

Letheringham Parish Council

Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on Monday 26th June 2023 at 7 pm in Easton and Letheringham Village Hall

The meeting opened at 7:10pm

2023.17 Members of the council present

Paul Clarke (PC) (chairman)
Trevor Gill (TG) (vice chairman & clerk)
Andrew Maskery (AM)
Malcolm Ross (MR)
Jan McNeill (JM)

RFO: Al Besly (AB) Responsible Financial Officer

2023.18 Members of the public present

None

2023.19 Public Participation

N/A

2023.20 Apologies for absence

None

2023.21 Declaration of Interest

None

2023.22 Consideration of dispensation requests

N/A

2023.23 Minutes

2023.22.01 Minutes of the Annual Parish Council Meeting on 22nd May 2023 were considered and **approved**.

2023.23.02 AB advised that the parish council meeting of 24th August 2020 was not a valid meeting because it was held more than six months after the previous meeting and the councillors had vacated office by not attending a meeting for six months. AB therefore recommended that the current meeting ratify the decisions of the earlier meeting.

PC proposed that the decisions made at the meeting of 24th August 2020 (approving the minutes of the previous (27th January 2020) meeting and approving all elements of the audit of 2019/2020) be ratified. **All agreed**.

2023.24 Matters of Report

2023.24.01 PC had written to Jean Barker.

2023.24.02 Clerk - Terry Carlin had resigned since being appointed Clerk & RFO at the last meeting.

2023.24.03 RFO - Al Besly (Clerk to Wickham Market, Little Glemham & Blythburgh Parish Councils) had kindly agreed to help LPC as RFO on a temporary basis to enable timely completion of the audit. He could not take on the role long term due to other commitments. He had already checked through all the audit paperwork for 2020/21-2022/23. All thanked him for agreeing to help.

2023.24.04 Highways – JM had been researching B1078 related issues and concerns (Sizewell, Potsford Farm). Questions raised about funding for signs etc. JM was intending to visit the highways department and produce a report on all relevant issues.

Action:JM visit highways department and circulate report to councillors

2023.24.05 Bank mandate changes - in progress but PC reported there had been delays and may yet be further issues due to a fire at a Barclays processing centre.

2023.24.06 Asset Register – Assessment carried out by MR (see report appendix A). It was proposed that work to repair the noticeboard should be carried out subject to a satisfactory quote. **All agreed.**

It was proposed to look into arranging a refresher training course on defibrillator use for residents and publicising the code. **All agreed**

Action:JM circulate list of noticeboard repair work

MR look into further defibrillator training for residents

2023.24.07 Website (TG) – Secure Certificate required so that ESC can access the website and it comes up in searches. Cost will be c£40. TG proposed this was essential and should be ordered. **All agreed**

Action:TG Request secure certificate from CAS

2023.24.08 Planning – TG had contacted Nick Glendinning of Nest Development Corporation, the current owner of Abbey Farm regarding his plans for the site. Nick was happy to attend an LPC meeting to speak about plans for the redevelopment of the site (once he had received pre-application advice from ESC which he was currently awaiting).

Action:TG Contact Nest ahead of next meeting to invite Nick to attend

2023.24.09 Email – a new account (letheringhamparishcouncil@gmail.com) had been set up and would be used for future correspondence. Terry Carlin had agreed TG could access the old email account to download contact details and any relevant e-mails.

Action:TG contact Terry Carlin to access e-mail & download relevant content

PC notify existing contacts of new e-mail address & upload existing contacts to new system

PC e-mail residents to seek consent for holding their e-mail addresses on file (to comply with GDPR)

2023.24.10 Training for councillors – It was agreed that LPC should pay for training for councillors to enable them to fulfil their roles effectively. It was agreed AM & MR would undertake sessions one and two of SALC introductory training webinar at £30 per session during July.

Action: PC book via SALC portal

2023.24.11 Insurance – PC had not progressed this due to prioritising audit and bank account work. AM agreed to help PC in supplying information to request quotes and assessing quotes when received. AB said he was happy to offer guidance and support with any queries.

Action: PC & AM get quotes & assess & make recommendation.

2023.24.12 Road signs – MR reported at end of meeting that two of Letheringham’s three road signs were falling apart. Apart from being difficult to read, they may be weak enough to fall. Attention was needed.

2023.25 Appointment of a temporary Clerk

2023.25.01 Under section 112 of the Local Government Act 1972 it is possible to appoint a member of a parish council as an officer without remuneration. Whilst this is not best practice, in the circumstances and for such a small council, this was a practical solution.

