

# **LITTLE BLAKENHAM PARISH COUNCIL PARISH COUNCIL MEETING**

## **MONDAY 14<sup>th</sup> SEPTEMBER 2015 IN LITTLE BLAKENHAM VILLAGE HALL**

**PRESENT :** Wally Binder (Chairman), Stephen Wright, Mary Whurr, John Latham, Stephen Clarke, Janet Gobey (Clerk)  
Three parishioners.

The Chairman opened the meeting at 7.45 pm with a welcome to those attending.

### 1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Mike Tabard.

### 2. DECLARATION OF MEMBER INTERESTS

The Chairman reminded Councillors about the need to declare any interests they had in any matter under discussion during the Parish Council Meeting.

Stephen Wright declared an interest in two Agenda items:

Item no.12 – as a member of the committee for the "Save the Duke" campaign.

Item no.13 – as a churchwarden for Little Blakenham Parish Church.

### 3. OPEN FORUM

Questions from parishioners and replies given:

Had a new person had been found to take over the Village Hall bookings ?

The Clerk confirmed that this had happened and that booking arrangements for the Hall would be publicised on the website and on the village noticeboards.

Have dates been set for further Meetings ?

It was noted that this was an agenda item for this Meeting.

Were there any updates on plans for the construction work in this section of the Bawdsey to Bramford underground cable for the East Anglia One Windfarm ?

The archaeological survey has started and will carry on for approximately two months.

It is anticipated that the cable laying work will take place in 2017.

There will be a large area for storage of materials and equipment next to the Premier Inn and it was noted that this has already begun.

The company will drill under the railway line, the A14 and the River Gipping and then trenching will start again by the Farm Shop.

It was agreed that this would be massively disruptive for residents of the Common and that East Anglia One should be asked to send a representative to a meeting of the whole village to give more details of what will be happening and to respond to the concerns of residents.

Stephen Wright said that he had a contact at East Anglia One Windfarm and would approach them to organise this.

**ACTION – STEPHEN WRIGHT TO CONTACT EAST ANGLIA ONE**

Have the Council made any decision on the issue of recording Meetings, which was raised at the last Meeting ?

The Clerk replied that she would be drafting a Recording of Meetings Policy for the Council to consider during the next few months.

Which properties does the Agenda Item 6 – Possible breaches of planning regulations in the area of Little Blakenham Common - refer to ?

Stephen Wright explained that he had been asked to raise this issue by a parishioner. There were two possible breaches :

Car sales on the land beside the Farm Shop

Storage of building materials on meadowland next to Stansfield House.

Is it appropriate for the Parish Council to make a donation to the “Save the Duke” campaign (Agenda Item 12) ?

A parishioner expressed his opinion that this was an inappropriate use of Little Blakenham Parish Council funds and that, if the Council was considering making a donation, it should be discussed at a meeting of parishioners. The Clerk confirmed that she had passed on comments that she had received on this to the Chairman.

Is it appropriate for the Parish Council to make a donation to the Probation Service for mowing and tidying the churchyard (Agenda Item 13) ?

A parishioner expressed his opinion that the village community should be able to look after the churchyard and the Parish Council should not be involved in this.

What is the issue with the land referred to in Agenda Item 15 ?

The Clerk replied that she was not aware of any particular issue, but interest had been expressed in what was happening there. She had invited the owner to this Open Forum, but he was not present.

One of the parishioners present said that he was the owner of Stansfield House and that he wanted to take the opportunity to explain what had been happening with the property. In the last year a great deal of renovation work had been taking place. This is now coming to an end and they are starting to clear the area around the house and remove building materials that have been stored there while the work has been going on. His son explained that he had checked with Planning Portal and believed that they were not in breach of any planning regulations.

The Chairman suggested that the owners contacted Mid Suffolk District Council to confirm this and the owners said that they would do so.

The parishioner then went on to say that he would be interested in becoming a Councillor if there were any vacancies. The Chairman confirmed that there was one vacancy and asked the Clerk to forward some information to the parishioner on the role and duties of a Councillor.

**ACTION – CLERK TO EMAIL INFORMATION.**

#### 4. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING AND MATTERS ARISING

The minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on 13/7/15 were agreed as a true and correct record and signed by the Chairman.

