

Minutes of a meeting of the Shotley Parish Council held on Thursday 19th October 2017 at the Village Hall, The Street, Shotley.

Present: Cllrs B Powell (Chairman), B Nichols, M Williams, N Green, R Green, J Catling and Mrs D Bedwell (Parish Clerk).

County and District Councils: County Cllr D Woods and District Cllr D Davis. District Cllr P Patrick's apologies were noted.

Public gallery: Mr and Mrs Humphries, Mr N Bugg, Mr I Peters, Mr J Howell, Mr Peters, Mrs D Girling and two other members of the public.

1. **Apologies for absence:** Apologies had been received (and were approved) from Cllrs B Higgs and R Wrinch, as well as District Cllr P Patrick.
2. **Declarations of interest with regard to items on the agenda, additions to register and requests for dispensation:** None received.
3. **Reports**
 - (i) County Councillor's report (D Woods): Cllr D Woods gave members a detailed report, which was available as a separate document attached to these minutes.
 - (ii) District Councillor's report (P Patrick): A report had been circulated ahead of the meeting and would also be attached to the minutes.
 - (iii) District Councillor report (D Davis): Cllr D Davis gave members a brief report, in which he referred to the cabinet meeting during which BDC and MSDC had agreed to merge, although the results of the 2011 Referendum had been 60/40 against. Cllr D Davis's report was somewhat critical of the Conservative leadership and Councillors strongly asked Cllr Davis to refrain from expressing his political views whilst delivering his report.
4. **To approve the minutes of the meeting held 7th September 2017:** It was resolved to approve the minutes as a true record of the meeting held. The Confidential minutes would be considered during the confidential session.
5. **Suspension of standing orders:** *Meeting open for 5 minutes to allow members of the public to speak:*
Meeting open – Concerns about the possible loss of public transport at certain times were raised but reassurance was given that help was available from the Shotley and Erwarton Good Neighbours Scheme for things such as trips to the Doctor's surgery or Hospital.

It was also noted that although some complaints appeared to have been made about the alleged high levels of noise from the Whinny Queech (UK Power Networks) works, a resident who lived about three feet away from the site did not see it as a problem.

Mrs Humphreys asked if the alleged vandalism of the Village of the Year sign placed near the corner Garage had been reported to the Parish Council, to which the response was negative.

The Village of the Year sign paid for by the Parish Council had recently been replaced with a new S.O.S sign.

Cllr N Green added that as far as she was aware, Shotley continued to be the reigning village until a new one was awarded the same accolade and this was confirmed by District Cllr D Davis.

6. Finance and administration

- (i) To consider and approve accounts for payment and note bank balances: It was resolved to approve the accounts for payment and the receipts were noted (*list of all payments/receipts is attached and forms part of these minutes*). The bank account reconciliations had been carried out and the current bank balances were read out to those present.
- (ii) To consider and approve S.145 expenditure (Christmas 2017): Member approved the purchase of three Christmas trees and any additional decorations, in line with expenditure in the previous year (£225.00). These would be placed at the Village Hall, the Shotley Church and bottom of Bristol Hill, opposite the Bristol Arms. Mr N Bugg, in the public gallery, was asked if the lights could be left on at night, which he assented and Cllr R Green volunteered to look after the lights on the tree near his property, for which he was thanked.
- (iii) To approve S.137 expenditure (RBL Wreath): It was resolved to donate £100 to the Royal British Legion and to ask Mr Brian Ives to order a better Wreath this year on behalf of the Shotley Parish Council.
- (iv) To consider and approve recommendations from the F & A Working Group meeting held 11.10.2017:
 - a) Internal and External Audit reports: Both reports had been analysed in great detail and it was agreed to approve both and the recommendations contained therein.
 - b) Responsible Financial Officer reports: The RFO report for 2016 had been slightly amended in order to conceal the names of former councillors previously identified and the revised report was approved by members. The RFO report for 2017 was deferred as it was still being prepared.
 - c) Suffolk Code of Conduct: The Suffolk Code of Conduct (version 2014) had been circulated to members ahead of the meeting and was approved and adopted by all.
 - d) Budget and precept 2018/2019 preparation, including Earmarked Reserves: The budget for the next financial year had been briefly discussed and members had been asked to provide the Clerk with their views, particularly those to do with capital expenditure and plans for the next 3 to 5 financial years.

