

# **WARBOYS PARISH COUNCIL**

Minutes of a meeting of **Warboys Parish Council** held on 10th July 2023 at the Parish Centre, Warboys.

## **PRESENT**

Councillor Dr S C Withams, Chairman.

Councillors Mrs J M Cole, D W England, D R A Fabb, Ms L A Gifford, J Land, Ms M L Morrow, A Ntuk, P S Potts, Mrs C L Sproats, G C M Willis and Mrs A R Wyatt.

## **ALSO IN ATTENDANCE**

District Councillor Ms C A Lowe.

## **APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillors R J Dykstra, J A Parker and Mrs S J Wilcox and District Councillor Mrs A E Costello

## **51/23 MINUTES**

Upon being moved by Councillor Ms Gifford and seconded by Councillor Mrs Sproats, the Minutes of the meeting held on 12th June 2023 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

Upon being moved by Councillor Potts and seconded by Councillor Ms Gifford, the Minutes of the special meeting held on 21st June 2023 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

## **52/23 MEMBERS' INTERESTS**

Councillor England declared a disclosable pecuniary interest in Minute Nos. 51/23(e) (Onyetts Field – Byelaws) and 61/23 (Onyetts Field) as he leased adjoining land. He had received a dispensation previously to speak but not vote on matters affecting the land.

He also declared a similar interest in Minute No. 64/23 (Complaints Regarding Trees) as he leased land adjoining Adams Lyons playground. He had received a dispensation previously to speak but not vote on matters affecting the land.

Councillor Potts declared a disclosable pecuniary interest in Minute No. 60/23 (Feast Week Band Concert) as his band was providing the entertainment. He spoke by way of explanation but did not take part in the decision-making process.

Councillor Dr Withams declared a non-statutory disclosable interest in Minute No 62/23 (Damage to Fencing – Pathfinder Way Open Spaces) as she lived on the same estate. She took no part in the discussion and voting in respect of the matter.

Councillor Mrs Sproats declared a non-statutory disclosable interest in Minute No 74/23 (Employment Issues) as she was a neighbour of the person appointed as Assistant Clerk. She took no part in the discussion and voting in respect of that employee.

### **53/23 MATTERS ARISING**

The Council considered the following matters arising from the meeting held on 12th June 2023:-

**(a) Bridleways**

Further to Minute No. 30/23(a), the Clerk reported that he had received a permissive path agreement for signature to link bridleways 17 and 18 along New Barn Drove on foot and for horse riders. Unfortunately, the route shown on the plan attached to the agreement was incorrect but the County Council had advised that they would supply an amended agreement with the correct plan.

**(b) Repairs to Lighting Columns**

Further to Minute No. 30/23(b), the Clerk reported that an order had been placed with Balfour Beatty for timers to be fitted to three of the floodlights in the Jubilee Clock Tower lighting columns. As the spotlights on three of the uplighters illuminating the Clock face appeared to still be not working, the Clerk indicated that he would report the matter again.

**(c) Climate Change and Environment Group**

Further to Minute No. 30/23(c), Councillor Mrs Sproats reported that the next meeting of Climate and Environment Community Liaison Group was scheduled to be held on 17th July. Members were informed that she would be attending a carbon literacy event organised by the District Council and was in contact with Pidley-cum-Fenton Parish Council regarding the actions that they had taken previously and an ecofair that they planned to hold shortly.

**(d) Local Highways Improvements Bid**

Arising from Minute No. 30/23(d), the Clerk reported that he had received nothing further from the County Council about the implementation of the LHI scheme approved for 2022/23 nor the bid submitted for funding in the current year.

**(e) Onyetts Field - Byelaws**

Further to Minute No. 30/23(e), the Clerk reported that he had been unable to progress arrangements to make byelaws for Onyetts Field since the previous meeting.

**(f) Vibrant Communities Fund**

Further to Minute No. 30/23(f), the Clerk reported that the District Council had reimbursed the Parish Council under the Vibrant Communities Fund with the

expenditure incurred by the Community Association in respect of the events in the village over the weekend of the King's coronation.

A further claim would be submitted for expenditure incurred on events during Feast Week.