It was proposed that the post of clerk be separate from RFO and filled temporarily by a member of the council. **All agreed.**

2023.24.02 PC proposed TG as clerk (ON A TEMPORARY BASIS). TG agreed to take on the role ON A TEMPORARY BASIS. **All agreed**

2023.26 Appointment of a temporary Responsible Financial Officer

PC proposed Al Besly as RFO on a temporary basis. **All agreed.**

2023.27 Appointment of an Internal Auditor

AB had established that Heelis & Lodge could provide an internal audit for LPC. He advised that, as fully accredited local authority auditors, they would provide a full report which could be very useful in guiding councillors on what systems needed to be put in place over the coming months to put the council in a good position for the future.

PC proposed Heelis & lodge be appointed internal auditor for the current year. **All agreed**

Action: PC contact Heelis & Lodge and book in

2023.28 Audit Submission 2020/21

2023.28.01 As LPC’s income of £1,200 and gross expenditure of £660 in 2020/21 were below £25,000, it can certify itself as exempt from an external audit. A **Certificate of Exemption** had been completed and it was proposed that the certificate be approved. **All agreed.** The certificate was signed by AB as RFO and by PC as chairman.

Action: PC e-mail the certificate to auditors PKF Littlejohn by 1st July 2023

2023.28.02 All nine statements of the **Annual Governance Statement 2020/21** were considered by councillors. AB advised that LPC's governance had not been in full control in 20/21. As a result, a 'No' response was entered to statements 1, 2, 3, 5 & 6. It was proposed that the statement be signed. **All agreed.** The statement was signed by TG as clerk and by PC as chairman.

2023.28.03 The details of the **Accounting Statements 2020/21** were read out. AB confirmed opening balances, payments and closing balances all tied up with the bank reconciliation. Approval was proposed. **All agreed.** The declaration was signed by AB as RFO and by PC as chairman.

AB noted that no support is lawfully allowed for the church (1894 Local Gov't Act), except for a clock. LPC had made a £400 payment in 2020 for graveyard maintenance. Recommendation is not to make payments to the Church.

2023.28.04 The **Year End Bank Reconciliation 2020/21** was read out by AB. PC checked and proposed approval. **All agreed**

Action:PC scan signed copies of the Certificate of Exemption, Annual Governance Statement, Accounting Statements and Year End Bank Reconciliation and send pdf's to TG

Action:TG upload to website pdf's of the Certificate of Exemption, Annual Governance Statement, Accounting Statements and Year End Bank Reconciliation by 01.07.2023

2023.29 Audit Submission 2021/22

2023.29.01 A **Certificate of Exemption** had been completed showing gross income of £1,200 and gross expenditure of £304 in 2021/22. It was proposed that the certificate be approved. **All agreed.** It was signed by AB as RFO and by PC as chairman.

Action:PC e-mail the certificate to auditors PKF Littlejohn by 1st July 2023

2023.29.02 All nine statements of the **Annual Governance Statement 2021/22** were considered by councillors. AB advised that LPC's governance had not been in full control as there had been no council standing throughout 2021/22. As a result, a 'No' response was entered to all nine statements. It was proposed that the statement be signed. **All agreed.** The statement was signed by TG as clerk and by PC as chairman.

2023.29.03 The details of the **Accounting Statements 2021/22** were read out. AB checked opening balances, payments and closing balances. All tied up with the bank reconciliation. Approval was proposed. **All agreed.** The declaration was signed by AB as RFO and by PC as chairman.

2023.29.04 The **Year End Bank Reconciliation 2021/22** was read out by AB. PC checked and proposed approval. **All agreed.**

Action:PC scan signed copies of the Certificate of Exemption, Annual Governance Statement, Accounting Statements and Year End Bank Reconciliation and send pdf's to TG

Action:TG upload to website pdf's of the Certificate of Exemption, Annual Governance Statement, Accounting Statements and Year End Bank Reconciliation by 01.07.2023

2023.30 Audit Submission 2022/23

2023.30.01 A **Certificate of Exemption 2022/23** had been completed showing income of £1,201 (£1 interest and £1,200 precept) and nil gross expenditure in 2022/23. It was proposed that the certificate be approved. **All agreed.** The certificate was signed by AB as RFO and by PC as chairman.

Action:PC e-mail the certificate to auditors PKF Littlejohn by 1st July 2023

2023.30.02 All nine statements of the **Annual Governance Statement 2022/23** were considered by councillors. AB advised that LPC’s governance had not been in full control as there no council standing throughout 2022/23. As a result, a ‘Yes’ response was entered for statements one and eight only. It was proposed that the statement be signed. **All agreed.** The statement was signed by TG as clerk and by PC as chairman.

2023.30.03 The details of the **Accounting Statements 2022/23** were read out. AB checked opening balances, payments and closing balances. All tied up with the bank reconciliation. Approval was proposed. **All agreed.** The declaration was signed by AB as RFO and by PC as chairman.

