

**Minutes of the Meeting of Doddinghurst Parish Council held on Thursday 17<sup>th</sup> October 2024 at 19.00 in the Parish Room, Church Lane, Doddinghurst, Essex, CM15 0NJ.**

**Present: Cllrs. Mrs D Dicker, Mr G Smith, Mr A Smith & Mrs D Rogers-Harrison**

**Also Present: Borough Cllr C Poppy  
County Cllr L Wagland  
Mrs C Fuller – Clerk/RFO**

**1. Apologies for Absence**

Apologies received from Cllrs D Potter (personal reasons) and T Lockhart (another meeting)

**2. Declaration of interests in items arising on the agenda**

None.

**3.  Minutes of Parish Council Meeting on the 5<sup>th</sup> September 2024**

Approved and signed as a correct record.

**4. Public Participation**

The Chairman thanked Cllr. Wagland for her extensive work and support on the No. 61 bus service issues. She also thanked Cllr. Kendall of the Brentwood Bus & Rail Users Assn. Cllr. Wagland reported:

- She continues her work on bringing the No. 61 bus service to an acceptable level and has written to all concerned. She summoned ECC officers to a meeting. She reported that the previous provider Vectare added the route from Brentwood High Street to Brentwood Station; it wasn't in the ECC contract. However, this and the Wyatts Green loop are both now fully included in the contract. The worst is hopefully now over but any problems should still be reported to her, and ECC will keep the matter under close review. A separate meeting with Nibs, ECC officers and representatives from Doddinghurst and Blackmore Parish Councils is being arranged.  
The Chairman stated that as well as an unreliable service, some drivers are rude to passengers.  
Cllr. G Smith reported that a bus stop is 'missing' in Doddinghurst Road. Cllr. Wagland asked for a photo and precise location.
- The Village Hall has applied for a Community Initiative Fund (CIF) grant.
- The Locality Fund (approx. £700) is available to parishes and applications are required as soon as possible for item that will have a positive impact on the environment, but not routine maintenance.
- New kerbs at All Saints Close are still in good condition, although Tesco has been closed for extensive repair works. No date published for re-opening but may be 24<sup>th</sup> October.
- Potholes at the entrance to Rectory Close have been fixed.
- Kerbstones at Middle Green are loose as they sit on top of concrete. There is a pilot scheme to fix them by adhering them to the concrete.
- Brentwood Borough Council has received two recommendations from the Ombudsman regarding how they deal with environmental nuisance or breaches (eg fumes, noise). BBC has had to change its policies. Any complaints sent to BBC must be dealt with in accordance with the recommended policies. It was agreed to compile a list of complaints for discussion at the next Parish Council meeting.

Cllr. Poppy reported:

- Cars parked for sale at top of Lime Grove – as long as they are parked legally, nothing can be done. He and Cllr. Wagland will liaise with the South Essex Parking Partnership to ensure that there is no illegal or dangerous parking.
- Deal Tree Surgery – Parish Councils are lobbying for increased parking to cope with increased population. Cllr. Poppy's advice was to leave the matter with Cllr. McCheyne who is monitoring the issue.

(Cllr. Wagland left the meeting)