It was noted that the Earmarked Reserves were under review, as in prior years the effects of an economic recession and additional/unexpected expenditure in areas such as the Heritage Park, Freedom of Information requests and other legal matters had meant that there had been no further movement, which now needed to be addressed.

The Clerk had put aside since 2006 a cumulative Earmarked Reserve of £25,000 for the play areas and this figure would need to be increased in order to provide new play equipment for the two areas in the village, Kingsland and Lloyd Road; There were approximately £25,000 available in Section106 funding, which could be used for such a project and it was hoped that additional funding could also be applied for.

A further meeting of the Finance Working Group was due to be held in preparation for the 2017/2018 budget and Reserves revision.

- e) Parish Council response to Shotley Open Spaces letter: The Shotley Parish Council wished to respond to a letter received from S.O.S. inviting members to an informal private meeting to discuss the content of the S.O.S. minutes dated 18 May 2017, as posted on their website.

The Parish Council was of the view that, as two opportunities had already been given to the S.O.S. group to address any issues pertaining to these minutes, which the Group had chosen not to accept, the time in which to do so had now passed.

However, the Shotley Parish Council wished the following public statement to be noted:

“For almost two years, a number of misleading statements, falsehoods and unwarranted attacks have been spread on social media about Shotley Parish Council and its members. Many of these have been drafted in a way to involve the Clerk to the Council, Mrs Dina Bedwell. It would seem these have been designed to cause the maximum offence and hurt - few, if any, could be described as constructive. The latest of these have been placed on a website open to the public. Broadly there are three contentious statements.

Firstly, that the Clerk had signed the terms of an agreement without the approval of the Council. The Council did approve the terms of this agreement and, as the Proper Officer, the Clerk would, on behalf of the Council, sign any such agreements.

Secondly, it is alleged that she was being obstructive. Far from this, she was acting on behalf of the Council to ensure it is compliant with the law. This can, without intention, appear to be obstructive. However, as a tier of local government, the Council must comply with all regulations and the requirements of 'due diligence'; the Clerk is responsible for such guidance.

Thirdly, it is alleged that she had not complied with warnings given to her by solicitors and that disciplinary proceedings had been taken against the Clerk. The Parish Council emphatically denies that our Clerk has ever received warnings from any solicitors, nor have any disciplinary proceedings taken place against her in her nearly twelve years of service.

Shotley Parish Council wishes to bring to the attention of the public that none of these allegations is true.

Shotley Parish Council is indebted to their Clerk/Responsible Financial Officer for her guidance and professional support on procedural advice, financial and legal matters and she enjoys their full support and confidence.”

The Parish Council welcomed the opportunity to meet with S.O.S. and any other local group in a prescribed manner in the future, to discuss and work towards achieving the best for our village.

This recommendation from the Finance Working Group was approved unanimously.

- (v) To consider and approve quotes received for various maintenance works: A quote for the additional tree works at Lloyd Road play area had already been received. However, the Clerk had asked UK Power Networks to see if they could carry out the relevant works at no charge. The invoice for the emergency repair to the coastal footpath was still outstanding and would be processed upon receipt. No other quotes were available for consideration at this point.
- (vi) To consider and approve meeting dates for 2018: The list of meeting dates had been circulated to members ahead of the meeting and was approved. Cllr B Powell asked members to consider bringing forward by one week the meeting date for December 2017, from the 14th to the 7th, which was also agreed by all.

- (vii) Clerk's report, including Election update: A report was received from the Clerk on the following matters:

Parish Council website: A number of positive comments had been received from parishioners, who were now able to find news and documents with ease and had noticed how much more up to date the site was overall. This was supported by members of the public present at the meeting, who were now finding the site much easier to navigate and pass as current.

Parish Council Elections: An Election had again been called by a small number of parishioners. Two candidates had submitted the relevant papers and the election would take place on November 9th.

The Clerk had been informed by Babergh District Council that Shotley, one of 93 Babergh parishes, was one of 5 "volatile" parishes, which now requested elections rather than go for the usual route of Co-option when a Casual Vacancy occurred.

