

REEPHAM PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of Meeting

Remote meeting via Zoom held on Monday 29 March 2021 at 7.30pm

Note: these are draft minutes only and are subject to approval at the next parish council meeting therefore may be subject to change

Present: Cllrs D Perkins (Chairman); A Brammer, C Wilson, B Tebbs, M Doughty, J Oxby, P Stuffins, N Ward, Mrs M Vail (Clerk), D/Cllr A Welburn, C/Cllr I Fleetwood.

There were 2 members of the public present.

All were welcomed.

Matters raised by members of the public:

One resident spoke in respect of:

- 1) the Goods farm development; requesting that the Parish Council should consider the Planning Inspectorate's appeal decision from the previous planning application; and in particular the Inspector's comments that any development on the north side of the village of the size of the previous proposal would jar with the grain and layout of the village; would not be in an appropriate location; and would harm designated heritage assets and their settings. The Inspector had also not agreed with the destruction of the barn as this would harm the conservation area.

The resident then urged the Parish Council to make clear to any developer of any further proposals on the north side of the village which would contravene the abovementioned Inspector's comments; that the developer respects the findings of the Planning Inspectorate's appeal decision.

- 2) who could vote on this matter. The resident had previously requested the Chairman obtain some legal advice. These legal aspects will be discussed later in the meeting.

The Chairman then explained that matters had been deferred at the previous parish council meeting as legal advice was already being sought and considered in conjunction with guidance from a WLDC Officer regarding what councillors are allowed or not allowed to do. All councillors have received a copy of this advice. The Chairman further noted the need to get this right: the decision reached must be relevant and unchallengeable; and comments must stand up. The resident noted that Reepham is a small community; all are affected; and all have views. He continued by opining that it is unfair to disbar any councillor living close to the proposed development who has previously expressed a view; providing they had said that they will attend a meeting, will listen and are prepared to change their views. If they make that declaration in advance; the resident cannot see why they should be disbarred from voting.

Meeting started at 7.36pm.

1. Apologies:

All councillors were present, therefore there were no apologies.

2. Minutes of Meeting held on 23rd February 2021:

At the proposal by Cllr M Doughty, seconded by Cllr A Brammer, it was **RESOLVED** to accept the minutes as a true record.

3. Clerk's Report

Councillor vacancy: this has been publicised on the notice boards, website and via Reepham News. Councillors were asked to promote it verbally within the village.

Register of Electors: WLDC have now supplied the clerk with a copy.

Annual play inspection: this has been booked in for an April visit, exact date cannot be specified.

Grass cutting: the contractor has confirmed receipt of the works order.

Litter pick – This is scheduled for Sunday April 11th, 2021, meeting at the village hall at 10am. It has been advertised via noticeboards; the website and Reepham News. Cllr M Doughty will promote it on Facebook. Preparations are all in hand. Participants should bring their own gloves. C/Cllr Fleetwood is

arranging for the supply of equipment from WLDC; and for WLDC to collect the rubbish which will be stored at Cllr P Stuffins' yard.

4. Correspondence

LALC Annual Membership 2021/22 – to approve fees of £255.55:

At the proposal by Cllr P Stuffins, seconded by Cllr A Brammer, it was **RESOLVED** to approve expenditure of £255.55 for the LALC Annual Membership 2021/22. **Action: clerk**

Clerks and Councils direct magazine and LCR magazine: Receipt of these was noted.

5. Financial Matters

Presentation of Accounts:

Current cheques for signature:

M Vail March/April 2021 salary	£ 376.00
HMRC – March/April 2021	£ 94.00
LALC – donation for website assistance	£ 25.00
EON – electricity for seasonal lights	£ 2.68
	£ 497.68

To also include the LALC Annual Membership fees as agreed at item 4 above; at the proposal by Cllr P Stuffins, seconded by Cllr A Brammer, it was **RESOLVED** to approve the above-mentioned cheques for payment. **Action: clerk**

Bank mandate and online bank access:

- **approve one additional Councillor for addition to mandate**
- **online banking**

The bank mandate has been updated. At the proposal by Cllr B Tebbs, seconded by Cllr C Wilson; it was **RESOLVED** to approve both the addition of Cllr A Brammer to the bank mandate; and to move to online banking. **Action: clerk**

Insurance renewal: the insurer has made initial contact; and renewal quotes are expected to be received approximately 4 weeks prior to the renewal date of 1st June 2021.

