

Letheringham Parish Council

Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held
on Monday 25th September 2017 at Easton & Letheringham Village Hall

In Attendance

Terry Carlin (TC) (Chairman & Financial Officer)
Maurice Finch (MF)
Matthew Bickerton (MB)
Richard Gooding (RG)

David Allan (DA) (Clerk)

Public Attendance:

Andrew & Debbie Maskery Paula & Brian Latimer
David & Ruth Holborrow Mike Lloyds Jan McNeill
Robin Vickery (SCC Councillor) (part)
Carol Poulter (SCDC Councillor) (part)

Meeting opened at 7.45pm

Public Forum

Robin Vickery addressed the Meeting with regard to County Council matters. RV stated that the Highways Department had now been divided in three areas, with the Carlford ward now covered by the Ipswich Office. David Chenery and Tony Buckingham were now based at the Halesworth Office, which covered East and North Suffolk, with the Rougham Office covering the Western area. Reporting can be done using the same contact numbers as before or online.

Customer co-ordinators will be the main point of contact to direct enquiries. The co-ordinator for our area is Claire Brown, who can be contacted by email at claire.brown@suffolk.gov.uk. Community Wardens (Paul Jeffrey, Scott Francis, Dan Hasseltine and John Bourke) will inspect roads and ensure that action is taken when defects meet the intervention criteria. Community Engineers (Paul Gant and Justin Lewis) will deal with more complex issues.

Overall responsibility for Highways rests with the Cabinet Member, James Finch, although during his current absence due to illness, James Storey has taken over this role.

The County Council Chief Executive, Deborah Cadman, has left her post in order to take up a similar role in Birmingham. Suffolk CC are therefore conducting interviews for a replacement. Sue Cook is acting as interim Chief Executive pending a replacement, as well as covering her usual role as Director of Children and Young Peoples Services.

TC raises issues regarding pot-holes, including those by Seven Spar Farm where some have been filled but others left untouched. ML confirms that contractors have attended on three occasions, and TC confirms that while very large craters have been filled, smaller potholes have been left untouched, despite these getting bigger as a result. RV referred to the criteria used to determine whether holes require filling (which is the reason for work on pot-holes near to Letheringham Mill not being authorised) but has spoken to Colin Noble about a degree of common-sense being deployed, so that when contractors are filling in larger holes they also repaid smaller holes nearby at the same time. CN agreed with this suggestion and is looking into implanting this.

With regard to the promised funding for the Vehicle Activated Signs, TC confirmed that £1,225.43 had been received from the Locality Budget, and expressed his gratitude to RV for arranging this. TC confirmed that a cheque in this sum had been received.

AM raised a query regarding gritting, and RV stated that he believed that this was the responsibility of Norse, with a grit store at Phoenix House.

RV left after addressing the meeting at 8pm.

Carol Poulter subsequently attended at 8.22pm when the meeting was paused to enable her to present her Report and for issues to be raised in a Public Forum (which is therefore interposed in this part of the Minutes).

CP had provided a written report, entitled Parish Council Briefing for September 2017. [This is a lengthy document and a copy has been uploaded onto the Website – it does not include any reference to the Local Plan Review].

With regard to the Local Plan Review, CP stated that an original submission had been made on behalf of Kerr Farms in 2005. This had been subject to an objection by the LPC as being in breach of the Local Plan and in an area of 'open countryside'. However, it was now proposed that the Local Plan and hierarchy be amended which was why the submission had been re-visited, despite being rejected on at least two previous occasions, due to pressure on Councils generally to find land suitable for development.

An email sent from PC regarding the proposals was read out, including the following passage:

This site appears to be an anomaly. The shape and size of the site appear to have been determined more by the aim of rationalising an awkward field shape rather than contributing to the evolution of the village. Its scale, topography and relationship to its immediate surroundings mean developing it as proposed would dominate the historic village street and eclipse the listed row of cottages. It would overwhelm the village character and be inappropriate for the existing road access and services. The SCDC table suggests it would accommodate 169 houses – over four times the number of houses in Letheringham at present. I believe it would be harmful to the future of our village for this site to be allocated to housing as proposed.

