



Dickleburgh & Rushall Parish Council

Parish Council Meeting minutes

For 5th June 2023,

7.00pm, St. Mary's Church, Rushall

PRESENT: Cllrs. Andrew Goodman (Chair), Stephen Adlam, Les Bragg, Sam Johnson, Jim Kerr, David Leyserman, Pam Reekie, Robert Theobald, Tony Perkins

IN ATTENDANCE: Ann Baker (Clerk)

Matthew Hill (Responsible Finance Officer)

MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC: Dist. Cllr. C. Hudson, Dist. Cllr. D. Thompson, 9 residents

19. ACCEPTANCE OF APOLOGIES - none

20. DECLARATIONS OF PECUNIARY AND OTHER INTERESTS FROM MEMBERS ON ANY ITEM TO BE DISCUSSED – the new forms from SNC had been circulated to all Councillors. **ACTION** - the Clerk requested an electronic copy of the Word document to be completed by Wed. 7th June

21. ADJOURNMENT OF THE MEETING FOR PUBLIC PARTICIPATION , COUNTY AND DISTRICT COUNCILLORS -

Resident on Harleston Rd.: The residents asked for Parish Council support in addressing issues related to the main Rushall to Harleston Road as it winds through Furze Green. The road is dangerous, the speed limit is the National Speed Limit. They would like it reduced, as there is no refuge on either side of the road, no white line, and the road is in places very narrow with blind bends. They are of the opinion that the amount of traffic has increased. Residents claim the road is now too dangerous to walk, cycle or ride horses, and there have been several close calls in recent days.

The discussion focussed upon the Parish Council supporting the efforts of Dist. Cllr. C. Hudson with Highways, the possibility of locating the Parish Council SAMs traffic camera at a point to assist in determining the traffic usage and speeds. The residents will also approach Starston and Pulham Parish Council for their support as the parish boundaries meet in this area.

Clayton Hudson as Dist. Cllr. – suggested they could approach Alison Thomas, as Co. Cllr and lobby her. The Parish Partnership may be an option if funding is required for any signage. Dist. Cllr. C. Hudson pointed out that 40mph or 30mph speed reductions may be an option similar to that in Pulham St. Mary; It was suggested that the Parish Council work with Dist. Cllr. C. Hudson, and contact is made with Adam Mayo (SN Highways Engineer). A further suggestion was that signs alerting road users to the dangers of the road could be put up, if the sign is sited on private property. – Dist. Cllr. C. Hudson will contact County Hall

Dist. Cllr. C. Hudson - reported there are now 22 Cllrs on opposition benches, he is serving as an Independent - thus he is unable to be on the committees in the Council, this may change in future; he is no longer on Local Drainage Board; the speeding issue at Furze Green is likely to take 3 - 6 months to resolve; the County Council election will be Thurs. 13th July, (VC booked for polling), Dist. Cllr. C. Hudson is not standing himself, he will wait until 2025, when there is a change in boundaries and Dickleburgh may find it will become part of East Depwade.

Regarding the Reg. 14 consultation – a lengthy response had been sent from SNC, Dist. Cllr. C. Hudson is interested to assist moving the plan forward and will help to arrange a meeting with R. Squires, SNC/Broadland Senior Community Planning Officer; Locality funding is available again – a grant for a

consultant to ensure the Neighbourhood Plan meets its legal requirements would be valuable; the toilet block in Harleston that cost £35,000 to build have been scrapped, the total cost of building, maintaining and then scrapping was over £200,000. The management of new toilets has been transferred to Harleston Town Council – Cllr Hudson envisages that eventually will have electronic entry, like those in Southwold; the new Horizon Offices – there are still concerns about the location, in 2021 the cost was estimated as £70,000 in 2021, the minimum cost is now around £250 - £500,000 - residents had no say nor opportunity to vote; Dist. Cllr. C. Hudson enquired about the Dickleburgh electric car chargers – the amount of usage etc. ACTION - the Clerk will update with a promise of more accurate information when she has it to hand.