Internal Auditor: noted that the current Internal Auditor prefers to step down. It has been custom for this to be an honorary position held by a Reepham resident. It was **RESOLVED** to appoint Mr Allan Crease as the new Internal Auditor.

Sage payroll: At the proposal of Cllr P Stuffins, seconded by Cllr A Brammer; it was **RESOLVED** to approve the use of Sage Payroll at £7.00 + VAT per month. The expense is offset, at the clerk's suggestion, by not paying mileage to the clerk. **Action: clerk.**

Homeworking allowance: At the proposal of Cllr P Stuffins, seconded by Cllr A Brammer; it was **RESOLVED** to approve a homeworking allowance of £15 per quarter to cover telephone/internet costs.

6. Planning Matters

Report from Planning Committee:

Cllr B Tebbs reported as follows:

New **Application 142543**; 9 Chapel Close - extension to front to create garage with alterations to existing garage. The Parish Council supports this application.

WLDC have granted permission for Application **142179** - 78 Hawthorn Road - side, front and rear extension.

Good's Farm Development –

LALC had been first port of call for guidance; but had not responded, therefore WLDC had been approached. It was confirmed that all councillors had received e-mails in respect of declarations of interests and the circulation of documents.

The WLDC Officer had confirmed the following summary as accurate:

1. Cllrs living near the site and previously having submitted written objections to the earlier application – no legal reason why they should withdraw but they should consider doing so to avoid any public perception and allegation of interest.
2. Cllr's owning competing development sites - no legal reason why they should withdraw but they should consider doing so to do so to avoid any public perception and allegation of interest.
3. All Cllr's can receive all documentation.

Therefore, following this confirmation, a resident's correspondence had been circulated. In respect of councillors being open minded and not having a pre-conceived opinion, the WLDC Officer had suggested that the Parish Council acts as 'safe and sound' as possible to avoid the possibility of any legal challenge.

Councillors were then invited to give their thoughts, summarised as follows:

- what can councillors do/not do? Can they be in on the meetings, can they have a view?
The Chairman responded that if all declare an interest it substantially restricts meaningful dialogue. A councillor can still declare an interest and take part as it is a non-pecuniary interest. This is not clear cut if a councillor has a conflicting site. A possibility is that all take part in discussions, but those with interests do not partake in voting.
- Should numbers of councillors be reduced to 3 or 4; this would make it very difficult for those remaining to make such a major decision.
- Can an independent person be called in to scrutinise and therefore protect councillors against any allegations; then everybody could participate?
The Chairman responded that if councillors can discuss and agree how they prefer to operate; this could be taken to WLDC to be sanctioned. This will bring it all into the open; all the conflicting interests are known from the start; then whatever councillors do they will try to do on a legal footing.
- Provided an interest is declared before the start of discussions, there should be no bars to participating in the discussion and decision making. All in the village have a view and an interest in any sizeable development that may take place. The interest of a resident in close proximity to the site does not necessarily outweigh a different interest of another resident. All elected councillors have signed the Code of Conduct etc and should be enabled to take part in discussions and decision making.
D/Cllr A Welburn then clarified as follows: neither the clerk nor any WLDC Officer can tell any councillor whether to declare an interest or not as this is down to councillors on an individual basis to decide if they do have an interest and if it is a pecuniary interest. Each councillor has their own self-written Declaration of Interest form on the WLDC website. However, it is good practice to declare an interest and the reason why. This will be recorded, therefore will be open and honest for all to see. It is all about the public perception.
- Could create a difficult personal situation for some councillors.
- Would prefer to declare an interest and partake in discussions.
- Looking out for the future of the village, its requirements; the conservation area.
- Individual views on the new proposals may differ to views on the original proposals

As a starting point, it was suggested that:

- 1) the following declarations of interest be minuted to publicly record the position of the below-mentioned four councillors. This will allow public scrutiny and time for any objections to be received ahead of potentially discussing matters in-depth at next meeting

Cllr M Doughty and Cllr A Brammer who live close to Goods Farm

Cllr N Ward and Cllr P Stuffins who both have competing sites.