**(g) Former Youthie Premises**

Further to Minute No. 30/23(g), the Clerk reported that he was awaiting a reply from the County Council's Asset Review Manager with regard a potential lease of the former Youthie building to the Parish Council for storage purposes as an alternative to the demolition of the building.

**(h) Christmas Lighting**

Arising from Minute No. 30/23(h), the Clerk advised that he hoped to attend the next meeting of the Christmas Lighting Group on 23rd August regarding the implementation of the decisions of the Council to assist the Group with the arrangements for the lighting display later in the year.

**(i) No Mow May**

Arising from Minute No. 30/23(j), Councillor England reminded Members that he had reported at the previous meeting that he had received many complaints from members of the public about the County Council's policy of 'No Mow May'. These had included the overgrown footpath between the church and cemetery in Church Road, visibility being obscured at highway junctions and vegetation encroaching on to the highway restricting the carriageway width.

While Members acknowledged that the County Council policy was intended to promote biodiversity, they did not consider that this should be at the expense of highway safety and public access. It was therefore

**RESOLVED**

that the County Council be advised of the views of Members and asked to revisit their policy on No Mow May to ensure that highway safety is paramount in future years.

Councillor Ms Morrow arrived at the meeting during the discussion on the above item.

**54/23 PLANNING COMMITTEE**

**RESOLVED**

that the Minutes of the meeting of the Planning Committee held on 12th June 2023 be received.

## **55/23 LEISURE AREAS COMMITTEE**

### **RESOLVED**

that the Minutes of the meeting of the Leisure Areas Committee held on 19th June 2023 be received.

## **56/23 REPORT BY DISTRICT COUNCILLOR**

District Councillor Ms Lowe drew attention to the District Council's intention to introduce a charge of £57.50 per annum for the fortnightly collection of garden waste in green bins from households. Faced with further cuts in central government funding, the District Council had concluded that savings would have to be made or additional charges levied. The Council had also contended that 60% of the authorities in East Anglia already charged for garden waste collection.

Members expressed their concern over the proposal which was likely to lead to less waste being recycled and an increase in fly tipping.

## **57/23 POLICE REPORT**

The Clerk reported on further minor acts of vandalism that were being experienced around the village.

Members' attention also was drawn to the destruction of a seat in Ramsey Road near the junction with Jubilee Avenue as a result of a traffic collision on 8th July. The Police had supplied details of the two vehicles involved and the Clerk reported that he had submitted a claim to the Council's insurers for the cost of a replacement seat. It was hoped that the insurers would be able to claim against the drivers' insurers which would enable the Council's own policy excess to be recovered.

## **58/23 REPLACEMENT PARISH CENTRE**

Further to Minute No. 34/23, the Clerk advised that the closing date for the receipt of tenders for the replacement Parish Centre had been extended to 1st August as the documentation had not reached one of the tenderers initially. Members were informed that a meeting of the working party would be held after the tenders had been opened.

## **59/23 FREEDOM OF INFORMATION COMPLAINT**

Further to Minute No. 35/23, the Clerk reported that the reply from 3C Shared Services on behalf of the District Council had failed to answer all of the questions asked by the Parish Council in respect of the land in their ownership which they proposed to sell for the development of affordable homes at Station Road.

Shared Services had advised that they had been unable to supply information as to when the land had been purchased by the District Council nor the purpose for its acquisition. The Clerk explained that legislation enabled a local authority to purchase land in pursuance of

any of their functions and to appropriate the land for another purpose if it was no longer required for the purpose for which it was being held immediately prior to appropriation. The Clerk reported that, as the District Council was unaware why it had acquired the land, it had not followed the correct procedure in deciding that it should be sold for housing because it had failed to assess whether the land was no longer required for the purpose for which it was being held. Members were informed that 3C Shared Services had advised that they were unable to respond to the point of law that had been raised and had referred the matter back to the District Council.

### **60/23 FEAST WEEK BAND CONCERT**

Further to Minute No. 38/23, Councillor Potts reported upon a conversation with the proprietor of the White Hart regarding the Feast Week band concert to be held on 23rd July. When held previously at the public house, the concert had always been at the front of the premises to enable passers-by to listen but the proprietor had indicated that he wished to hold the event at the rear of the premises in a marquee.

