

## WALBERSWICK PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Meeting of the Parish Council meeting held on Monday 14<sup>th</sup> November 2022 at 7pm.

Present (physically): Councillors Lewis (Chair), Bassinette, Richardson, Sutherland-Rogers, Sutton, Tucker and Whiting. Only Councillors physically present can speak (except during the public forum or if standing orders are temporarily suspended) and vote. No Councillors joined remotely. Also in attendance in person were eleven (11) members of the public, County Councillor Richard Smith and District Councillor David Beavan.

Also in attendance (remotely via Zoom) were 4 (four) members of the public and Mark Knight, Parish Clerk and Simon Ashton the Responsible Financial Officer.

### **088/22-23 Chair's welcome.**

The Chair welcomed those present to the meeting and those attending by Zoom. Due to the high level of public attendance and interest in agenda item 098/22-23, the Chair moved that item directly to after item 094/22-23.

The Chair also gave a full explanation of how the meeting would run and when people would be allowed to speak.

### **089/22-23 To consider and approve any apologies for absence.**

None.

### **090/22-23 Declaration of Interest and Requests for Dispensation.**

Cllr. Whiting declared a non-pecuniary interest in item 095/22-23.1

Cllr. Sutherland-Rogers declared a non-pecuniary interest in item 095/22-23.2.1

Cllrs. Lewis and Whiting declared a non-pecuniary interest in item 095/22-23.2.2

### **091/22-23 Open Forum**

None.

### **092/22-23 To receive a report from County Councillor Richard Smith**

Cllr. Smith reported that he had recently laid a wreath at the church in Walberswick on Remembrance Sunday.

He reported that the sub-station at Friston had an initial request for judicial review (JR) refused, but a new request for an oral hearing in front of a judge has been made. On Sizewell C, he noted that a JR was also pending. Tens of billions of financing would also be required before a final investment decision could be made although recent announcements by Government of tax payer financing indicated more certainty. If it was allowed to go forward then the attention of Suffolk County council would switch to trying to obtain the best deal for the community in terms of mitigation.

Achieving a balanced budget for the County Council is proving difficult. Inflation of 15 to 20% in the Adult Social Care sector which makes up 75% of County council spending was the biggest challenge and was creating one of the toughest budget setting periods in memory.

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He thanked Cllr. Bassinette for her report on the proposed Eurolink and Sealink projects and noted that he agreed with its content and supported its approach. He said that in his opinion and that of planning experts at SCC, the site proposed at Walberswick was likely to be judged inappropriate, but that it was essential for the Council and residents to strongly make the case to the developers on why Walberswick was inappropriate. He added that Suffolk County Council would respond at every stage of the consultation process and that there was a real concern over the level of NSIPs in the Suffolk area.

**093/22-23 To receive a report from East Suffolk District Councillor David Beavan**

Cllr Beavan reported that he was extremely concerned over the current state of the NHS with the provision of ambulances and bed blocking a real issue.

The budget setting at the District Council was also very difficult with a need to address inflation and wage demands. He noted that there was a 10% vacancy rate across all services. He mentioned the possibility of a rubbish collection strike by workers who were falling behind the living wage. He mentioned that he had introduced a motion questioning an external consultancy that a Councillor had accepted with BP, but was barred.

He updated the meeting on the work of the Harbour Management Committee (HMC) and its Advisory Group, highlighting an ongoing disagreement on the need to put limitations on the ability of HMC to sell land and assets.

Cllr. Beavan also agreed with C Cllr. Smith regarding the importance of a clear and convincing case being made regarding Sealink and Eurolink and an appropriate site for the projects. He explained how the siting of the cables in Suffolk was against normal best practice which was to put substations at sea or on brownfield sites. He also suggested that all local MPs be contacted for their support.

**094/22-23 To consider the minutes of the meetings of 10<sup>th</sup> October 2022**

The minutes of the 10<sup>th</sup> October 2022 meeting were **APPROVED** with the Chair to sign the minutes and to retain them until they can be handed to the Clerk in person.