## 5. STREET SIGNS

The Beeches (LBPC140915AG5) - it was agreed that a new sign was needed and that it would be preferable for it to be fixed to the wall of Newlands House, rather than on poles sited in the area of grass on the corner between Somersham Road and the Beeches. It was noted that the property is currently for sale, and it was agreed that this matter would be pursued with the new owners once the sale was completed.

Pound Lane - a new signpost has appeared at the Somersham end of Pound Lane. It is partly hidden by tree branches and the name plates are pointing the wrong way.

**ACTION – CLERK TO CONTACT HIGHWAYS.**

## 6. FINANCE

### a. Qualification of Accounts

The Clerk said that the external auditors had contacted her to announce that the Council's 14/15 Accounts would receive Qualifications on two items -

Failure to agree the Accounts at a minuted Parish Council meeting before 30/6/15.

No system to pay salaries under PAYE.

The Chairman explained that he had felt that there was nothing to do but accept the Qualifications and to put into place procedures to ensure that they were not repeated, so the Clerk had contacted the auditors to inform them of this.

### b. Clerk's Financial Report

This was circulated. The second payment of the Precept had just been received, resulting in a higher than usual balance in the Council's current account. There were some invoices to be paid and money set aside for replacement of electricity poles and for the Council's share of the costs for the playground equipment.

### c. Proposal to set up Earmarked and General Reserves.

The Clerk explained that this was to make it clear what money the Council had set aside for future projects and to show that the Council was not building up large reserves without any purpose for them. The formula for calculating the General Reserves had been provided by SALC and the resulting sum of money was to be regarded as a contingency fund for the running of Parish business in the event of an emergency.

It was agreed to adopt this system and that the Clerk would provide updated figures for the replacement of telegraph poles ready for the reserves to be agreed at the next Meeting.

**CLERK – TO OBTAIN UPDATED COSTS FOR REPLACEMENT OF ELECTRICITY POLES.**

### d. Approval of Standing Orders (LBPC140915 AG7d1) and Financial Regulations (LBPC140915 AG7d2)

The Clerk said that consideration and approval of these was required as part of the action plan to address points raised by the Internal Auditor. The Clerk had downloaded the latest version of both documents and had done an initial round of amendments, but Councillors needed to review both documents and decide on matters such as delegated authority levels. The Chairman proposed that, as the Agenda was already quite lengthy, the Council should hold an Extraordinary Meeting to discuss both documents and the Draft Code of Conduct and that these would be the main business for that Meeting. This was agreed.

e. Payments to be authorised	
SALC Invoice for New Clerk's Training Course (17/7/15&24/7/15)	£120.00
Clerk's Expenses (Office Supplies, Key Cutting) (1/5/15 to 12/7/15)	£42.11

These payments were approved.

#### 7.METHOD OF PAYMENT OF SALARIES (LBPC140915 AG8)

The Chairman proposed that the Council contract with Thirsk Payroll (the third method outlined in the Agenda Paper) to provide a quarterly payroll service. This was agreed unanimously.

**ACTION – CLERK TO CONTACT THIRSK PAYROLL SERVICES.**

#### 8.VILLAGE HALL

##### a. Village Hall Accounts

The Clerk stated that the Village Hall Accounts showed a small, but steady income, most of which was coming from two bands booking the Hall for rehearsals. She was adjusting the spreadsheet to show expenditure on the Hall and was waiting for a figure for the proportion of the Parish insurance costs that related to the Hall.

Booking money would be collected once a month and paid into the bank the next day. The Clerk said that she felt it would be sensible if she emptied the coin meter and paid the electricity money in at the same time. It was agreed that the Clerk would collect the coin meter key held by Mary Whurr .

**ACTION – CLERK TO IMPLEMENT NEW SYSTEM.**

##### b. Hire Rates

The Clerk reported that the rate was currently £10 for any length of booking. It was agreed that there would be no change to this rate for the present.

##### c. Cleaning and Consumables

The Chairman reported that the previous cleaner was no longer carrying out the work and that it would be necessary to find a new cleaner. It was agreed that the Clerk should arrange for an advert for a cleaner/handy person to go in InTouch and on the village noticeboards.