In the ensuing discussion, Members confirmed that the band concert should be provided at the front of the White Hart from 5.00 to 6.00 p.m. with an hour's break to accommodate the evening service at the adjoining Methodist Church and then from 7.00 p.m. to 8.00 p.m. In the event of this being unacceptable to the proprietor of the White Hart, Members agreed that the concert should be held at the Royal Oak public house.

### **61/23 ONYETTS FIELD**

Further to Minute No. 30/23(i) and 08/23(i) of the Leisure Areas Committee, the Clerk reported that Red Tile Wind Farm Trust Fund Ltd had approved a grant of 50% of the cost of the materials required to strengthen the bank sides of the pond at Onyetts Field. Councillor England reported that he had ordered the materials from the Middle Level Commissioners with the invoice to be sent to the Council and that he and Councillor Fabb would arrange to undertake the work.

Following the vandalism resulting in damage to the bridge and the removal of the remnants for safe keeping by Councillor England, the Clerk reported that he had been liaising with the County Council regarding its replacement. The County Council proposed replacing the bridge with a culvert to avoid any further vandalism but had been advised that the Parish Council would prefer the retention of a bridge as an attractive feature in the public open space. The County Council had therefore agreed to meet the cost of repairing the bridge if this was arranged by the Parish Council. Councillor Fabb offered to manage the repair later in the year and to supply a quotation for approval by the County Council prior to the work being undertaken.

Members were informed that the tree donated by a local businessman and planted at Onyetts Field to commemorate the late Queen Elizabeth II's platinum jubilee had been wilting badly after the recent extended spell of dry weather. However, this had survived thanks to the extensive efforts of Councillor England and the Handymen in arranging for it to be watered.

Councillor England reported that he had levelled the silt dredged from the pond earlier in the year and that the land could be seeded later in the year. In reply to a question, the Clerk reported that he would arrange for the Handymen to cut back the hedging encroaching on the kissing gate at the entrance to the field.

Councillor Willis reported that he had received information from the Wildlife Trust about the size required for the creation of a newt pond which would be too large to be accommodated at the field.

#### **RESOLVED**

- (a) that the report with regard to the work to the banksides of the pond at Onyetts Field be received and Councillors England and Fabb thanked for offering to undertake the work without charge;
- (b) that Councillor Fabb be requested to supply an estimate of the cost of repairing the bridge for submission to the County Council for approval; and
- (c) that no further action be taken with regard to the creation of a newt pond at Onyetts Field.

#### **62/23 DAMAGE TO FENCING – PATHFINDER WAY OPEN SPACES**

(Councillor England declared a disclosable pecuniary interest in the following matter as he was a trustee of the Sports Field. He left the room for the duration of the discussion and voting thereon.)

The Clerk reported that he had been contacted by the owner of a property in Stirling Close adjacent to an area of open space owned by the Council which extended in a narrow strip alongside his garden. He had drawn attention to damage to the fencing panels between the open space and the adjoining sports field which had allowed access to the field.

The Clerk reported that when he had visited the site, the panels had been reinstated and obscured by brushwood. A notice had also been displayed with the words ‘No access to sports field’. As access to the sports field could be obtained from various directions and the route from the Pathfinder Way open space was indistinct, it was

#### **RESOLVED**

that the report be received and no further action taken.

#### **63/23 GOVERNMENT GUIDANCE ON BIODIVERSITY**

The Clerk submitted a report (copies of which had been circulated) explaining that the Environment Act 2021 had placed a new duty on local authorities to conserve and enhance biodiversity. Each authority, including parish councils, was required to agree policies and objectives for land in their ownership by 1st January 2024 and review those policies and objectives at no longer than five yearly intervals. In complying with its duty, the Clerk advised that the Council had to be consistent with the proper exercise of its functions which

would require a balance to be struck between enhancing biodiversity and the effective management of land in the interests of the general public.

## **RESOLVED**

that a working party be established comprising Councillors Parker, Mrs Sproats, Ms Gifford and Ms Morrow to consider and report back on the establishment of policies and objectives to comply with the new duty to conserve and enhance biodiversity.

## **64/23 COMPLAINTS REGARDING TREES**

Members' attention was drawn to a report by the Clerk (copies of which had been circulated), containing details of complaints received from several members of the public about trees on land in the Council's ownership near their properties.