## 5. Clerk's Report

- Staff Vacancy – There are 5 applicants for the Litter Picker / Playground Inspector job.
- Burial Ground - The gravedigger has topped up and seeded some sunken graves. Grass is still being cut and strimmed by Joe Webb in the absence of Ken Roast. Next ashes interment will be on 22<sup>nd</sup> October.
- Open Spaces - Work to lay a hard surface at the main entrance to Budgens Field along with a padlocked gate has been completed by MD Landscapes. Hedge cutting at Peartree Field will take place between now and mid-November.
- Nature Trail - No news from the developer at Waterworks Spring Farm. Deputy Clerk and I walked the route together and thought about the logistics of laying a path through the woods to form the Nature Trail. Although nothing is impossible, it would not be easy due to the length of the trail, uneven terrain, and numerous tree roots in the way. Access for construction machinery would be very difficult (over the Rec Ground, through the woods, over Budgens Field and into the second woods). The work would have to be done in the summer / dry weather. A local contractor prepared a specification for a path, without actually walking the route, but this does not take the above difficulties into account. The Parish Council will have to seriously consider whether to proceed with this project and this issue is on the agenda when the Budget is discussed. The amount set aside as an Earmarked Reserve for this project is £20,000 which we suggest would be nowhere near enough to provide a proper pathway for the distance required. This project requires further consideration.
- Allotments - The next year's tenancy agreements and invoices have been sent out and most tenants have renewed from 1<sup>st</sup> October. Now available – 3 full plots and 1 half plot. There is no waiting list now so the empty plots have been cleared of weeds and covered in black membrane by Joe Webb (we have a supply of membrane in the office). One tenant had a plot under the trees for which 1p was charged. It contained some old fruit frames which have fallen into disrepair. Joe has removed the frames and the plot is being left unlet. A member of the committee has asked for an end of season skip so one has been ordered for the first weekend of November.
- Defibrillator/Tesco. When Tesco re-opens I will arrange for KJF Electrical to replace the defibrillator with our new one on the side of the building.
- No. 61 Bus - The service continues to be unsatisfactory and all reports are being forwarded to Cllr. Lesley Wagland. Lesley has had a meeting with officers at ECC and Nibs Buses and an improved service has been assured, but the complaints continue. Latest correspondence from Lesley had been circulated to members. The Clerk at

Blackmore and I both felt that a separate meeting which can be attended by a representative from both Doddinghurst & Blackmore Parish Councils should be arranged.

- Community Bus - Trip to Colchester took place on 15<sup>th</sup> October, thanks to driver Roger McCheyne. Unfortunately, some people didn't turn up due to illness and there were only 5 passengers. With no one on the waiting list we could not fill the bus. Monthly trips up to December are fully booked. A meeting of the driver volunteers will take place on 30<sup>th</sup> October. Trips for the first half of 2025 will be planned. Whether to apply for a Section 10 Permit from the Office of the Traffic Commissioner is under review.
- Office - Annual PAT testing on 17<sup>th</sup> October. Nasty smell in the building has gone following drain cleaning. Further jetting to prevent it returning is on the agenda.
- Planters - Autumn/winter planting due soon.
- Brentwood Borough Council's Review of Polling Districts, Polling Places and Polling Stations - closing date of 31<sup>st</sup> October. Nothing affects Doddinghurst, but the notice has been put on our notice boards.

## 6. Financial Reports

- a) Resolved to approve the Bank Reconciliation for September 2024.  
Cash in hand = £152,864.33
- b) Resolved to approve the Schedule of Payments & Receipts for September 2024.

## 7. Feedback from Committees & Other Meetings Attended

Resolved to note the following:

- a) BBPCA meeting held on 19<sup>th</sup> September. Attended by Chairman & Clerk.

## 8. Co-Option

One applicant who had expressed an interest in being co-opted had withdrawn her interest.

## 9. Grant Application from Doddinghurst Wellbeing Hub - £500.00

The Clerk reported that the Deputy Clerk had been successful in securing a Micro-Grant of £900 from the Essex Association of Local Councils for the Wellbeing Hub to support its weekly lunches. The grant was made to the Parish Council for distribution to the Hub on production of receipts. It was resolved to grant £500 from the Parish Council. This will enable to lunches to continue into the New Year. Members thanked the Deputy Clerk for her work on this.

## 10. Drainage CCTV Survey Report

Resolved to instruct Drainage & Hygiene Services Ltd to:

- a) carry out drainage high pressure water jetting - £180 + VAT
- b) carry out drainage lining works - £985 + VAT
- c) supply and fit new manhole cover and frame - £250 + VAT

## 11. Planning Update

Noted.

