

THORPE MORIEUX PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE PARISH COUNCIL MEETING

HELD ON 9 MARCH 2023 2023 AT 8PM IN THE VILLAGE HALL

Present: Chair Cllr Jules O'Brien, Cllrs Ashley Simpson, Keith Lee, Garry Russell, Louisa Pepper, John Gagen and John Squirrell.

Parish Clerk, Nicola Sturgeon was present at the meeting.

District and County Cllr Robert Lindsay was present at the meeting.

No members of the public attended the meeting.

1. Apologies for absence:

- i. No apologies – all Cllrs present;
- ii. Cllrs consented to accept the apologies - not applicable.

2. Members' Declaration of Interest:

- i. To receive disclosures of pecuniary and non-pecuniary interests for the agenda under discussion – Cllr Squirrel declared an interest in item 10 planning matter due to proximity of his own home. Chair Cllr O'Brien declared an interest in any discussion that may take place at the meeting in relation to any narrowing of Green Lane.
- 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:

Minutes of the meeting on 12 January 2023 – Cllr Pepper proposed and Cllr Russell seconded that they were a true and accurate record of the meeting.

Minutes of the meeting on 2 February 2023 – Cllr Squirrell proposed and Cllr Russell seconded that they were a true and accurate record of the meeting.

4. Matters arising:

Planning applications

DC/22/05136 – Land to the West of Bury Road, Thorpe Morieux. Full Planning Application – Erection of 1 No detached dwelling (amended scheme to that approved under DC/20/04096). **Scheme amended further and therefore planning matter on the Agenda for the meeting on 9 March 2023 for consideration.**

DC/23/00281 – 4 Blacksmiths Lane, Thorpe Morieux. Householder Application – Erection of two storey side and single storey front porch and rear extensions. **Permission Granted.**

Signed.....

Dated.....

DC/22/05374 – Potash Farm, Cockfield Road, Thorpe Morieux. Application for a Lawful Development Certificate for an existing Use, Operation or Activity including those in breach of a planning condition. Town and Country Planning Act 1990 as amended – Continued use of The Stables as a Dwellinghouse. **Still ‘Awaiting Decision’.**

Following on from discussion at January PC meeting a letter raising concerns about due diligence was sent to Arthur Charvonia the Chief Executive at Babergh District Council.

Response as follows:-

“Although the law requires us to treat the different elements as standalone issues i.e to charge council tax and register electors to vote even if the property in question does not have planning permission. I have requested that we do a regular data check to flag if people are trying to register for such things as a property without planning permission so that we can take any necessary planning enforcement action.”

The PC asked District Cllr Robert Lindsay to get clarification over what is meant by “regular data check”. How often is that, define ‘regular’? Should it not be every application for a new dwelling and just ask the Applicant for the planning application number and if they cannot provide it then further enquiries should be made as to whether they have planning permission or not and whether enforcement action should be taken.

DC/22/06309 – Anglian Water Services Bury to Colchester Pipeline. **Awaiting decision.**

Several comments/questions raised by PC with Anglian Water as follows:-

- (1) How will any pipeline installed have its route marked on the ground to ensure that any markers are in keeping with the rural location? The matter was referred to the technical team at Anglian Water and awaiting their response;
- (2) Can the poor water pressure in Thorpe Morieux be resolved whilst AW are carrying out the pipeline works in the village? The new proposed pipeline directs water to and from reservoirs, which then feeds to existing networks which brings water to household taps. It would not improve water pressure issues in the village but AW have put the Parish Council in contact with the Network Services Manager at AW (Cllr Squirrell is liaising with him) to ascertain what is some of the water pressure issues such as repeated burst mains pipes to see if matters can be improved.

Green Lane – road reclassification

SCC Highways reference number 310889.

Last update on 12 January 2023 stating:-

SCC Highways submitted relevant forms to GeoPlace. No further update for this meeting.

Protecting the grass area on the Village Triangle

The PC have already agreed that they could not consider any works to improve the green area until such time as they had a 'windfall' sum of money, for example from a CIL payment, was received by the PC.

In the meantime County Cllr Robert Lindsay has spoken with SCC Highways and shown them the photographs taken by Cllr Squirrel and their response is as follows:-

"...damage to the verge is probably caused by large agricultural vehicles and kerbing the green would therefore not prevent those vehicles from over running the green and moving the kerbstone and still muddying up the grass."