Dist. Cllr. D. Thompson - following the AGM at SNC/Broadland all committees are now in place and he is a member of several committees including critical planning & licensing. Regarding the new offices – many residents of South Norfolk are now closer to SN new offices. The Octagon in Diss is receiving visitors - sometimes 5 per day, 181 in Diss in May - he will track the numbers over the coming months. Regarding the new offices - 184 SN members of staff now live within 5 miles, as a result there have been no disruptions in work patterns, again he will monitor this; there is a Forum, via Zoom on Wed 17th May at 10.30 am concerning two new grants that are being launched – Parish Councillors were encouraged to participate.

Comment made - it is not surprising that the Octagon is getting visitors, some will simply be curious to find out about the services. The key is the nature and quality of advice received - however the signposting to other groups is not always helpful when you arrive at the Octagon and answers are needed. Dist. Cllr. D. Thompson accepted the point. He will keep requesting breakdown of visits.

A Cllr. commented that The Octagon should provide online information, libraries already provide this type of service. Are the staff at the Octagon able to provide resources, assistance in the Octagon itself? – Dist. Cllr. D. Thompson will investigate;

Further questions: Is the property in Diss leased? – Dist. Cllr. D. Thompson has not heard if it is temporary – he will investigate, there is no indication at present that it will be re-located.

The Norwich Office offers some positive answers - a reduction in their carbon footprint, better working environment, the move should pay for itself in four years, however the need to ensure it is accessible for all should be paramount;

This does not detract from the fact that rural areas miss out, urban areas have better infrastructure. Point made: Rural poverty and isolation does not appear to be factored into the decision and there appears to be no provision for door to door assistance; a possible answer is to ensure Diss Office is maintained;

Although there is always the option to go online, it has the potential to undermine relationships between officers & residents; need to continue build a structure with Dist. Cllrs. C. Hudson and D. Thompson acting as conduits but also to improve public transport links

Dist. Cllr. D. Thompson is the Vice chair of Development & Planning committee - this committee meets on monthly basis, to consider, votes on planning applications – based on the principles of SNC;

As a resident of the village of Dickleburgh, regarding the Neighbourhood Plan, his preference will be not to be involved. He will refrain from commenting on the Plan due to his vested interest in the outcome of the NP process.

7. 08 Cllr. S. Johnson arrived

The Chair thanked everyone for their attendance, indicating that they were welcome to remain for the remainder of the meeting.

The meeting resumed at 19.54pm

22. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF THE PARISH COUNCIL ON 15TH MAY 2023 - the minutes were adopted as a true and accurate record, proposed by Cllr. P. Reekie, seconded by Cllr. S. Adlam, all approved unanimously

23. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES OF 17TH APRIL 2023, FOR INFORMATION PURPOSES ONLY:

- a. The Half Moon Inn – Community Asset application (March min. 163b) - decided Half Moon designated as Community Asset, (history - the landlord/lady leaving, the Parish Council felt it

necessary to put forward an application for the building, the document was worked on and put forward) ; the present landlord is negotiating to purchase the property and asked the Parish Council not to submit the Community Asset application. The question therefore arises - does the Parish Council wish to continue this process? If yes, it will ensure the pub remains a pub – there will be no effect on property/business whilst it is functioning as such, it strengthens the case of the applicant, and should be relatively quick process. It would sensible to meet with the tenants, to understand their concerns if they feel it would detrimental to their purchase - **ACTION** - It was suggested a meeting be arranged to discuss amicably, towards the end of June – Clerk, to send contact details to Cllr. A. Goodman

24. THE MONTHLY FINANCIAL REPORT FROM THE RFO, including notification of payments made over the last month:

a. PAYMENTS & RECEIPTS – a list of payments and receipts, along with comments had been circulated to all Councillors.