**098/22-23 Report and recommendations on Eurolink and Sealink consultations**

Cllr Bassinette gave a brief introduction following on the comments made by Cllrs Smith and Beavan in their statements. She emphasised how important it was for parishioners, visitors and friends of Walberswick to become directly involved by helping make people aware of the proposals, attending the consultation meetings, and writing to National Grid and all our elected officials. She also noted, with thanks, the steps being taken by concerned residents to create flyers and posters alerting people to the proposals and promoting action. Thereafter, the five proposals in the report were discussed consecutively and the following resolutions and decisions were taken:

1. WPC **RESOLVED** to strenuously object to the short-listing of Walberswick beach as a landing site for Eurolink on the basis of the inappropriateness of the site including for environmental, logistical and economic reasons.
2. WPC **RESOLVED** to write to our elected representatives at the District, County and National levels to express objections and ask for their support in objecting to the Eurolink proposals. In this regard, the Council noted with thanks the stance of SC Cllr Smith and ESC Councillor Beavan in opposing the Eurolink proposals. The Council in particular stressed that ESC, unlike Suffolk County Council, had not objected to Sizewell C and the Friston sub-station despite the enormous damage these projects brought to our area and that we expected ESC to act in the interest of its constituents and object to Eurolink.
3. WPC **RESOLVED** to send all necessary written responses to the consultations on

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Eurolink starting with the non-statutory consultation closing on 18 December. It was agreed that the response would be approved at the 12 December Council meeting in order to meet the deadline.

4. WPC **AGREED** that it should take appropriate actions to strongly encourage all concerned residents, visitors and friends of Walberswick to engage in the consultation process which would involve attendance at consultation events, responding to the consultation and by submitting written responses to the National grid and elected officials. WPC would make use of social media, the Council website and the Village News.
5. Cllr. Bassinette was **DELEGATED** to continue in her role in relation to Sizewell C and other infrastructure projects to write reports, consultation responses and letters for submission and to liaise with other government bodies, local authorities and organisations such as the Walberswick Common Lands Charity on behalf of the WPC. Cllr Lewis would act as back-up as needed. If timing permitted, Cllr Bassinette would bring consultation drafts to the Council for approval before submission, or when time did not permit, submitted documents and letters would be shared with the Council at the earliest opportunity following submission.

Eight (8) members of the public then left at 8.11pm.

#### **095/22-23      Planning**

**095/22-23.1      The Council noted planning decisions that had been taken previously under delegated authority:**

**095/22-23.1.1      Creek Cottage, The Green      DC/22/3653/FUL**

It was **RESOLVED** to **SUPPORT** this application.

**095/22-23.2                      Applications for consideration**

**095/22-23.2.1      Longwood, Church Field      DC/22/4176/FUL**

It was **RESOLVED** to **STRONGLY OBJECT** to the application due to the impact on the setting of the church, churchyard and conservation area as well as concerns over the design quality, materials and residential amenity.

**095/22-23.2.2      Rosemary Cottage, The Street      DC/22/4271/FUL**

It was **RESOLVED** to **OBJECT**. The proposal to build an office and store, not only in front of the building line but almost touching the front boundary, is an intrusion which would seriously disrupt this attractive entrance to the village and the Conservation Area. All in favour.

#### **096/22-23      Finance Matters 2022/3**

**096/22-23.1      Review bank receipts/budget & payments/budget (as at 31<sup>st</sup> October 2022)**

It was **AGREED** to **ACCEPT** the figures as presented.

**096/22-23.2      To approve the Bank Reconciliation (to 31<sup>st</sup> October 2022)**

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Cllr. Richardson asked why we were holding what looked to be a large amount of cash reserves. It was explained that this represented the full amount of payments (precept and grants) that had been received for the entire fiscal year and that it would be spent down during the balance of the year with approved expenditures. In addition, it included the ring-fenced reserves such as CIL payments.

It was **AGREED** to **APPROVE** the report as presented, Cllr. Bassinette signed the appropriate document.

### **096/22-23.3 Approve items on the Authorisation to Pay Sheet**

It was **AGREED** to pay all items on the sheet. Cllrs. Bassinette and Lewis were authorised to carry out the electronic payments.

### **096/22-23.4 LGA Settlement**

It was noted that the pay deal and associated scales for the 2022/3 financial year had now been agreed and would be applied to WPC staff salaries for the December payroll and backdated to 1<sup>st</sup> April 2022.

### **097/22-23 Finance Matters 2023/4**

#### **097/22-23.1 To review the draft budget, precept and reserves**

Cllr. Lewis explained that this review was the first step in the Council's agreed budget making process. The spending proposals would be considered and then matched to the necessary precept. The starting point was that the precept would not increase and that the recommended 6-12 months of contingency reserves would be held. The hope was to have a finalised budget for approval at the December meeting ready for the precept request that has to be made in January 2023.

