

Minutes of the Meeting of Doddinghurst Parish Council held on Thursday 2nd November 2023 at 19.30 in the Village Hall, Church Lane, Doddinghurst, Essex, CM15 0NJ

Present: Cllrs. Mrs D. Dicker (Chairman), Mr G Smith, Mr A. Smith, Mr P. Arnell, Mrs J. LePage, Mr R. McCheyne, Mr M. Capon and Mr D Potter

**Also Present: Mrs C Fuller – Clerk/RFO
County Councillor L. Wagland (for part of the meeting)
Borough Councillor K. Parker**

Prior to the commencement of the meeting the Chairman informed those present of the death of ex-Parish Councillor Alan Farrow, a dear friend and colleague. He did great work for the Parish Council and the community and will be greatly missed. Tributes had been placed in the Doddinghurst Link by the Parish Council and the Village Hall.

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies received from Cllrs. D. Rogers-Harrison (unwell) and P. Arnell (for lateness). Apologies for absence also received from Borough Cllrs. C. Poppy and C. Gelderbloem.

2. Declaration of interests in items arising on the agenda

None.

3.  Minutes of Parish Council Meeting on the 7th September 2023

Item 10. Cllr. LePage asked that she make the application to Gigaclear on behalf of the Village Hall instead of Cllr. G. Smith and he agreed. The minutes were then approved and signed as a correct record.

4. Clerk's Report

- Total funds held as at 24th October 2023 = £182,646.60.
- Bank signatory changes for Santander are still pending and have been chased up via letter to the branch.
- Application to open Current and Savings accounts with Unity Trust Bank are complete. The switch to Unity Trust away from Barclays will be completed during November.
- 2023 risk assessments are almost complete
- The next Community bus trips are 22nd November to London, and 5th December to Bluewater.
- Parish Councillor vacancy has been advertised but no applications have been received. As there are now less than 6 months until the elections the Clerk will apply to leave the position vacant.
- Solicitor has been instructed to register Cemetery and Play Area with the Land Registry following the valuations carried out by Mass & Co of Brentwood.
- Peartree Pond has been tidied up by Cut Above who cleared dead and overhanging trees.
- Children's Play Area – Broadmead Leisure have carried out repair and maintenance works identified in the bi-monthly inspections and by ROSPA, including replacing the goal net. Paths have been weed-killed. The aerial runway set needs to be replaced and Broadmead Leisure have been asked to advise.
- Parish Office. Refurbishment of the Gents Toilet will begin on Monday 6th November. Two additional alarm keypads have been fitted by KJF Electrical which completes the alarm

works. A new, more economical, printer was purchased following the breakdown of the old one. Annual PAT testing has been carried out with no issues identified.

- Fitness Sessions. Funded by BBC, Helen Pratt's outdoor fitness sessions on the Recreation Ground have proved popular. She has been offered the Parish Room on Wednesday lunchtimes to enable the sessions to continue until Christmas. Fund received from BBC = £1,040. Spent so far on fitness sessions = £325.

5. Financial Reports

- a) Bank reconciliation for September & October 2023 was noted and approved.
- b) Schedule of Payments & Receipts for September & October 2023 was noted and approved. It was noted that the half-precept had been received along with the allotment rents.
- c) Members noted the Clerk's Report on the Parish Council's Public Works Loan Board loans. Two loans are outstanding totalling £45,633.91. Annual cost to service the loans is £7564.14.
 - i) £60,000 loan to pay towards essential repairs for the Village Hall.
Date of advance 11/2/2010. Fixed rate loan over 19.5 years. Annual rate of interest 4.33%. Amount outstanding £25,751.60
 - ii) £40,000 loan to pay towards the refurbishment of Priest House.
Date of advance 26/22/2009. Fixed rate loan over 19.5 years. Annual rate of interest 4.01%. Amount outstanding £16,882.31

Members discussed repaying the loans from general reserves. The Clerk advised reviewing the estimated out-turn for end of year 2024 and setting the budget for 2024/25 before considering this.

During this item Cllr. McCheyne reported that grants are available to introduce newts into the countryside.

6. Public Participation

Borough Councillor K. Parker reported on the Waterworks Spring Farm development:

- He has met the developer, highways engineers and an enforcement officer at the development. All passing points on Dagwood Lane have been agreed (no date set) and all Section 106 conditions are being progressed. An objector is causing problems to the developer, but the enforcement officer has identified no breaches of conditions and works are not being affected and will be in full production shortly.
- The Chairman advised that the developer had been asked to host a public meeting and provide a monthly newsletter for the public. Cllr. Parker advised that all the developer's time is being taken up overcoming problems.
- Cllr. G. Smith reported that all lorries appear to be using Mountnessing Lane which is causing blockages. Cllr. Parker advised that the County Council sets the route for site traffic.
- Cllr. Potter stated that the General Purposes Committee discussed a path connecting the development to the village and will ensure that this is delivered.
- Cllr. Parker stated that the developer must install a sub-station and that costs for removing contaminated soil have risen from £1.7m to £3.25m.