Income as expected, caretaker's salary less than usual as there were a number of unauthorised absences, there has been no sick note since 13/5. He is now on half pay in line with his contract. A grant for the Neighbourhood Plan is ring fenced for printing for the Reg. 14 consultation and other payments.

It was resolved to accept the 'Payments and Receipts sheet, proposed by Cllr. D. Leyserman, seconded Cllr. R. Theobald, all approved

b. Approval of the Internal Auditor's report for Financial Year 2022-23 - the report was returned - a couple of points were raised - to formalise the arrangements for role of RFO - this is not salaried, there a no contract, nor is Matt Hill a Councillor - the insurance needs to be checked to ensure it is not invalidated; the Parish Council could employ the RFO on a minimum wage - Matt Hill has declined this offer. It was resolved to approve the Internal Audit Report, proposed Cllr. J. Kerr, seconded Cllr. S. Johnson, all approved. **Agenda item for July**

There has been an ongoing issue with Barclays Bank regarding the signatories on the accounts which the RFO is in the process of resolving

c. Approval of the AGAR Part 3, Section 'Accounting Statements for 2022-2023' – these were approved at the May meeting, min. 11b

d. Dates for the Unaudited Governance Accounts & Accountability Return 2022 – 23 - the dates for the public to view these accounts is from Fri. 23rd June – 7th August, 10.00am – 4.00pm, Monday to Friday, by appointment

25. A short report on the Reg. 14 Consultation - Clerk reported that there could be in the region of 40 – 60 responses. The responses are currently being collated by Alan Patching, a member of the NP team, the Clerk and Cllr. T. Perkins. Andrew Goodman will meet with Alan Patching, to sort out the consolidation of the responses. Once we have all the responses together they can be analysed. The whole plan will be reviewed, with each policy looked at, and how they are affected by the responses. The plan will be changed to reflect comments made. At that point the Plan will be handed over to the PC who will, in turn, pass it onto SNC who will take it through next steps. SNC will manage the public vote, if majority vote for it, it then becomes statute.

Feedback - It is clear there is some disquiet, which was expressed at previous meetings. The Parish Council are to ensure updates are available on the - website, a time-line of the process will be created of procedures. All relevant minutes of Neighbourhood Planning meetings have been posted on the website. It is hoped the plan will last until, at least, 2042, with reviews at regular intervals.

26. Planning Applications as received from South Norfolk Council:

- a. Planning Application 2023/1432 4 Council Houses, Rushall** – non-material amendment – change of the rear single storey roof pitch to flat & insertion of a roof light - it was resolved to approve
- b. To consider any application which may have been received prior to the meeting** - NONE
- c. Receipt of Consultee reports of planning Decisions made by SNC:** none

27. Approval of the following policies:

- a. **Standing Orders** – these have been amended to remove references to EU Law, which is no longer applicable
- b. **Financial Regulations** - renewed, no amendments necessary
- c. **Financial Risk Assessment** - these have been amended to include: the two defibrillators, the SAMs machine and the three EV charging points
- d. **The LGA Code of Conduct** - this was approved at the March meeting, it is now recommended by SNDC and provides the support to the Pecuniary Interest forms that have been completed by all Councillors
- e. **Safe Guarding Policy** - this had been circulated, as part of a recommendation from the Internal Auditor's report 2022-23. At a future meeting a Safe Guarding Officer should be appointed. Recommendation that these policies are accepted. It was resolved to approve, proposed Cllr. J. Kerr, seconded Cllr. T. Perkins, all unanimous in agreement.

