

Letheringham Parish Council

Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on Monday 27th November 2023 at 7pm in Easton and Letheringham Village Hall

The meeting opened at 7:00pm

2023.33 Members of the council present

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

2023.34 Members of the public present

3 parish residents

2023.35 Public participation

A resident in attendance asked to speak on matters related to recent flooding. It was agreed to delay this until item 2023.43 Storm Babet.

2023.36 Apologies for absence

None

2023.37 Declarations of interest

None

2023.38 Consideration of dispensation requests

None

2023.39 Minutes

Minutes of the Meeting on 26th June 2023 were considered as a fair and accurate reflection, and therefore **approved**.

2023.40 Matters of report

2023.40.01 Notice Board: PC thanked JM for her work on the notice board refurbishment, now completed. All agreed that the money was well spent on the project.

2023.40.02 Website: TG had organised the security certificate and updated the website with draft policies. He invited all to review the site and make suggestions to improve it including design, layout, function.

2023.40.03 Planning: Nick Glendening of Nest Developments would now be invited to speak at the next parish council meeting about his plan for Abbey Farm. **Action point for TG to send the email invite.**

2023.40.04 Easton Neighbourhood Plan: LPC had received email notification of the consultation run by ESC on the draft Easton Neighbourhood Plan. PC suggested this be forwarded to residents of Letheringham as they may want to comment on the plan. **Action**

point TG to send out the email.

2023.40.05 Email list: TG had emailed all on the residents list to advise that only the Gmail address would be in use from now on and they needed to opt in to continue to consent to remaining on the list. PC proposed that a further email be sent to those who had not opted in to confirm that their contact data would now be deleted. **Action point TG to send out the email**

2023.40.06 Training: AM and MR had both completed the SALC basic councillor training online. Was held on Zoom, helpful and recommended for new councillors but was useful rather than a one stop shop for how to run a parish council.

2023.40.07 Insurance: PC apologised that he had not got this arranged as previously agreed. He had requested a quote from the business services company run by Community Action Suffolk which offers a policy designed for parish councils. He expected to receive this the day after the meeting. **Action point PC to progress this.**

2023.40.08 Road Signs: PC had established that Easton replaced their damaged fingerposts at their own cost as SCC Highways refused to do so., They had cost £5,000, including installation, for 3 signs in 2018. They continued to insure them to ensure they could be replaced like for like if damaged. PC was awaiting a reply from the clerk of Cretingham Monewden & Hoo PC as they had reported agreeing to buy three new fingerposts in their minutes and he had asked the clerk for further information as the fingerpost by Sanctuary Bridge is just within Hoo.

MR felt strongly that the current fingerposts were not fit for purpose and SCC Highways should be held accountable for their replacement. PC had mentioned to SCC Cllr Elaine Bryce that we would appreciate her support in getting these signs replaced. **Action point TG/JM/MR to raise with Josh White (Highways Liaison Officer).**

2023.40.09 Audit: PC confirmed that all the audits for 2020/21, 2021/22 and 2022/23 had been signed off and posted on the noticeboard and the website as required. PC had not proceeded with the Internal Audit as it had become clear that none of the records and policies to be audited existed for 2022/23 as no council operated. He felt the quoted cost of £85 was not justified. It would need to be done for the current 2023/24 year and there would be records and policies to audit then.

2023.40.10 Accounts: PC had met with Al Besly (RFO) in July to set up an Excel spread sheet cashbook for LPC which PC was now using to record all transactions.

2023.40.11 Banking: PC confirmed that the bank mandate had been updated and that JM, AM and PC were now signatories on the accounts.

2023.41 Policies & Procedures

On advice from SALC & Al Besly, PC had downloaded draft policies from SALC and circulated to councillors in July. He had since adapted specific points in each to tailor them to LPC's situation and now presented them for approval, highlighting where each had been modified.

