grants at a cost of £1,879,394.

The budget for 2004/2005 includes:

- Local Council Tax Support Scheme continuing with a maximum reduction of 100%;
- The introduction in 2025 of a second home premium in relation to council tax;
- Changes to the long term empty property premium on council tax.

On a less positive note very soon into the new administration a decision was taken to not progress the Western Way Hub development which would have provided among other things a new swimming pool to replace the existing one which is in urgent need of significant renovation being over 40 years old. At the present time we do not have a time schedule for when this will be carried out or how long it will take. Additionally the Bury St Edmunds Archives which SCC had agreed to move to the hub as its present building is no longer viable is now in need of a new home and may be relocated to Ipswich.

I cannot finish this report without mentioning West Stow Anglo- Saxon village which is run by the council. The council recently organised a tour of the village for representatives from the American Air bases and members of the council. I had not been there for many, many years and did not realise how it has been developed by the Council and what it now has to offer and moreover what an important archaeological site it is. So much so that it receives significant outside funding for various projects it undertakes. As well as the reconstructed houses in the village there is an excellent museum, a lovely coffee shop and wonderful walking opportunities with or without a dog. They hold regular events there and host tours for schools. I would urge you all to pay it a visit one day and get involved - they are always looking for volunteers.

Finally, may I thank all members of the Parish council for all the work they do on behalf of the village and its residents and remind you that my Locality Budget is now open for this year!

7. Report from Village Hall

Main improvements to the hall since May 2023

The electric bar heaters in the hall have been replaced with infra-red heating panels in the ceiling and two wall mounted fan heaters.

Improvements were made to the outside area with trees and bushes removed or cut back and damaged barriers removed.

Events at the hall:

The committee has held two fish, chip and Bingo evenings, three coffee mornings and a garden party.

There have been several hires of the hall for private events.

The Rural Caravan is using the hall for its monthly sessions.

Regular activities:

All regular activities from the previous year remain the same.

Proposals for future events:

A garden party in the summer, a fish, chip and Bingo evening, coffee mornings

Lindsay Sams

9. Any other Business

The councillors extended their thanks to both our District and County Councillors for all their hard work.

No further business, meeting closed.