It was agreed that several of the proposed line items should be increased by 10% to reflect price increases that were known, including staff salaries. It was also agreed to increase the amount for village maintenance by £500 to budget for a possible additional cut of key footpaths given the experience of the last few years when Suffolk Highways had allowed the paths to be seriously overgrown. In response to questions about the insurance, it was mentioned that the Council had considered the new rate reflected in the budget at the September meeting and that insurance costs for councils had increased across the board.

Regarding the earmarked reserves it was **AGREED** that the IT reserve should grow annually until there was a £1,000 total which could then be used to replace equipment as needed.

It was noted that there would be significant costs associated with playground repairs in relation to the ROSPA report. Therefore, the Chairman proposed and it was **AGREED** to move forward item 102/22-23 to this point to address the ROSPA report, Safety Committee proposals and any associated financial implications for next year's expenditures.

#### **102/22-23 To receive the minutes from the Safety Committee**

Cllr. Lewis explained the Safety Committee's review of the ROSPA report and detailed items raised by the ROSPA inspection. The Council **AGREED** with the suggestions made by the Safety Committee to repair play equipment as outlined in their mark up of the ROSPA report. It was also **AGREED** that plans should be made

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to replace the Rocking Horse and Junior Swing.

In terms of the proposed budget, it was **AGREED** to include £1,000 for the play area for planned maintenance.

In relation to the playground, it was proposed that the Council consider the purchase and installation of a roundabout and that this could become a ring-fenced item in the reserves. This would be brought forward as a separate proposal in due course

In terms of the precept, it was agreed to leave the precept at £20,000.

It was then **AGREED** to authorise the Responsible Financial Officer to make any necessary changes to and to represent the paper at the December meeting as detailed above.

The Responsible Financial Officer then left the meeting at 8.45pm.

The Chair then proposed that standing orders be suspended to allow the meeting to carry on past the two hours allowed. It was **AGREED** to extend the meeting by an additional thirty minutes.

#### **099/22-23 To discuss maintenance on the allotments**

Cllr. Tucker introduced her report and the potential responsibilities of the Parish Council regarding the upkeep of the allotment site.

Cllr. Lewis explained that the allotment land was leased from a local land owner and that the policy of the Council was that the allotments should be cost neutral to the tax payers of Walberswick

The creation of an Allotment holders association was recommended to allotment holders, but it was not in the gift of the Council to do this itself; it would be up the Allotment holders themselves to do so if they wished to

It was resolved that The Parish Clerk would investigate the legal responsibilities of the Parish Council, following which a meeting with allotment holders could be arranged to agree a way forward

Two (2) members of the public left the meeting a 9.09pm.

#### **100/22-23 Oral Updates from Councillors on areas of responsibility if relevant.**

##### **100/22-23.1 Footpath and Highways**

Cllr Sutherland-Rogers emphasised that one of the benches on a key footpath had been in a poor state of repair for at least 5 months. It was agreed to write to the owners of the bench and give a deadline for replacing the bench, or that position would be offered to others wanting to fund a new bench

##### **100/22-23.2 GDPR, SALC and Website**

Cllr. Lewis reported that he had been re-elected as Chair of SALC for East Suffolk South for another year. The Council expressed their congratulations.

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**100/22-23.3 Playing Fields and the Green play area**

Nothing further for the meeting.

**100/22-23.4 Safe Spaces and Car Parks**

Nothing for this meeting.

**100/22-23.5 Sizewell and other power related developments**

Cllr. Bassinette reported that she was attending meetings of the B1125 working group and would be reporting back at an upcoming meeting.

**100/22-23.6 Neighbourhood Plan**

Cllrs. Whiting and Lewis reported on the Executive Summary of the Housing Needs Survey which was now complete. It was also reported that a consultation exercise would take place over the weekend of the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> December in the Heritage Hut.

**100/22-23.7 Village News**

The items to include in the Village News were discussed and agreed. Cllr Sutherland-Rogers agreed that she would discuss with the editor and follow-up with Cllrs Lewis and Bassinette via text as usual.

**101/22-23 Oral Committee reports if relevant.**

There were none.

**103/22-23 Clerk's report**

The Clerk presented his report and there were no questions.

**104/22-23 Matters arising**

It was agreed that Eurolink and Sealink would be on the agenda for December to approve the written response and it was hoped the quotes for replacement play equipment would also be ready too.

**105/22-23 Date of next meeting was confirmed as being Monday, 12 December 2022 at 7pm.**

**The meeting closed at 9.24pm.**

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