2023.41.01 Financial Regulations: PC had tailored this to include budget preparation in October, a £300 limit for expenditure approved by the Chairman and Clerk (without full council) and the requirement to agree an internet banking protocol before opting in to online banking. Adoption was proposed by PC and seconded by TG. **Adopted unanimously.**

2023.41.02 Standing Orders: PC had included a maximum of 15 minutes for public participation in a meeting with any individual limited to 3 minutes. Adoption was proposed by PC and seconded by TG. **Adopted unanimously.**

2023.41.03 Code of Conduct: This was the standard policy for all councillors in Suffolk. Adoption was proposed by PC and seconded by TG. **Adopted unanimously.**

2023.41.01 Freedom of Information: TG had uploaded the draft to LPC website in July and it was LPC Adoption was proposed by PC and seconded by TG. **Adopted unanimously.**
Action point PC to send the final policy texts to parish councillors for their reference. TG to post to LPC website.

2023.42 Finance

2023.42.01 Financial statement dated 21/11/2023 was reviewed item by item. Approval was proposed by TG and seconded by MR. **Agreed unanimously.**

Transaction Summary:

Balances at bank at 01.04.2023:

Community Account	8,243.16
Business Premium Account	269.03
Cumulative Total at Bank at 01.04.2023:	8,512.19
Less unrepresented cheques:	-
Cash Book Balance at 01.04.2023	8,512.19

2023/24 Transaction Summary to 21.11.2023:

Receipts to date	1,401.28	
Payments to date	413.66	
Cash Book balance as at 21.11.2023:		9,499.81

Bank Reconciliation:

Plus unrepresented payments at 21.11.2023:	39.00	
Cashbook Balance adjusted for unrepresented cheques:		9,538.81
Represented by Balances at bank at 21.11.2023:		
Community Account	9,268.50	
Business Premium Account	270.31	
Cumulative Total at Bank at 21.11.2023:		9,538.81

2023.42.02 Payment authorisation: PC presented the invoice for £561.84 for the refurbishment of the village noticeboard. Payment was **approved unanimously**. The cheque was signed by PC and AM.

2023.43 Storm Babet:

The following points emerged from general discussion.

2023.43.01: Public participation (delayed from item 2023.35): A resident in attendance showed video footage of the flood water on the road and flowing into gardens and up to the houses in The Street in Letheringham from the field run-off and the road itself (from Blyth Hill) on October 20th.

2023.43.02 Review of the damage caused:

- 7 houses out of c.30 in the village had had some water inside the property (a very high proportion of the total). This ranged from 300 mm deep throughout two properties to partial flooding. Sheds and outbuildings were also flooded.
- The main culvert on Park Road was reported as near collapse. The road was submerged up to 1m due to agricultural field run off during the storm. Flooding at this point now more regular due to high flows of surface run off and drainage water from agricultural land.
- The junction of footpath 9 with Park Road
- No access during the storm onto the A12 as the B1078 into both Charsfield and Wickham Market closed leaving Hall Road via Four Bridges as the easiest access route which was deeply submerged with nearly 2 ft of flood water.
- TG felt that Hall Road by Four Bridges had subsided significantly, no longer fit for the traffic it gets, and the reference gauges are now completely wrong. The water on the Easton side of the bridge was deeper due to high verges. This route is still the only real option to get to the A12 as evidenced by Storm Babet.
- Road drains did not have the capacity to deal with the water coming off Blyth Hill.
- Drains in The Street were inadequate, partly due to debris within the silt traps.
- Significant drainage water gushing from the outfall opposite Pike Cottage in The Street from field opposite village houses, combined with road surface drainage overwhelmed the drains.
- Significant debris were deposited on the Fairfield road at the junction with the farm track near the pit. This was due to run-off from the field and track– estimated up to 10 tonnes of sand and stone. It was dealt with by village residents in the absence of prompt action by Highways.
- Cars had been damaged in previous regular flooding and during the storm due to the depth of flooding around Sanctuary Bridge, Hall Road, Park Road, Easton Farm Park.
- Park Corner had torrents of water coming towards the houses from road run-off. A barn and garden had been flooded but whether it had entered any of the three homes was not known for certain.