The Clerk advised that complaints were received regularly from the occupiers of mobile homes at The Paddocks about the vegetation in Adams Lyons playground bordering the boundary with the estate. Tree surgeons had been engaged on several occasions in recent years to prune the trees and vegetation with work also being undertaken by the Handymen, most recently in April. Major work had been last undertaken in November 2020 at a cost of almost £3,500 which had included work to a tree adjoining 28 Church Road. Members were advised that the occupier of the latter property had now also asked for the trees in the playground adjoining her boundary fence to be cut back.

The Clerk referred to the cost of continuing tree surgery with the last major work having been undertaken less than three years previously. Conversely, removal of the trees would impact on the Council's new biodiversity duty and permission might be refused by the District Council as the trees were located in the Warboys Conservation Area.

Members were also informed that a complaint had been received from a resident in Ramsey Road, complaining about a tree planted in the verge outside her property causing saplings to grow in and shading to her garden.

Following discussion, it was

## **RESOLVED**

that consideration of the complaints be deferred and arrangements made for the Chairman of the Leisure Areas Committee, together with the Clerk and Handymen to carry out a site visit to the areas in question and report back.

## **65/23 CIVIC SERVICES**

Members noted the receipt of the following invitations but decided not to attend –

Mayor of Ramsey's Church Service on Sunday, 17th September;

Mayor of March's Civic Service on Sunday, 15th October; and

Mayor of March's Carol Service on Sunday, 17th December.

### **66/23 80<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF D-DAY**

Members were informed that a guide had been produced for a series of events nationally to commemorate the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the D-Day landings in World War II on 6th June 2024, including the lighting of a chain of beacons. The Clerk reported that the village had taken part in recent beacon lightings, the last such occasion being the platinum jubilee of the late Queen Elizabeth II.

Councillor Mrs Wyatt also suggested a commemorative concert by the Huntingdonshire Big Band on either 1st or 8th June next year at the Parish Church.

### **RESOLVED**

- (a) that arrangements be made for the beacon to be lit on the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of D-Day and the Rector asked if this could be held at the Church, together with a civic service; and
- (b) that enquiries be made to book the Huntingdonshire Big Band for a commemorative concert at the Church on 1st or 8th June 2024.

### **67/23 OPEN FORUM**

The Clerk reported on the matters raised at the Open Forum following the previous meeting of the Council. A member of the public had expressed support for the retention of the former Youthie premises and a Member of the Council had drawn attention to the size of the leylandii at the Manor House in Church Road which were overhanging the footway. The Clerk explained that he had been unable to observe the trees since the previous meeting but Members indicated that they had read on social media that the owner of the property was trying to arrange for them to be cut back.

### **68/23 ACCOUNTS**

Upon being moved and seconded, it was

### **RESOLVED**

that the following accounts be approved:-

		£
W E Batterbee	Salary – June 2023	1,237.44
D A Warwick	Salary – June 2023	1,342.48
R Edwards	Salary – June 2023	408.80



R Reeves	Salary - June 2023	1,126.12
HMRC	Tax & NIC – June 2023	1,619.17
R Reeves	Reimbursement – Zoom subscription	15.59
E.ON	Electricity supply - Parish Centre (paid by direct debit)	192.54
E.ON	Gas supply - Parish Centre	51.48
Chess ICT Ltd.	IT support (paid by direct debit)	104.86
Allstar	Fuel (paid by direct debit)	83.94
Total Gas & Power	UMS 1 street lighting electricity supply (June)	7.50
Total Gas & Power	UMS 3 street lighting electricity supply (June)	6.04
Cranbrook Plants	Bedding plants	520.51
Balfour Beatty Living Places	Timers for Clock Tower lighting	770.18
MAM Garden Maintenance	Grass cutting	340.00

### **69/23 BUDGETARY CONTROL**

The Council received the budgetary control statement for June 2023, together with the list of Parish Centre bookings for that month, copies of which had been circulated to all Members.

### **70/23 CONNECTIONS BUS PROJECT**

(The Chairman reported that she had agreed to the following item being raised at the request of Councillor England as visits by the Connections Bus Project were a weekly occurrence.)