28. Highways and PRoW reports:

- a. **Highways Rangers visit** - the Clerk had circulated the information, any further issues should be sent to the Clerk
- b. **Parking on The Street, Dickleburgh** - the matter is to be discussed with Adam Mayo, Highways Engineer
- c. **Safe Crossing on Ipswich Road** - meeting to be arranged with Adam Mayo. Following the death of Cllr Duffin this issue is in abeyance (there was a meeting scheduled for May). It needs re-scheduled with Adam Mayo.
- d. **The Half Moon** - Concerns were raised over inconsiderate parking on The Street Rushall (outside and in close proximity to the Half Moon) by delivery vehicles; Visitors to events are parking on and damaging the grass verge and also parking in front of tables at the front of the Pub. A Cllr. will endeavour to speak with the Tenants.
- e. **Speeding traffic near to Tumbil Lane, Rushall** - the Parish Council were prepared to support the residents - it was suggested that temporary signs could be placed outside residents homes to alert vehicle drivers; they were encouraged to write to the Highways department, the District and County Councillors. **ACTION** - The Parish Council to organise a meeting with Adam Mayo, Dist. Cllr. C. Hudson, Dist. Cllr. D. Thompson and a resident to be invited; Clerk to contact Adam Mayo re siting the SAMs machine along that stretch of road; can Furze Green be defined as hamlet? Clerk to investigate. It was resolved to support this issue, proposed Cllr. T. Perkins, seconded Cllr. R. Theobald, all agreed

PRoW

- f. **Japanese Knotweed on Semere Green Lane** – the RFO reported that the area has been sprayed, it is believed by a local landowner, which has killed other plants on the verge. The Knotweed is now on both sides of the ditch. The Parish Council is unsure whether the landowner has been asked by NCC, or carried out work independently - **Agenda July to review**
- g. Cutting the PRoW - FP3 around Brandreth Close – there is an agreement between the Parish Council and Saffron Housing that the Parish Council will cut the permissive path. The Clerk is to remind Frances Salway to contact landowners to take responsibility for PRoW. Lonely Road - at present it is not possible ride a horse down Lonely Road Bridle Way or walk easily due to it's overgrown nature. **ACTION** - Clerk to contact Duncan West, landowner.

29. PLAYING FIELD REPORT:

- a. **Receipt of play inspection weekly reports** - the RFO reported that there was nothing major to report. He mentioned the annual report needs to be examined and any recommendations undertaken.
- b. **Zip-wire repair** - Zip-wire quotes to be requested; Clerk to contact NGF
- c. **Petanque court** – Cllr. D. Leyserman confirmed that the Lottery bid he had circulated to all had been submitted to the Big Lottery. It will take approximately 12 weeks to take forward, unfortunately the grant application was unsuccessful – the community involvement wasn't clear;

an application to Sport England grant will be submitted in due course - The grant application should show auditing of community voice and a percentage of those in favour; mention of the deprivation statistics for the Parish may assist - as deprived communities are a priority. Contact will be made with Royal Wootton-Bassett about how they got their grant. We need to utilise the website, parish magazine for questionnaires, fliers in shop, parents, Mikeys Bar. Cllrs. R. Theobald and Cllr. D. Leyserman to liaise on this aspect.

d. Trees on the village green – the trees require attention, the Clerk will approach three tree companies for quotes and action later in the year.

30. RECEIPT OF MATTERS OF INFORMATION FROM COUNCILLORS:

- **Cllr. S. Johnson** - JK community grant form has been asked for by Julia Jacka - they are looking to apply for a grant to support the global leadership adventure – Clerk to send. There is concern within the community that someone is using an Electric scooter on the paths.
- **Cllr. J. Kerr** - A resident reported that a cat had been run over by a speeding car on Rectory Road. It had been noted that drivers travelling are looking on mobile phones - Cllr. Kerr reassured residents that the PC do as much as they can, Speed Watch advice is to contact Police – to build up a case to carry out an official speed watch
- **Cllr. T. Perkins** - laptops were provided to Councillors for Councillor use to assist with GDPR regulations, but emails are still going to personal emails – item for July Agenda

31. DATE FOR THE NEXT MEETING AND ITEMS FOR THE NEXT AGENDA ON - (TO BE CONFIRMED) JULY 2023, 7.00PM, AT DICKLEBURGH & RUSHALL VILLAGE CENTRE

AGENDA ITEMS - Half Moon progress, Japanese knotweed review, cutting of PRow, meeting with A. Mayo, laptop usage/GDPR

The Chair thanked everyone for their contributions and attendance at the meeting.
The Meeting closed at 10.00pm

SIGNED

DATE

In PRIVATE - The Personnel Working Party met on 24th May 2023 in order to present a resolution to the June PC meeting. There is a need to resolve a number of issues - what re-triggers 6 months full pay, need to persuade the Doctor to sign him off.