- 2) All councillors will engage in the discussions until any such time as ongoing review on the situation determines that they shouldn't be.

At the proposal of Cllr C Wilson, seconded by Cllr M Doughty, it was **RESOLVED**, to approve proceeding as per above.

Neighbourhood Planning Group – update, finances:

Cllr C Wilson reported that survey results are still being analysed. Informal remote Zoom meetings have taken place at which no decisions have been taken and no minutes have been produced. The process has not yet reached the draft plan stage.

All councillors then confirmed their support of comments made earlier in this meeting in respect of Goods farm development ie that it should be made clear to all prospective developers that they should respect the findings of the Planning Inspectorate. D/Cllr A Welburn noted the need to be mindful; and to look at each application individually and on its own merits without reference to anything else. WLDC will take the Inspector's comments into account.

C/Cllr Fleetwood explained the three planning items which WLDC will judge applications against. These are: The National Planning Policy Framework; the Central Lincs Local Plan; and a Neighbourhood Plan (where one exists). The Central Lincs Local Plan will carry more weight, being the most recently adopted policy. The most weight will come from the Inspector's findings which should help provide developers with a more defined approach to what they are doing.

Councillors confirmed they were happy to take the advice of D/Cllr A Welburn and C/Cllr I Fleetwood.

7. Roads and Footways

Cyclists dismount signs – EKM Ltd had made contact to fit the signs, but at extremely short notice; therefore the signs will be fitted at the next visit. Cllr A Brammer to liaise with the relevant residents.

Action: Cllr A Brammer. Clerk to supply Cllr A Brammer with EKM Ltd's contact details. **Action: clerk Mellows Close to Manor Rise footpath** – **Action: clerk** to locate previous grant; and to research new grant possibilities. C/Cllr I Fleetwood confirmed that LCC has no money for grants.

Village gate/SID – a quote has been circulated. Noted that there is no local electricity supply at the preferred location. A suggestion was made that the solar farm could perhaps install one (community benefit). Agenda item for next meeting. **Action: clerk** to send details to Cllr A Brammer.

Cllr A Brammer then noted the following:

- School white lines require repainting
- Junction of Mellows Close and High Street would benefit from double yellow lines. Noted that this may get public support. Agenda item for next meeting. **Action: clerk**
- The slip road onto Hawthorn Road off the bypass has a sharp bend. **Action: clerk** to write to LCC. D/Cllr A Welburn noted that mopping up is taking place as bypass issues are arising.

8. Field Footpaths and Bridleways

LCC response ref footpaths – LCC have advised that requests for remedial action would be considered on a route-specific basis. Issues should be reported to LCC by any communications route; including Fix My Street; and the exact location must be identified.

9. Conservation Area

Village Green

Parking alongside the village green

Signage options have been circulated. Consideration was given to wording, size, and colour of both the background and the words. The preference is to have two signs. **Action: Cllr C Wilson** to research best colours for colour blindness. **Action: Cllr J Oxy** to supply a third version of sign to the clerk.

Agenda item for next meeting. **Action: clerk**

10. Amenity Areas

Report of March 2021 play area inspection – the report had been circulated.

Playpark fencing – this has been installed. **Action: clerk** to advise EKM Ltd that the gate does not close properly.

At the proposal of Cllr B Tebbs, seconded by Cllr A Brammer; it was **RESOLVED** to approve issuing payment of £4337.00 + £867.40 VAT (Total £5204.40) within seven working days subject to the invoice according with the quotation and subject to councillors being happy with the work. Councillors should advise the clerk if they have any concerns regarding the completed work.

11. Christmas Tree Lights – Noted that Cllr N Ward had purchased lights in 2020 specifically for the Christmas tree; therefore, he should be reimbursed. **Action: Cllr N Ward** to provide a copy of the invoice to the clerk. Agenda item for next meeting. **Action: clerk**

12. Business for next Agenda: Bypass – poor road surface.

13. Date of next meeting – 18 May 2021 at 7.30pm (church hall or village hall, otherwise Zoom).

Meeting ended at 8.58pm.

Mrs Michelle Vail, Parish Clerk/RFO. 8 April 2021