"...Highways would not prioritise repairing those kerbs, so you have crooked kerbs for some years"

"...However, I did ask for a cost estimate for a kerb for the triangle, which I now have. It would cost between £6,900 and £8,420...and I would not be able or willing to contribute more than a token amount to this cost, especially given all the issues I have outlined."

Currently, the PC could not afford to pay for this project.

Postbox

The newly replaced post box had not been in use as it was sealed up, but it would seem that it now unsealed and hopefully operational.

5. District and County Cllr report

Babergh CEO promise to cross check re planning enforcement

Following a fairly lengthy correspondence with me, Babergh's chief executive has agreed to ensure that planning team regularly cross checks electoral register data to see if anyone is registering a property without planning permission.

Coronation road closures

The county council is waiving the fee for road closures for villages who want a Coronation street party. Details on their website.

Babergh admits failure to meet health and safety standards for its tenants

The council has reported itself to the Social Housing Regulator for failing to keep up with checks on gas, electrical and asbestos safety checks for its council tenants.

Signed.....

Dated.....

Councillors were told at the end of November that the council had begun its own “in depth review” using two outside specialists. The first phase of the review included compliance, we were told. At the end of January they announced that:

- More than 150 properties had not received an annual gas safety inspection. Also carbon monoxide monitors were not yet installed in all relevant properties
- It did not have valid communal asbestos surveys for all its communal blocks. The Council reported over 70 (over 70%) of re-inspection asbestos surveys were overdue.
- More than 150 domestic properties do not have a current electrical condition report (meant to be every five years).

Because the council had begun an urgent programme to remedy the matter, the regulator said it would not take statutory action but would monitor the council closely.

Floods and drainage backlog

There are a number of long-running flood issues in our Cosford division, including frequent flooding near the bridge between Kettlebaston and Preston St Mary which are not being prioritised by the county’s drainage team. I requested details of what jobs had been done. Just 17 of the nearly 1000 flood and drain problems on Suffolk county council’s list have been completed. The extra £10m that was allocated in Dec 2021 to be spent over 3.5 years is being used for “low hanging fruit” – minor civil works – that are not in this list, and that work has been speeded up. Climate scientists have been predicting an increase in rain fall for some time so it is a shame drainage repairs and maintenance appears to have been underfunded over the years.

County Council budget

For the 2023/24 budget the county council has now formally voted to increase the council tax precept by 4%, below the 5% cap they are allowed. An amendment by our political group (Green, LibDem, Independent) to raise it to just below the 5% cap to help fund social care and public transport was voted down.

£1bn Highways contract awarded to Milestone Infrastructure

The county’s Highways maintenance contract with Kier Group is due to expire on October 1st. Kier failed to make the three-strong shortlist for the re-tendered contract which has now been awarded to Milestone, part of venture capital-owned M Group Services. Milestone’s road maintenance business was created by buying

Signed.....

Dated.....

Swedish group Skanska’s UK facilities management arm. It will be responsible for maintenance of roads, pavements, rights of way, drainage, hedge trimming, construction of new road schemes, snow-clearing and gritting.

Babergh Budget News

Babergh Council agreed at its last meeting to put up its council tax precept by 2.99% for next year – the equivalent of an extra £5.30 a year, or 10p a week for residents in a Band D property.

Inflation and other pressures mean the net cost of delivering services is set to increase by almost 20% from £10.43m in 2022/3 to £12.45m in 2023/24, while the cost of running and maintaining the council’s housing stock has already increased by 50%.

Council tenants will also see a 7% increase in rents to try to keep pace with increased costs and ensure necessary investment in repairs and maintenance.

Housing

Following an in-depth review of the Councils’ Building Services the Council have self-referred themselves to the regulator for social housing. A number of properties were found to be failing Health & Safety compliance.

Detailed investigations showed that some of homes were not compliant, and that the current situation was:

In Babergh, of 3,502 properties

- 116 did not have an up-to-date electrical safety report.
- 72 were overdue a gas safety inspection.
- 32 were overdue asbestos re-inspection surveys.

A Regulatory Notice was issued for this breach of compliance. This means it will now monitor Babergh and Mid Suffolk Councils and will meet with the Council regularly to ensure the necessary changes are being made.

New Depot funding

The last Babergh council meeting also agreed to allow officers to add £6m to the capital budget to start the search for a single depot across Mid Suffolk and Babergh. Mid Suffolk council agreed the same proposal. The plan is to close three aging sites and consolidate them into a single 8-acre site at a location probably close to the A14, for the councils’ 200 shared operational staff and fleet – including waste services, public realm, and building services and repairs teams.

6. Public Forum:

No members of the public were present at the meeting.

Signed.....

Dated.....

7. Correspondence: (all correspondence has been circulated to Cllrs ahead of the meeting)

8. Clerk's Report:

(i) Schedule of items awaiting approval:

N Sturgeon	salary chq435	228.06	LGA1972
------------	---------------	--------	---------

All Cllrs present agreed expenditure

(ii) Income and expenditure from 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023

Income

Precept - 1 st of 2 payments	1796.50
---	---------

Precept – 2 nd of 2 payments	1796.50
---	---------

3593.00

Expenditure

SALC Membership	146.17
-----------------	--------

BHIB Insurance	391.19
----------------	--------

Clerk salary	1629.00
--------------	---------

TMVH – screening and lighting upgrade	1657.71
---------------------------------------	---------

Thorpe Times	400.00
--------------	--------

PCC – grass cutting	200.00
---------------------	--------

David Barrett – website	92.00
-------------------------	-------

Jessie Allen – grass cutting	600.00
------------------------------	--------

TMVH – reimburse defib pads	107.58
-----------------------------	--------

TMVH – hall hire	120.00
------------------	--------

5343.65

Signed.....

Dated.....

Cllrs noted the information and understood it would form the basis of the audit for 2022-2023.

9. Cllrs Reports

Cllr Squirrell gave an update from the Suffolk Police website. In the village there were no reported crime in December 2022. In January 2023 there was 1 reported crime. In the previous 12 months to date there was a total of 7 reported crimes, which is slightly lower than the recent 12 month rolling reported crime figures for the village.

Cllr Pepper confirmed that she had reported the potholes following the meeting in January, and although SCC Highways had been out and looked and them and painted yellow lines around them but nothing had happened since and the yellow lines are now fading. *Clerk will look at the reporting numbers and ask Cllr Robert Lindsay to see when Highways will do these works.*

Cllrs reported a methane smell coming from a mushroom compost heap in the village. The smell is very, very pungent and smells like there is a gas leak. Some villagers in various areas of the village have complained to Cllrs. Whilst people generally agree that living in a rural farming community you expect some smells, this mushroom compost smell is particularly offensive. Following discussion it was agreed that one of the Cllrs would go and have a look at the area and then email Cllrs with their findings and they can agree a way forward thereafter.

Cllr Gagen reported that the Village Hall Committee had organised a village litter pick for Sunday 2nd April 2023, meeting in the Village Hall at 9am when tea/coffee and a bacon/sausage roll would be available for those joining in the litter pick. The Parish Council thanked the Village Hall Committee for organizing this event.

Cllr Gagen reported that a new roadside hedge had started to be planted at the Old Chapel Barn. It was very near to the roadside, he felt that it was within a metre of the road as it was roadside of a telegraph pole and nearer to the road than the existing fencing. Cllrs spoke with County Cllr Robert Lindsay about the matter who advised that SCC would prefer in the first instance if Parish Councils wrote to the homeowner and if the matter is not resolved then to refer it to SCC. *Cllrs asked the Clerk to write to the homeowner about this and also the footpath along the side of the property that is difficult to pass at present.*

10. Planning

- (i) DC/22/05136 – Land to the West of Bury Road, Thorpe Morieux (Wheelwrights). Full Planning Application – Erection of 1No detached dwelling (amended scheme to that approved under DC/20/04096)

Signed.....

Dated.....

Cllrs commented that the build quality seems to have improved under this application and there are less windows overlooking. Some concern that no dimensions on the plans and wary that if original building is knocked down how do you know how big it was. No objection.

11. Date of next meeting: Annual Parish Council Meeting on 11 May 2023.

Meeting closed: 9.40pm