Early in the new year the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) will come in at BBC, meaning funds direct from development to communities. Councils with Neighbourhood Plans receive a larger percentage of the fund. The Chairman reminded those present that BBC is still

holding £16,000 for Doddinghurst Parish Council.

7. Feedback from Committees and Other Meetings Attended

- a) Planning Committee 28th September did not take place as it was not quorate.
- b) General Purposes Committee 11th September. Cllr. G. Smith took members through the draft minutes. Members noted that football is being played on Peartree Field without the Parish Council's permission. It was suggested that the grass is left to grow longer, with pathways cut through. This would discourage football games and be beneficial to wildlife.
- c) Planning Committee 26th October. Draft minutes were circulated at the meeting. The Chairman asked whether BBC monitors developments once planning permission has been granted. Cllr. Parker replied that BBC does ensure that planning conditions are met, and a building inspector will inspect. If anyone has any concerns, they should contact the Planning Enforcement Officer. The Chairman also reported that the No. 61 bus contract comes up for renewal in summer 2024. It was noted that smaller buses are being used occasionally. It was further noted that no reply had been received from the Diocese on the proposed future of the Vicarage. The Clerk was asked to write again. The Chairman finally reported that Mr Phil Drane is leaving BBC's Planning Department.
- d) BBPCA 5th October. The Chairman attended on behalf of the Parish Council. She reported that speeding and road conditions are the main concerns across the borough. The industrial estate in W.Horndon proposed for housing will now remain industrial due to their Parish Council's objections.

(County Cllr. L. Wagland arrived at the meeting)

The Chairman expressed the BBPCA's concerns that Parish Councils no longer have a voice at the Local Highways Panel. Cllr. Wagland stated that LHP's are under huge financial pressure, there are not enough funds to finance all the schemes put forward, and there are not enough people to manage the schemes.

(Cllr. P. Arnell arrived at the meeting)

There had been problems with Parish Representatives not representing the parishes, and it should be noted that not all of Brentwood Borough is parished. The removal of the Parish Rep seat had been misrepresented as depriving Parish Councils of their say, but the reality is that there are no funds to distribute and there has been no loss to anyone. The priority is to complete schemes that should have been done last year.

- e) Informal meeting of Parish Councillors 10th October. Members noted the notes of the meeting.

(Borough Cllr. K. Parker left the meeting)

8. Planning Update

Noted. Consideration to be given to the two applications for planning conditions for the Waterworks Spring Farm development.

9. New Grant Scheme

The draft Guidelines & Policy and Application Form were considered and some minor amendments made.

- a) Resolved to approve the Guidelines & Policy.
- b) Resolved to approve the Application Form.

The Finance & Resources Committee to consider the amount of funding to be allocated to the Grant Scheme.

10. 🖱️ Councillor Tablets & Email

The Clerk gave advice quoted by the Information Commissioner's Office, the Essex Association of Local Councils and the National Association of Local Councils on the need for a dedicated email address for each Parish Councillor. She also stated the benefits of issuing a tablet to each Councillor in order to keep Parish Council business separate from personal and other business. A quote from Bits & Bytes to supply a tablet for each Councillor, plus set up of each Parish Councillor email account was circulated with the agenda.

After discussion it was agreed in principle that each Parish Councillor should have a council email address rather than using their own personal accounts, but members did not agree to purchase tablets. The Clerk to investigate whether all Parish Council correspondence could be stored in the Cloud and accessed through members' personal devices via an access code.

11. Alan Farrow

Members considered a fitting tribute in memory of former Parish Councillor Alan Farrow who had recently passed away. It was generally agreed that the planting of a tree in his name would be appropriate.

The Chairman invited Cllr. Wagland to give her report:

- There had been good successes in dealing with floodwater at Barn Mead. Repairs had taken so long due to multiple agencies being involved.
- ECC is providing funding to the Village Hall via its Locality Fund. A much larger fund is coming through and news will come soon about local halls being hubs for children.
- Trees are available for planting in the county.
- Cllr. Capon reported that there are potholes in Church Lane towards Kelvedon Hatch, and the road has collapsed on both sides, along with overgrown vegetation and no pedestrian refuges.
- Regarding overgrown trees etc, Cllr. Wagland advised looking at the Highways Info Map and use the drop-down menu to determine the ownership of the land. Green hatched with no black edge is believed to be ECC land. Green hatched with a black edge is ECC land. If the problem lies on private land, she advised Parish Councils to write to the owner.
- There is no LHP funding for pedestrian refuges, not even for assessment.
- Funding priorities are for gritting, flooding and safety.
- Regarding speeding, a search of the Safer Essex Roads Partnership will reveal all collision data and only serious or fatal accidents will trigger works. Money must be spent where there are the best outcomes.
- Community Speedwatch does stop people offending.

12. Information

- Remembrance Sunday Service at All Saints Church – 12th November. The Chairman is unable to attend and Cllr. Brooks will attend on behalf of the Parish Council and lay a wreath.
- Land for sale in Doddinghurst Road by auction – noted.
- Next Finance & Resources Committee on 15th November will agree the draft budget.
- Next Planning Committee meeting on 23rd November.
- Next Council meeting on 11th January 2024.

The meeting closed at 21.30

Minutes signed:

Date: 11th January 2024