The cleaner/handy person would be responsible for checking levels of consumables. It was agreed that, until somebody took over, the Clerk would see if Nathan would keep an eye on supplies and inform her if anything needed to be bought.

**ACTION – CLERK TO DISCUSS WITH NATHAN**

d. Stephen Wright said that he had noticed that one of the gutters down the side of the Village Hall was leaking. It was agreed that repair and maintenance of the gutters would be one of the responsibilities of the cleaner/handy person.

#### 9. ONLINE REGISTER OF MEMBER INTERESTS

The Clerk said that she had contacted Legal Services at MSDC/Babergh to confirm the position on this.

The paper Register of Member Interest forms are no longer in use and have been replaced by the Online Register. It is a legal requirement that Councillors declare any land or property that they own or rent in the Parish and so it may be necessary for Councillors to amend their entry on the Register. The Clerk said that she would email Councillors once she had established how the amendment process worked, so that they could confirm whether or not they wished to amend their Online register entries.

**ACTION - CLERK TO EMAIL COUNCILLORS TO ASK IF THEY WISH TO AMEND THEIR ENTRY IN THE REGISTER.**

#### 10. SECTION 137 REQUEST

The Chairman said that a request for a donation had been received from Headway Suffolk. It was agreed that a donation of £100 should be made.

**ACTION – CLERK TO ARRANGE FOR A CHEQUE TO BE SENT TO HEADWAY SUFFOLK.**

#### 11. CONSIDERATION OF DONATION TO THE “SAVE THE DUKE” FUND

Stephen Wright clarified that the “Save The Duke” were approaching local Parish Councils to ask for donations towards the Fund's legal fees and were not asking Councils to purchase shares.

The Clerk explained that she had contacted SALC to see if it was possible for the Council to make a donation to a Community Interest Group. SALC had arranged for a legal opinion from a NALC solicitor. This identified a Section 137 donation as the only means by which the Council could make a grant and recommended that the Council should consider having a legal agreement drawn up with the “Save the Duke” Community Interest Group.

The Chairman asked for views from Councillors and said that he had heard from parishioners who objected to the proposal to use Parish funds for this purpose Stephen Clarke said that he had canvassed opinion and had also received several objections. Councillors discussed the matter and it was agreed that Stephen Wright would arrange for the “Save the Duke” to write to the Parish Council to formally request a donation. The request would be reconsidered at the next meeting of the Parish Council.

#### 12. CONSIDERATION OF DONATION TO PROBATION SERVICE FOR CHURCHYARD CUTTING

Stephen Wright explained that he was requesting a donation towards the Community Service Team's costs for cutting the grass and tidying the churchyard. It was noted that a donation of £75.00 had been made previously and that the money went towards the cost of the supervisor and the minibus. The Council discussed this and agreed that the donation should be made as it was important that the churchyard was kept in a fit state for parishioners and relatives of those buried there to use, especially as it is still an open churchyard.

#### 13. PARISH COUNCIL BANK UPDATE

The Chairman gave a summary of the difficulties encountered by the Clerk and Mary Whurr in confirming that there had been a change of Clerk and that all correspondence should be sent to the new Clerk. A new letter to the bank explaining this was signed by the Chairman and Mary Whurr.

#### 14. LAND OPPOSITE THE CHURCH (FORMERLY OWNED BY MR. MARLAND)

The Clerk said that she had spoken to the new owner of the land and he had said that he was using the land to keep chickens and grow fruit and vegetables. He is intending to fence the land along either side of the footpath and use the area behind the Village Hall for horse grazing.

#### 15. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

It was agreed that future Meetings will start at 7.30 and will continue to take place on Mondays.

2/11/15 – Extraordinary Meeting to agree new Financial Regulations, Standing Orders and Code of Conduct

9/11/15

11/1/16

14/3/16

9/5/16

11/7/16

12/9/16

14/11/16

The Chairman thanked everyone for attending and closed the Meeting at 9.20 pm.

Signed on 9/11/15 as a true and correct record of the Meeting.

Wally Binder  
Chairman Little Blakenham Parish Council