PL commented that the site included a quarry, with very steep drops and drainage issues. The quarry itself was an oasis and provided a habit for many species of wildlife, and development would affect dark skies. PL queried the practicality of the proposed development if the area of the quarry as well as PL's house was excluded. PL also expressed concerns that the proposal would result in development on three sides of her home.

MF raised concerns regarding the banking on the edge of the site opposite the cottages, which already creeps forward slightly each year, as well as the impact on wildlife in the quarry and pond, which he believed included protected species including Slow Worms and Natterjacks.

DA raised a query regarding the method used to identify potential sites, and whether this simply involved the use of rejected previous applications without any consideration of their viability.

CP responded by stating that she did not consider that there were any grounds for residents to be unduly worried, that the proposed developments affecting Letheringham had been rejected previously and that she did not understand why they had been included, particularly given the lack of local infrastructure including the single-track roads.

TC commented that the Council was sending out a message by requesting land for development. Letheringham did not have a Village Plan, and that by drawing a boundary for such a Plan there was a danger that piecemeal development could be allowed through extending this boundary. TC drew a distinction between Principal and Secondary Service Areas, Easton being an example of the latter, with its school and pub. There was therefore an issue regarding development at or around Easton Farm Park, which would breach the issue of open countryside and have an adverse impact on Letheringham in that it might result in development up to and along the Deben River.

CP referred to the example of Cransford, which was a small village with no Parish Council, where there was a poultry farm which had been the source of issues. The owner of the farm had put in an application for the development of six residential houses, but this had been rejected by the Council on the basis of the lack of suitable infrastructure despite 95% of residents being in favour.

TC commented that the Local Plan review document suggests that the Council is open to exemptions to existing rules and intends to make the Local Plan more flexible.

RG stated that the issue of housing won't go away and that even if all the housing on the Plan is built, this will still not meet needs. TC queried the economic justifications and suggested that the targets were simply arbitrary.

MB referred to the 'yellow blobs' on the Plan, and referred to one that was next door to his house, which refers to land that he now owns! MB queries the process of going back to sites that had already been rejected.

CP commented that the Government has decreed that everyone has to build more homes. However, houses should be built only where there is work and need. The SCDC leader has referred to the lack of jobs in our area, and a response to the Government plan is therefore needed.

MB acknowledged this but enquired why sites were being reconsidered when they had previously been rejected. CP stated that this was to ascertain whether anything had changed, and it was therefore for the Parish Council to raise objections and to oppose the Plan.

AM referred to the importance of objections being submitted by individuals as well as by the Parish Council. AM also queried the potential market for such houses given anticipated rises in interest rates. With reference to the developments in Framlingham, there was no hope of young and local residents buying property, and that it was affordable housing that was required. AM also referred to the potential environmental impact on the village, which he considered to be potentially disastrous, including flooding and road-widening schemes.

MB acknowledged that formulating and undertaking Planning Policy was very difficult, and queried the impact of objections in the face of lobbying by professional advisors employed by developers.

TC commented that, despite any difficulties, the only option was to raise concerns and objections, and CP endorsed this and underlined the foundation of such objections by

reference to planning grounds, although ML queried the extent to which Planning Inspectors took objections from villages into account.

MF asked why the land in question could not be removed from the Plan. TC stated that Kerr Farms had quite reasonably offered this land and that, despite being rejected twice, it remained on the database and was therefore land which might still be available, [particularly as the Plan suggested that a more flexible approach would be adopted than might previously have been the case. JM commented that this highlighted the need for a robust response from individuals as well as from the Parish Council, particularly as other developments on open countryside, such as that in Framlingham, had been recently approved.

TC distinguished that development as, although involving open countryside, Framlingham was a Principal Service Point and the land concerned abutted the town itself.