2023.43.03 Consideration of the issues and vulnerabilities:

- Surface run-off and drainage water from agricultural land were a major concern, particularly with forecast more frequent and more extreme weather events.

- The capacity of road drains and the level of their maintenance were considered inadequate for such events.
- The lack of emergency access during the storm and after, including over what is usually the "higher" ground.

2023.43.04 Consideration of how the council can address these for future resilience:

- Question raised about what can highways do about field run-off when causing major road safety issues?
- Suggestion that we speak with landowners about how to slow down the run-off and deal with debris.
- All present agreed that we needed to compile a list to present to highways to futureproof the area following our initial discussion with Local Councillors, including
- Continued close working with SCC Highways to ensure that the issues in Letheringham are strongly represented when government funding to address flooding issues reaches Suffolk.

2023.44 Highways Issues

2023.44.01 B1078 Speed Reduction Measures: JM had met Josh White, SCC Highways Community Liaison Officer, to look at the recurring issue of speeding vehicles for horse riders. His view was that horses should not be on the route because drivers of HGV's and other vehicles would not be expecting them on that kind of road. He suggested finding another solution. JM explained that riders avoid using the grass field margins alongside the B1078. Although these might seem safer, the big hedges mean horses cannot see approaching cars and can be spooked when speeding cars suddenly roar by, especially if their wing mirrors hit branches of the hedge and make loud bangs on impact. (a resident showed a video clip of dozens of smashed wing mirrors on the verge under the hedge as evidence of this issue). These hedges may need to be looked at in conjunction with the signs.

Potsford Farm had asked for their request for standard red triangle warning signs showing a horse and rider to be raised again. Highways would support self-funded signs. JM had spoken with ESC Councillor Owen Grey who had suggested there was funding available. TG raised the point of liability if they are self-funded. MR agreed these issues needed to be looked into, but we need to cost the project and then review. **Action point JM to speak with Owen Grey to look at funding.**

2023.44.02 To consider how to progress specific works: It was recognised that continued close working with SCC Highways and ESC and SCC Councillors was the best way to make progress.

2023.44.03 To address debris on roads: Sand and gravel continued to be deposited by runoff down the farm track near the pit on to the road alongside the Fairfield. This and hedge clipping from flailing were a hazard for road users, especially cyclists. **Action point PC to speak to the Kerrs**

2023.45 River Deben

2023.45.01 Woodbridge Climate Action Centre meeting 14/07/23. MR had attended and reported that there had been no agenda, discussion was random, no minutes were recorded and there had been no subsequent follow up. He felt it was of little value.

2023.45.02 River levels. JM & MR had noted significant fluctuations in the level of the river. JM had been informed that there were control box issues on the Mill sluice due to the power surge caused by the nearby lightning strike on August 24th. JM had noted and reported to the EA that the river was low on November 10th. It had been fixed then but it was low again on November 16th. She wondered if the control box issues had had any effect on the sluice gate performance and the flooding from Storm Babet on October 20th. **Action point. JM to contact Emmett Klipalo at the EA to investigate flood gate operation and who has control further downstream.**

2023.46 Proposed Meeting Dates

The following dates were proposed by PC for scheduled parish council meetings on Monday evenings at 7 pm in 2024, when the village hall is available. The dates were agreed subject to two councillors checking their diaries.

- January 22nd
- March 11th (preceded by Annual Parish Meeting)
- May 6th (Annual Parish Council Meeting)
- July 8th
- September 9th
- November 11th.

2023.47 Matters for Next Meeting

An item on Abbey Farm development would be included on the agenda for the next meeting.

The meeting closed at 9:30pm.

Paul Clarke

22nd January 2024

Signed:

Date: