

THORPE MORIEUX PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE PARISH COUNCIL MEETING

HELD ON 6 JANUARY 2022 AT 8PM IN THE VILLAGE HALL

Present: Chair Cllr Louisa Pepper, Cllrs John Squirrell, Ashley Simpson, Jules O'Brien and Garry Russell. No members of the public present.

1. Apologies for absence:

- i. Clerk was unable to be in attendance at this meeting due to ongoing treatment for health issue. Cll Lee sent his apologies, he was unwell. District and County Cllr Robert Lindsay away on annual leave, but sent his apologies and a report for the meeting.
- ii. Cllrs consented to the apologies

2. Members' Declaration of Interest:

- i. To receive disclosures of pecuniary and non-pecuniary interests for the agenda under discussion – none;
- ii. To receive declarations of gifts of hospitality received – none;
- iii. To consider requests for dispensation for pecuniary interests for the agenda under discussion – none.

3. Minutes to consider and approve Minutes of meeting on 4 November 2021. Cllr Russell proposed that they were a true and accurate record of the meeting, and Cllr Squirrell seconded.

4. Matters Arising:

Parishioner raised question regarding play equipment on land at Whitethorn Ley.

Nick Elliott, Public Realm Officer at BDC has confirmed by email dated 18 November 2021 that he has looked through both a copy of the register and the Transfer Deed regarding this piece of land from BDC to the Parish Council and he does not believe that there is anything to preclude the PC from erecting play equipment on the land.

However, Mr Elliott suggests that the PC should carry out a consultation with its residents to ascertain what if any) equipment is desired by the parish as a whole – it may be the desire of one or a few residents but other residents may have a different view. BDC/Mr Elliot would be happy to provide some guidance on carrying out a consultation, should it get to that stage.

The Parish Council considered and discussed the request further from the parishioner who enquired about play equipment, now that they had further information and advice/guidance regarding the cost, insurance, maintenance and having liaised with neighbouring villages that have play equipment. It was agreed that Thorpe Morieux

Signed.....

Dated.....

is such a small hamlet village and that we don't have the resources to pay for and maintain an area with play equipment. Some concern regarding ongoing management and cost not just with regards to the initial outlay and installation.

Babergh draft Local Plan

Cllr Squirrell advised at the meeting on 4 November that government had rejected parts of the Babergh draft Local Plan. Clerk asked District Cllr Robert Lindsay to provide information about this. Please see report at item 5 of these Minutes for further information. The draft Local Plan has been stalled and decisions regarding development are not likely to change in the next 2 years.

5. District and County Cllr Robert Lindsay report:

Babergh Planning – Joint Local Plan delay.

During the Inspectors hearings into the new Joint Local Plan, the inspectors made clear that they felt that policies around determining settlement hierarchy and spatial distribution of housing (Ipswich fringe, towns and core villages having priority for development) were not robustly justified nor explained. Also, they felt that the decisions around why some housing site allocations were approved while others were not (housing site allocation policy) were not made clear.

Inspectors also complained about a lack of clarity on open space policy and on gipsy site allocation (this last particularly applies to Mid Suffolk).

The inspectors have now asked the two councils to resubmit the Joint local plan with the key bits they didn't like removed.

That would create a "part 1" plan that could be approved faster. It would use the settlement boundaries and open space policies from the existing plan rather than the new proposed ones.

The more controversial aspects will have to be submitted later as a "part 2" of the plan, once Babergh have better explained their reasoning for housing allocations, spatial distribution, settlement hierarchy, open space and gipsy site policy. This will take much more than a year and may have to be reconsulted.

This was agreed by the two councils with the inspectors at a hearing on December 16th which you can watch here <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-mz6ZDQzMFQ>

What this means for villages like Thorpe Morieux is that there is very likely to be a JLP approved this year but this approval will provide no more and no less protection against development than we already have with existing policies. Part 1 will only improve such things as the environmental standards of any proposed houses.

It is only when part 2 is approved – which could be a couple of years away – will the protection against development on green fields and open countryside be improved.

The fact that we have more than a six year land supply (beating the five year's required) is a big protection however.

Play equipment at Whitehorn Ley

At the time of writing, we hadn't heard back from the officer to Nicola's question about what sort of consultation would be required but my reading of what he has already said is that it is basically up to you. You might want to do a piece in the Thorpe Times saying what you are proposing and asking for comments. You could couple that with letters through the doors at the houses in the neighbourhood of the open space. I had thought that space was being maintained as a meadow habitat. So you might want to make clear what your plans are for the whole area.

The point is that you don't want to go to the expense of installing and more importantly, **maintaining equipment**, if hardly anyone is going to use it.

I'd have thought you'd need some kind of trust/committee to ensure the equipment is maintained. Another village in my patch has problems with wear and tear on their play equipment and the surface around it (mud). Residents complain that their children/grandchildren can't use it, but no one is prepared to do the voluntary work necessary to do something about it.

Babergh - parking and political row

Babergh's cabinet has been rejigged, with the member for environment leaving the Conservative group and joining the independents in a row over the car parking charges. She remains on the cabinet but two more Conservatives (who are for scrapping the plan to charge for parking) have been appointed to the cabinet. One of them, the new portfolio holder for Environment, announced to the press, without consulting cabinet, that the plan to introduce charges has been delayed indefinitely – at least until after the next Babergh election May 2023.

Babergh move to scrap cabinet system and reintroduce committee system

In the new year, Babergh council will be debating whether to change from a cabinet system – whereby 8 or 9 individuals appointed by the leader make all the decisions, with no voting by other councillors – to a committee system whereby seats on each committee are allocated on a basis proportionate to the size of each political group and major decisions are approved by all councillors at full council. I and our Green group favour the latter option.

Suffolk budget proposals – 4% council precept rise, below the 5% cap

Suffolk County Council is proposing a 4% rise in council tax for next year. This is made up of the maximum 2% they are allowed on general budget and 2% rise for social care precept (below the 3% cap they are allowed). They had a similar rise last year. They are having to dip into reserves to meet a forecast budget deficit for the year. Savings they were hoping to make by implementing new ways of working particularly with Special Educational Needs and adult social care – have not happened as soon as they would like.

6. Public Forum: no members of the public present.
7. Correspondence: (all correspondence has been circulated to Cllrs ahead of the meeting). Clerk had circulated an email to Cllrs ahead of the meeting from the PCC asking that if anyone was interested in commenting on the PCC desire to increase individual households contributions to policing (included within each households annual Council Tax bill) then they had been provided with a link to make their comments on that proposal and a deadline by which to comment.
8. Precept:
Cllrs considered a proposed increase in the hourly wage paid to the Clerk. Currently on payscale 4 (very low) at £9.80 per hour. Cllrs provided Cllrs with the NALC 2020-2021 National Salary Award. Payscale level 9 was proposed at £10.86 per hour. Cllr Russell proposed and Cllr Gagen seconded.

Cllrs then went on to review the draft Precept prepared by the Clerk. The total of the proposed Precept for 2022/2023 is £3593. This compares to a Precept in 2020/2021 in the sum of £3455 and in 2021/2022 a total of £3418.

Cllr Simpson proposed to agree the Precept for 2022/2023 in the sum of £3593, and Cllr Squirrell seconded. Motion carried.

Thorpe Times grant was discussed and the Parish Council agreed that they would like the TT to continue to provide colour copy and that if the advertising income doesn't allow this the PC could consider increasing the funding. Cllr O'Brien will speak with the TT Editors and bring any proposals back to the PC.

9. Clerk's Report: - no matters to report for this meeting.
10. Cllrs reports:

Cllr Squirrell gave a report from the Suffolk Police website. Two more crimes reported in TM and investigated since the last meeting. Annually, there had been 7 crimes in the last year in the village.

Piece of hedge between Greatfields and old phone box – PC agreed to let Strutts know that this needs to be done as it is now half way across the pavement and is overgrown.

Second post box – has still not been replaced. Clerk to contact Cllr Lindsay to request his help in getting it reinstated.

Cllr Russell raised the issue of flooding on Green Lane. PC agreed the following (a) letter to be sent to Strutts to look into managing the ditches in that area; (b) Cllr Russell to approach highways to see if they can suck out the gullies.

11. Planning

- (i) Application for scoping opinion – DC/21/06672. Request for formal Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Scoping Opinion – Bury St Edmunds to Colchester Water Pipeline Scheme affecting parishes as per Schedule A.
Noted that at BDC Parish Councils are not statutory consultees but are notified for the purposes of openness and transparency and there is no obligation for any PC to respond.

Cllrs discussed and agreed that the full planning application is likely to come in the Summer when the Parish Council will consider commenting.

12. Date of next meeting: 3 March 2022 at 8pm in the Village Hall.