Although Shotley Parish Council had not requested polling cards in order to make a saving, the cost of this election would still be just under £2,000 and therefore over the last twelve months some £4,900 had been incurred by the tax payer on two elections.

Some concern was expressed by members of the public as to whether some of the parishioners signing the election request letter fully understood the financial implications of holding an election.

The Clerk reminded those present that calling for an election was part of the democratic process and that the Parish Council had no power over it.

- (viii) Remembrance Service (100th Anniversary Commemorations 1918-2018): The Clerk, Cllr R Wrinch and Cllr N Green had recently attended a meeting with Mr B Ives and a second one was planned for October 31st at the Ganges Museum. This meeting had been very brief due to the venue being double booked but already a very good number of ideas had been put forward for further consideration, including a virtual release of balloons, a music concert, children activities, parades, etc.

7. Planning matters

- (i) To consider applications received from Babergh District Council:
DC/17/04524 Peartree Farm, Main Road - Use of land for stationing log cabin for occupation by agricultural worker: It was resolved to recommend the approval of this planning application.

DC/17/04817 Ceremonial Mast of the Former HMS Ganges, Royal Navy training establishment - It was resolved to recommend the approval of this planning application.
- (ii) To note Approvals/Refusals: **DC/17/04590 36 Great Harlings** - Tree Preservation Order Works related: Planning Consent granted.
- (iii) Planning Correspondence: There was no further planning correspondence.
- (iv) Gate Farm Road Caravan Park- update: A brief report was received by Cllr B Powell on further building works within the site and how ineffective Babergh District Council's Enforcement appeared to be.

Speaking from the public gallery, Cllr D Davis stated that he had been extremely disappointed with the way three issues on the peninsula were being dealt with and that he had spoken with the Chief Executive himself about how unacceptable the situation was, as well as asking him to ensure that more positive action was taken. Cllr D Davis re-iterated that there were considerable problems within Babergh and that his only option was to continue exerting pressure.

- (v) Babergh and Mid Suffolk emerging Local Plan consultation: The Clerk reported on the presentation that she and Cllr R Wrinch had recently attended.
- (vi) Shotley Neighbourhood Plan considerations: A brief report was also received from the Clerk, including her recent contact with Babergh's Community Planning team and the possibility of a meeting in November to ascertain whether a Neighbourhood Plan would be the best option for Shotley and whether it was likely to be a peninsula wide initiative. It appeared other parishes had already made their decision and would be doing individual Neighbourhood Plans or appraisals, therefore the focus would indeed be on how Shotley wished to progress.

8. Facilities and Open Spaces:

- (i) Whinny Queech (including works by UK Power Networks): The Clerk read to members the latest update from UK Power Networks and recent problems with the first phase of drilling works, which had resulted on some slurry on the coastal footpath. The Environment Agency had been informed and UK Power Networks had assured the Parish Council that it would clear the area once works were completed.

The recent issue had meant that work needed to be carried out on a 24 hour basis but all affected residents had been kept very well informed and had been offered compensation for any night disturbance, as well as the availability of free overnight hotel accommodation.

The Clerk also highlighted that unfortunately an inaccurate statement had been made on Social Media that UK Power Networks would be providing new play equipment at Lloyd Road play area once works were completed.

UK Power Networks had agreed with a request for a gesture of good will from the Parish Council but this was more likely to equate to a £2,000 / £3,000 contribution towards future provision, not a whole play area. In addition, and in the interest of fairness, should the Parish Council be in a financial position to replace the play equipment in Lloyd Road, it should also do the same in Kingsland and it was with this in mind that the Clerk had created the play area Earmarked Reserves in 2006.

A meeting was in the process of being organised between BDC, the Parish Council and UK Power Networks in order to agree the re-instatement of Whinny Queech once works were completed. The Parish Council had asked for this land to be either gifted or leased to the Parish Council in 2015 and although this process was proving extremely slow, there was an expectation that the Parish Council should be involved with the future of this area, as it adjoined the Lloyd Road open space.