## 12. 🖐️ New Planning Applications

### a) Greenbaze, Days Lane, Doddinghurst

Upward extension to create chalet bungalow with bedrooms in the loft area.

Ref: 24/00886/HHA

RESOLVED: NO OBJECTION. It complies with BE14 (i) in the Local Plan and there will be no harm to the openness of the Green Belt or adverse impact to neighbouring properties.

### b) Castleton, Days Lane, Doddinghurst

Demolish garage, add single storey side extension to dwelling and construct new detached garage.

Ref: 24/00930/HHA

RESOLVED: NO OBJECTION. It complies with BE14 (i) in the Local plan and there will be no harm to the openness of the Green Belt or advert impact to neighbouring properties. The site is well screened with mature trees and has a wide frontage providing adequate space for off street parking.

### c) Farm View, Doddinghurst Road, Doddinghurst

Application for a Lawful Certificate for an existing use or operation or activity including those in breach of a planning condition for a mixed used residential and car sales.

Ref: 24/00700/S191

Thanks were given to Cllr. Poppy for ensuring that the Parish Council and residents are consulted on this application. It was noted that parking, illegal or otherwise, outside the property or on the road is not taken into account as part of the application, although the Council wished to express its strong views on this.

RESOLVED: OBJECTION. Inappropriate use of a front garden, additional parking on the road causing an obstruction at the junction and danger to pedestrians and vehicles either when stationary or moving cars around.

## 13. 🖐️ Banking

- a) Annual review of the Council's bank signatories in accordance with Financial Regulation 5.4. Noted.
- b) Resolved to add Cllr. Alan Smith to the list of authorised signatories for Unity Trust Bank

## 14. Budget

- a) Forecasted Final Position to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2025 was noted.
- b) Proposals for the 2025/2026 Budget were considered and it was agreed:
  - To leave £20,000 in earmarked reserves for the Nature Trail.
  - To research new play equipment – a slide on 'the hump' and some sensory activity boards.

**15. 🖐️ Litter Picker / Playground Inspector Vacancy**

- a) It was noted that five applications have been received.
- b) Resolved to delegate responsibility to the Clerk of selecting a candidate by interview and references.
- c) Resolved that, if there is a time gap between selecting a candidate and their start date, that IDC Greenscapes be asked to extend their temporary contract accordingly.
- d) Resolved, if the interview process does not produce a suitable candidate, to continue to use the services of IDC Greenscapes until 31<sup>st</sup> March 2025 at the latest.

**16. 🖐️ Staff Payroll**

Members considered the Clerk's report and two quotations for outsourcing the staff payroll to an external company and resolved to employ the services of DM Payroll Services of Kidderminster at a cost of £268 per year/£22.33 per month plus a £50 one-off set up fee, for four employees.

(Cllr. Poppy left the meeting)

**17. Other Urgent Information**

- a) To note that the next meeting of the Parish Council will be held on 28<sup>th</sup> November 2024.
- b) The Clerk circulated template 'Register of Members' Interest' forms to members as required.
- c) Cllr. Lockhart had asked the Clerk to report that he had received a response to his query from the Head of Property at the Diocese of Chelmsford. "The future of the vicarage is still being discussed with the PCC and I have not received any update on the conclusion of that review. Benefice houses are subject to ecclesiastical legal process which is ongoing. I will update you when possible."
- d) Cllr. Lockhart had asked the Clerk to canvas opinions as to whether members would like their photos and a short personal statement printed in the next edition of the Doddinghurst Link. There was no support for this suggestion.

**18. 🖐️ Exclusion of Pres & Public.**

In view of the confidential personnel business to be transacted it was resolved to exclude the press and public (none were present).

**19. 🖐️ Salary Review**

Resolved to bring the Deputy Clerk's salary up to 75% of the Clerk's salary by increasing from SCP18 to SCP20. An increase of 3.6%. Backdated to March 2024.

**The meeting closed at 21.10**

Minutes signed:

Date: 28<sup>th</sup> November 2024