Councillor England referred to the disruption caused by the visit of the Connections Bus to the village on 9th July. The bus normally parked in the library car park but due to the ongoing work by cable laying companies in the High Street had been parked in the High Street between the library and the White Hart on this occasion. Councillor England reported that children had been wandering across the High Street by the bus which had posed a danger from passing traffic and they appeared to be blocking access on the footway adjoining the bus.

The Clerk reported that he had brought this to attention of the staff of the Connections Bus, who had explained that they had been unable to use the library car park because of the number of vehicles parked there to avoid the disruption caused by the temporary traffic lights system in the High Street. The staff on duty had been of the opinion that location where the bus had been parked had not been dangerous and the children had been briefed about behaving safely. However, due to the nature of the visits being of a 'drop-in' nature, the bus staff indicated that they could not be responsible for children acting independently outside the vehicle.

In reply to a question, the Clerk advised that a notice was displayed at the library car park indicating that parking was for library users only, although some residents with no off-street parking did tend to park there on a regular basis, including overnight. As this had been an isolated occurrence due to the disruption caused by a cable laying company, Members decided that no further action was required, although the Clerk was asked to explore the feasibility of a notice being displayed in the car park asking motorists not to park there on Friday evenings.

### **71/33 ADJOURNMENT**

As members of the public were in attendance to raise issues in the Open Forum and there was further business to be discussed after the public had been excluded from the meeting, it was

#### **RESOLVED**

that the meeting be adjourned for the duration of the Open Forum.

Upon resumption of the meeting.

### **72/23 EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC**

#### **RESOLVED**

that the public be excluded from the meeting under the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 as the following items related to a claim against the Council for damage to property and to employees of the Council

### **73/23 INSURANCE CLAIM – BROKEN WINDOW**

Further to Minute No. 47/23, the Clerk reported on a claim submitted to the Council's insurers to meet the cost of repair of a window in a property in the High Street broken as a result of the strimming of the roadside verge by the Handymen. The insurers were of the opinion that the Handymen had not acted negligently and that this was a viable defence to the claim. They therefore regarded the incident as an accident which was not an insured risk and they referred to case law to this effect.

The Clerk suggested that this left the Council with a choice of three options of either adopting the same approach as the insurers and denying liability, or offering to meet the householder's insurance excess if he claimed off his own insurance, or accepting a moral obligation to reimburse the householder with the repair cost amounting to £1,380.

Following discussion and a vote had been taken, it was

**RESOLVED**

that the report be received and the householder informed that the Council regard the incident as an accident for which the Council cannot be held liable and no reimbursement offered towards the cost of repair.

**74/23 EMPLOYMENT ISSUES**

Members were reminded to treat the following matter as confidential in the interests of the employees concerned until such time as an official announcement could be made.

Further to Minute No. 50/23, a report was submitted by the Clerk (copies of which had been circulated) following the decisions taken by the Council at its previous meeting arising from an announcement from the current Clerk of his intention to resign from the Council's employment.

Members were informed that both Mrs J Drummond and Mrs E Coverdale had verbally accepted the offers of appointment as Clerk and Assistant Clerk respectively. Details of the salary grades of the positions were contained in the report circulated and Members were invited to determine the starting point on the scale of both prospective employees.

The Clerk reported that a new laptop computer had been ordered and the laptop formally used by the Timebank Co-ordinator had been charged and was working. A quotation had been received from Chess ICT who supplied the Council's IT support for the supply of two mobile phones with unlimited calls and 100 GB of data at a monthly cost of £28 plus VAT for a three year contract.

Members were also asked to decide on the future of the equipment used by the current Clerk with the desktop computer now four years old and the printer six years old.

Following discussion, it was

**RESOLVED**

- (a) that the starting salaries of Mrs Drummond and Mrs Coverdale be fixed at spinal column points 25 and 11 pro rata respectively;
- (b) that two mobile phones be ordered from Chess ICT for use by the incoming Clerk and Assistant Clerk;
- (c) that the current Clerk be permitted to retain the existing computer and printer that he used after he left the Council's employment without charge; and
- (d) that an announcement be made containing details of the new arrangements when the Chairman considered appropriate.

There being no further business, the meeting was declared closed.

Chairman.