2023.30.04 The **Year End Bank Reconciliation 2022/23** was read out by AB. PC checked and proposed approval. **All agreed**

2023.30.05 The **Analysis of Variances for 2022/23** was presented. It stated that the difference in expenditure was because the council was not active last year. PC proposed approval. **All agreed.**

2023.30.06 PC gave a **breakdown of reserves at 31.03.2023** which had to be declared because the reserves carried forward (£8,512) were more than twice the annual income from local taxation (precept of £1,200). £2,325 had been received from Suffolk Coastal District Council (now East Suffolk Council) Enabling Communities Fund in 2015 (£1,100) and Suffolk County Council Locality Grant in 2017 (£1,225.43). AB recommended that the remaining £6,187 should be further broken down. He said it was good practice to allocate 50% of precept income (£600) as a general reserve. That ensured that the council could still meet its immediate outgoings if receipt of precept were delayed. AB stated that the £2,325 needed to be spent on a speed indicator device as it was granted to LPC for this purpose. More could be allocated for this purpose (estimated cost for solar powered unit would be around £4,000) if the council wished. The allocation of a significant reserve to separate purposes would be recognised by the internal auditor as good practice.

Action:PC scan signed copies of the Certificate of Exemption, Annual Governance Statement, Accounting Statements, Year End Bank Reconciliation and Analysis of Variances and send pdf’s to TG

Action:TG upload to website pdf’s of the Certificate of Exemption, Annual Governance Statement, Accounting Statements, Year End Bank Reconciliation and Analysis of Variances by 01.07.2023

2023.30.07 It was noted that the period for the exercise of public rights needed to be set for thirty working days to include 3rd to 14th July to give the public the opportunity to exercise their right to view the accounts. The notice of the dates needs to be signed off by the Clerk (TG) and posted on the notice board and website. **IT NEEDS TO BE UP BY ONE DAY**

BEFORE the start of the period.

Action: PC & TG prepare and sign the notice and post on the notice board and upload to the website

2023.31 Financial Report see Appendix B

2023.31.01 Current financial statement

PC reported a combined total opening balance on 01.04.23 of £8,512.19. Precept income of £1,200 had been received on 28.04.23, bringing the total funds to £9,712.19. After payment of the three cheques below, the total combined balance would stand at £9,474.53. After payment of the four further payments for pre-approval, the total combined balance would stand at approximately £9,040.

2023.31.02 Outstanding invoices for approval

The following invoices were presented for payment once the bank had confirmed that the mandate had been updated:

Date	Item	Payee	Cheque No	Amount
26.06.23	Defibrillator pads	CHT	100292	115.20
26.06.23	Website fee*	Terence Carlin	100293	60.00
26.06.23	Subscription	SALC	100294	<u>62.46</u>
Total				237.66

* Website fee for 12 months paid 15.05.23 by Terence Carlin to Community Action Suffolk to enable reactivation of website whilst awaiting change of bank mandate.

All agreed.

Action: PC co-ordinate signing of cheques and send payments when bank mandate changed

2023.31.03 Further payments for pre-approval

PC advised that the receipt of four further invoices listed below was likely well before the next meeting and sought agreement to pre-approve payment so that services could start as soon as possible.

Item	Payee	Amount
Hall hire 22.05.23 & 26.06.23 @ £27 each	ELVH	£54
Security certificate for website	CAS	£40 (est.)
Insurance – quotes still to be obtained	TBC	£300 (est.)
Registration - Information Commissioner's Office	ICO	<u>£40 (est.)</u>
Total (estimated)		£434 est.

All agreed.

Action: PC co-ordinate signing of cheques and send payments when invoices received.

AB stated that councillors should agree (delegate authority) to pay certain invoices (like hall costs) up to a set amount. This would form part of financial regulations.

2023.31.04 Online banking was discussed. AB stated that 2 councillors needed to sign every payment. This would mean one councillor needed to set them up and another needed to approve all payments. If the RFO were given internet access to set up payments, they became a signatory by default. He recommended the continued use of cheques as LPC had so few transactions. **It was agreed to continue to use cheques.**

If electronic payments were later adopted, there would need to be a process in place to ensure adequate financial control. This would be an element of financial regulations that LPC needed to adopt.

2023.32 Matters for the Next Meeting

2023.32.01 Preferred date for the next meeting was Monday September 11th. The 18th or 25th were possible if the hall not available for 11th.