The DWP are pressurising JL to work, to increase his hours to 40 per week – which he is unable to do.

An HR firm has been employed - ACTIVE HR who have made suggestions, with some recommendations including a letter to be sent to JL from Active HR's Jane Rodger.

An email was sent, see Matt Hill's email - regarding JL wishing to return to work but not deemed fit to do so.

JL is not used to being managed closely and the regime set by MH means he has to specify hours for the task given to complete.

The Issue facing the PC

The Caretaker has been on long-term sick (validated by periodic fitness to work certificates).

The role has, during that time been re-evaluated and continues to be under scrutiny to best determine the kind of role that is needed by the Parish Council.

There have been occasions where the caretaker has been deemed to be fit to work (by his doctor and the DWP) but has failed to attend work.

Failures to actively communicate with, respond to, or meet with his designated line manager (the RFO) as agreed.

There have been occasions where the caretaker has arrived late for work or left early from work without prior agreement or consultation whilst at work.

Desired outcome

A resolution to the on-going situation regarding the caretaking role, that either terminates the employment or the role and employment, or creates a new role that requires a different / new contract with greater clarity of expectations and outcomes (success criteria, performance targets).

Possible strategies for consideration

- 1 HR hand holding and advice. Are there strategies that could be adopted to dismiss the caretaker?
- 2 Issuing disciplinary letters?
- 3 HR-led meeting with the Caretaker.

Questions arising

- 1 Will it require a full appraisal of the role of caretaker and a redefining of the roles and responsibilities? Can the role be conjoined with aspects of maintaining the Village Centre? Can aspects of the role be shifted to volunteers (the Commons?). Organised litter picks or contractors for grass maintenance?
- 2 How long can you continue issuing disciplinary letters? What behaviours could trigger a disciplinary letter? What is the end game of issuing disciplinary letters?
- 3 What is going to take less time? What is going to cost less money? the HR consultancy may be around 7 or 8 hours work so it may cost in the region of £400.00 in HR time. We assume any VAT may be claimed back, which would reduce the HR cost.

Discussions then moved:

How much are the Parish Council prepared to pay him – to end his contract, what will happen then?

Fees for Active HR - in region £50/hour to go through process, equating to £375 per day.

This letter is first, are there subsequent two more?

Gross misconduct - what constitutes this?

At what point can he be asked to leave?

Without prejudice meeting – it is an official step, and the caretaker does not have to attend. A ‘without prejudice’ meeting is one that is off the record – this can’t be used in an industrial tribunal and any offer made would be subject to the confidentiality of the meeting.

Only route for formal dismissal at this stage would appear to be medical dismissal

Recommendations from Personnel Working Party:

- a. The Parish Council accepts the Active HR Consultancy agreement - **all agreed**
- b. The Parish Council agrees that Mr. Matthew Hill (RFO) is recognised as representing the PC in meetings with the Active HR consultant and has the authority to determine strategies with the Active HR consultant, to achieve the desired outcomes of the PC - **all agreed**
- c. Mr Matthew Hill (RFO) will line manage the Caretaker during the process - MH able to this whilst a plan of action is agree. He will continue to monitoring the inspection/work sheets, and identifying what work he has carried out but once the formal process starts he will be unable to assign work - **agreed.**
- d. Mr Matthew Hill (RFO) will organise with the Active HR Consultant a ‘without prejudice meeting’ with the caretaker to determine boundaries of interest and intent. If applicable a financial offer to the caretaker to terminate his employment can be made. **All agreed.**