JM reiterated concerns relating to infrastructure and, in particular, the ability of roads, to accommodate the proposed or any further development in Letheringham.

CP confirmed that she would do everything possible to help, and took the view that a massive housing estate in places like Letheringham was not right. However, without a plan there was a risk that speculative developers could over-ride objections, and it was therefore important for individuals and Parish Councils to object to the Local Plan Review and specific development, and the Council was obliged to publish all such objections on their website.

BL raised the three options referred to in the Local Plan Review, and TC stated that the Parish Council would formulate a response and potentially co-ordinate with Easton Parish Council. DA tasked with circulating email and overseeing response.

Issues relating to the B1078 were considered elsewhere.

2017.38 Apologies

Apologies received from Jean ~~Clark~~ Barker.

2017.39 Declaration of Interests

None.

2017.40 Approval of Minutes & Matters Arising

Minutes of LPC meeting on 12th June 2017 approved unanimously and signed by TC

2017.41 Matters of Report

The continuing issue regarding out-dated Police information was raised, and JM referred to an incident in which items of garden-furniture had been stolen.

2017.42 Planning & Licensing Applications and Issues

No new planning applications had been received and no responses or objections had been lodged with regard to previous recent applications relating to Letheringham Mill and Seven Spar Farm.

Issues relating to the Local Plan Review had been considered in the Public Forum.

2017.43 Insurance

The issue regarding Insurance renewal was discussed and it was unanimously resolved that the renewal would be for the policy from Inspire as recommended by Came & Co.

It was noted that the three quotes received from Came & Co always included one from Ecclesiastical, which was always much more expensive than the others. This effectively reduced the practical choice offered. DA to request that Ecclesiastical be omitted from future quotes.

2017.44 Financial Reports

2017.44.1 Invoices for Payment

The decision made previously to provide payment of £50 to the Village Hall Committee was endorsed .

Payment of £168 for the Insurance premium was unanimously agreed.

£1,225.43 had been received from Robin Vickery and the Locality Fund for the purpose of funding the vehicle activated signs on the B1078.

Payment was required to Community Action Suffolk in relation to their hosting of the One Suffolk website. DA to chase up details and also secure a receipt from the previous payment.

TC advised that the precept payment of £600, due in September, had not been received to date.

2017.44.2 Monthly Report

TC presented an updated Accounts and Financial Report [attached at Annexes A and B] showing an opening consolidated balance of £5,132.19, of which £2,325.23 was earmarked for the B1078 signs.

2017.44.3 Budget

TC presented the Budget Proposal for 2017-18 [attached at Annex C]. This omitted the payment to CAS for website hosting, and did not include any amount for Secretarial support, which could be needed if situations changed and it became necessary to employ a Parish Clerk.

With regard to Capital expenditure, quotes had been received for the SID signs totalling £2,800 plus VAT of £560 – although the VAT could be reclaimed. It was proposed that LPC would put approximately £500 towards this cost. Three supplier quotes had been sent and these would be circulated and considered. DA to contact other PC's re recommendations and sharing data.

2017.44.4 Audit

The Audit had been completed and returned with a clean bill of health.

The only issue flagged up for concern was the fact that the Responsible Financial Officer (RFO) was a councillor, and therefore could give rise to the appearance of a conflict of interest. Although this was not considered to be best practice, the fact that the role involved only about ten transactions per year and the alternative of employing someone for the role was uneconomic, it was proposed to continue with the current situation.

In addition, the Auditors had recommended that a Parish Clerk be employed and made RFO.

The Parish Council noted these concerns but resolved unanimously to take no action in relation to this matter at this stage.

2017.45 Phone-box / defibrillator

PL raised an issue regarding the phone box / defibrillator and the outstanding decision regarding the VETS scheme. The defibrillator had recently been deployed although not used, and the ambulance service had taken it away afterwards. An issue also arose regarding the code required to access the defibrillator. The cleaning and painting of the phone-box also remained outstanding: TC has the paint, but it would need to be pressure-washed before work was undertaken: DA to circulate an email.