- (ii) Play areas: This item had been covered previously on the agenda.
 - (iii) Shotley Gate Post Box: Cllr B Powell had recently held a meeting with the Royal Mail Manager (details provided) in yet another in a long string of attempts of getting the post box on Bristol Hill reinstated. This meeting had also highlighted that some health and safety concerns had been raised about the post box currently outside Nether Hall whilst UK Power Networks were working nearby. A possible solution of moving this post box to Council owned land on Bristol Hill had been put forward and was currently being considered by Royal Mail.
 - (iv) Anglian Water-works at Shotley Gate: Cllr B Powell gave members an update on this matter, including that he had written to Anglian Water and the Environment Agency asking for the plans to be re-considered, as the drained water would be coming up just by the small beach area at the bottom of Bristol Hill where children play in the warm weather.
 - (v) Although this was only supposed to be surface/rain water, Cllr B Powell reminded members that oil by-products from cars and chemicals from car washing would end up being collected as well.
- 9. Highways matters, including Ganges access roundabout:** The Clerk was still in the process of organising the meeting to discuss this matter and was awaiting confirmation from the Highways representative. County Cllr D Woods had received all the Clerk's correspondence on this matter and was aware the delay was not Parish Council related.
- 10. To note any further correspondence received and agree any response needed:** The Clerk informed members that a number of very kind letters had been received from the Village Hall Management Committee, the Good Neighbours Scheme and the Shotley Drama Group upon receipt of Parish Council funding.
- 11. Reports from Councillors on matters not itemised on agenda/to be included in next Agenda (no decisions with a financial implication are permitted to be made at this point and should be added to a future agenda for consideration):** Cllr J Catling reported that some bins on Lower Harlings did not appear to be emptied regularly- Clerk to check.

Cllr M Williams reported that the "No Dogs" sign at the Kingsland play area had been broken off its post and would need to be repaired; Cllr M Williams also asked when the overgrowth between Styngham Cottages and Chappell Fields was likely to be done as the area was looking quite bad.

Cllr R Wrinch had kindly offered to help with this and it was hoped that now that the bird nesting and the farming seasons had ended, he would be in a much better position to do so. The Parish Council had already approved the reimbursement of fuel for this task; Cllr M Williams also wished it to be noted that cars parking on the verge between the village hall and the Post Office were breaking up the path and causing other damage.

Mr N Bugg, speaking from the public gallery, added that residents were permitted to park on a regular basis on the village hall car park for a modest fee.

Cllr M Williams also asked if the installation of a bollard at the entrance to the allotments on The Street could be considered at the next meeting. It appeared this access was being misused by residents who were accessing the rear of their properties in this way.

Cllr B Nichols reported on the recurring problems with the pot hole outside the Shotley Rose.

Cllr R Green informed members that recent works carried out by Anglian Water on the slipway at the bottom of Bristol Hill would benefit from being professionally assessed, as they may have compromised the structure. He also reported that the "Dog Fouling" sign had been damaged and would need to be repaired. Clerk to investigate.

12. **Chair's urgent business:** any items not on this agenda but of such urgency as to merit, in the Chair's opinion, immediate action: there was no Chairman's urgent business.
13. **Suspension of standing orders:** *Meeting open for 5 minutes to allow members of the public to speak:*
Meeting open: Mrs P Humphries said that although in the past she had, on numerous occasions raised issues about the lack of updates and certain documents on the website, she would now like to congratulate the Parish Council on a job well done.

Mrs P Humphries also stated that, as she was aware the Clerk was unable to give her the details of who had requested the Parish Council Councillor election, she had gone to the Babergh District Council offices herself and had lawfully requested to see the said list. She had made a note of this list and was able to share this with any parishioner who may wish to know.

Mrs Humphries had found it very disappointing that none of the twenty-three names on the list were of parishioners who regularly or seldom attended a Parish Council meeting. Mrs Humphreys and her husband had attended every meeting for some eighteen months and therefore knew who had been in attendance for that length of time.

Council was asked how long after the meeting would the draft minutes be available on the website, to which the Clerk replied that she normally produced them seven days after the meeting, workload permitting. Members of the public confirmed that minutes appeared to be available on the website much quicker than before.

Temporary exclusion of press and public: *That pursuant to the Public Bodies (Admission at meetings) Act 1960 the Public and Press be excluded from the meeting due to the confidential nature of the business to be discussed*

14. Administrative matters, including review of contracts

15. Employment and training matters

With no further matters to be transacted, the meeting ended at 9.45pm.

Signed: _____ Date: _____