Action: PC book ELVH

2023.32.02 AB recommended that LPC should set up **procedures and policies** as a priority. He stated that a parish council had a duty to adopt a Code of Conduct. It also needed to put in place Financial Regulations, Standing Orders, Code of Conduct, and policies on GDPR and FOI. There needed to be Risk Assessments carried out to cover the council’s regular operations and any activities or events it held involving the public. Templates of these could be downloaded from SALC’s website and amended as necessary to fit LPC. It was also worth looking at other parish councils’ websites and adapting theirs if appropriate. These should be adopted at the next parish council meeting and then posted on the website. In the meantime, drafts could be uploaded to the website. TG proposed each councillor taking responsibility for checking and adapting the text on a specific topic and circulating to other councillors ahead of the next meeting where all could be swiftly agreed.

All agreed.

Action:PC download templates from SALC website and circulate to councillors as follows for them to review and amend ready for approval at next meeting: Financial Regulations (PC), Standing Orders (PC), Code of Conduct (MR), GDPR policy (TG), FOI policy (TG), Risk Assessment (AM)

2023.32.03 Other topics for the agenda were agreed as:

Abbey Farm Invite Nest Development to present their outline proposals.

River Deben Malcolm will attend a meeting on July 14th convened by Woodbridge Climate Action Centre to co-ordinate river water testing for parishes along the Deben and will report back on this.

All councillors thanked AB very much for his advice and guidance and the time he had spent to help LPC.

The meeting closed at 9:30pm

Paul Clarke

27th November 2023

Signed:

Date:

Asset Register Report

26.06.2023

LPC Asset Register

Capital asset	Value (£)	Replacement value
Village Sign	£1,469.00	£4,000.00
Phone Box	£1.00	£1.00
Grit Box	£150.00	£150.00
Millennium Seat	£485.00	£500.00
Defibrillator	£2,130.00	£2,130.00
Darcy Booms	£550.00	£550.00
Notice Board	£500.00	£500.00
Total	£5,285.00	£8,780

Since the meeting on 22.05.23 MR had inspected all assets to check their condition. At the parish council meeting of 26.06.23 MR reported:

Village Sign:

In good condition – no action needed.

Phone Box:

In good condition. Jim had trimmed the vegetation around the base. – no action needed.

Grit Box:

Condition OK and the box is full of sand.

Millennium Seat:

Condition OK.

Defibrillator:

Defibrillator pads had been supplied by CHT late 2022 but the invoice remained outstanding and needed to be settled asap.

Lewis Marshall looks after the defibrillator and checks it regularly. He has stated the battery will most likely need replacement in c. 12 months' time at a cost of c. £200.

Darcy Booms:

These had been used on the river here and rented out. They are in sound condition.

Notice Board:

This is the most used of the assets. It needs some TLC. Repairs estimated at £300 inc VAT for labour plus materials. Details overleaf.

Details of notice board repairs proposed:

(circulated by JM 28.06.23):

Aim:

- 1) to make it water tight
- 2) re-use existing (where commercially viable)
- 3) longevity
- 4) minimal maintenance

Existing to remain:

- upright posts (into ground)
- glass (if possible, i.e. if comes out OK)
- main box frame

Work required:

- two new doors to include bracing, so doors don't drop (*as they have done, enabling further water to penetrate*)
- install new cork board (*existing failed due to water ingress*)
- make a new "top/head" canopy (*currently there is no waterproof head*). Possibly a lead canopy (to throw water away) which is wider to provide a hood to protect it from driving rain
- possibly re-do the word "Letheringham" (*maybe more cost effective to make/scribe new*)

Notes:

- currently it is hard wood - great if it is regularly maintained (which it will not be), so a painted finish is recommended
- paint not included in cost (we must be able to find some!)
- I must keep the greenery cut above it!

Cost:

- £300 for day labour rate (includes VAT), *note minimum of a day's work required, could be more depending on top/head detail*
- Minimal materials, but budget for £100 (particularly if lead used)
- Advise to budget for £400 - £450

Contractor:

Timber Framed Buildings (Stephen Pritchard)

Financial Report at 26/06/2023

Opening Balances at 01/04/2023

Community Account	8,243.16
Business Premium Account	<u>269.03</u>
Total Funds	8,512.19

Income 01/04/2023 - 26/06/2023:

Date	Item	Payer	Method	Amount
28.04.23	Precept	East Suffolk Council	BACS	<u>1,200.00</u>
Total				1,200.00

Expenditure 01/04/2023 - 26/06/2023:

Cheques presented for payment at this meeting:

Date	Item	Payee	Cheque No	Amount
26.06.23	Defib. pads	CHT	100292	115.20
26.06.23	Website fee*	Terence Carlin	100293	60.00
26.06.23	Subscription	SALC	100294	<u>62.46</u>
Total				237.66

* Website fee for 12 months paid 15.05.23 by Terence Carlin to Community Action Suffolk to enable reactivation of website whilst awaiting change of bank mandate.

Closing Balances at 26/06/2023 after payments made:

Community Account	9,205.50
Business Premium Account	<u>269.03</u>
Total Funds	9,474.53