2017.46 B1078 / SCDC Grant

Matters relating to this had been considered elsewhere

The meeting closed at 9.36pm

Signed.....

Date.....27/11/2017

Next Meeting: Scheduled for the 27th November 2017 at 7.45 pm in the Village Hall

Appendices follow:

- A Financial Report as at 25th September 2017
- B: Letheringham Parish Accounts as at 25th September 2017
- C: Budget Proposal 2017-18

Letheringham Parish Council

Financial Report as 25th September 2017

Cheques presented for payment at this meeting

Insurance (came & co)	25/09/2017	100258	£168.00
Village Hall contribution	25/09/2017	100259	£50.00

Income received

Locality fund grant	25/09/2017	£1,225.43
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Current position before cheques are paid

Community Account £3,857.66

Business Premium Account £267.10

TOTAL £4,124.76

Current position after cheques are paid

Community Account £4,865.09

Business Premium Account £267.10

TOTAL £5,132.19

Expenditure approved minute 2017.44.1 refers
Date 25/09/2017

ANNEX B

Letheringham Parish Accounts

statement of account as at September 25th 2017

COMMUNITY ACCOUNT #50571423			(2017-2018)					
	date	Cheque no	debit	credit	total	vat	account statement	statement date
C/F from 2016-2017					£2,851.86			
SCDC precept	26/04/2017			£600.00	£3,451.86			
HMRC VAT rebate	21/04/2017			£500.02	£3,951.88		£3,951.88	27/04/2017
SALC membership fees	12/06/2017	100256	£34.22		£3,917.66			
Community action Suffolk (web site)	12/06/2017	100257	£60.00		£3,857.66	£10.00	£3,857.66	26/07/2017
Insurance (came & co)	25/09/2017	100258	£168.00		£3,689.66			
Village Hall contribution	25/09/2017	100259	£50.00		£3,639.66			
Locality fund grant	25/09/2017			£1,225.43	£4,865.09			
SCDC precept								
BDO audit invoice			£0.00					
churchyard fund								
village hall hire								
<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; display: inline-block;"> total grant funding received for SID signs £1100 +1225.23 total 2325.23 </div>								
YTD total debits/ credits								

BUSINESS SAVER ACCOUNT #50571431						
transaction	date	Payments	Receipts/ interest payments	Balance	Bank statement	statement date
c/f 01/04/2017				£267.10	£267.01	13/12/2016
	12/06/2017			£267.10	£267.10	09/06/2017
	25/07/2017			£267.10	£267.10	25/07/2017

note statement 09/06/2017 is an online statement print out

Letheringham Parish Council				
Total account balances				
date	Community Account	business premium account		Total funds available
21/05/2017	£3,951.88	£267.10		£4,218.98
12/06/2017	£3,857.66	£267.10		£4,124.76
25/09/2017	£4,865.09	£267.10		£5,132.19

LPC	ASSET REGISTER	
Capital asset	Value (£)	Comment
Village sign	£1,469.00	Sign insured for public liability and replacement cost £4000
Phone box	£1.00	Replacement value £1000
Salt Box	£67.00	Replacement value £100
Millennium seat	£485.00	Replacement value £500
defibrillator	£2,130.00	replacement value £2130
village notice board	£500.00	replacement value £500
Total	£4,652.00	total replacement £8230

2017-2018 budget proposal**Current Account**

Budget Item	Budget (£)
Secretarial support	0
Election costs (May 2015)	0
SALC membership	35
Burial ground account	150
Insurance	168
Village hall	180
Internal audit	50
defibrillator	?
Salc Training	150
Post and Printing	20
Total current account budget	753

Capex	
SID sign	£2800
Total Capex	£2800 +560 vat

notes
 vat on SID signs will be reclaimable
 grants received for SID signs £1100 SCDC plus
 £1,225. LPC contribution approx £500 net £1050
 gross