

Minutes of Hitcham Parish Council meeting held on Thursday 12th July 2021 in the Village Hall at 7.30pm in line with current Covid-19 requirements

Present: Allan Scott, Chairman; Pauline Squirrell; Wendy Crease; Brian Hubbard; two residents and Doreen Neun, Clerk/RFO

1) Apologies for Absence:

These had been received from Cllr Robert Lindsay and Rob Whiting.

2) Declaration of Pecuniary Interest:

None was declared.

3) Minutes of Meeting held on Monday 6th May 2021:

These were approved as being a true record of that meeting. Proposed: Mrs Squirrell

Seconded: Mr Hubbard

4) Matters Arising from Meeting held on 6th May 2021:

- a) Neighbourhood Plan and Neighbourhood Watch Scheme: Very little can be done until lockdown is over. An offer of help had been received with regard to the Neighbourhood Plan which Mr Scott will look into. A meeting with regard to the Neighbourhood Watch Scheme should be possible in the near future and all those who had shown an interest had been contacted and all wished to still be involved.
- b) Co-optation of Parish Councillors: Mrs Crease had approached the resident mentioned at the last meeting but the person felt that as they had recently taken on a new voluntary role they were unable to take on another committee at present. Another name was suggested and Mrs Crease again agreed to approach them. Now restrictions are starting to lift it will hopefully enable more people to be approached.
- c) Church Green oak tree: Mrs Squirrell felt she had given Gadd Brothers the go ahead to trim the tree, but nothing had happened. They may not do it at this time of year unless it is causing a danger. Mrs Squirrell will contact them again.
- d) Dog and Litter Bin/SID batteries purchases: The Clerk had ordered all items and would let the Councillors know when they had been received. She had ensured all invoices were addressed to the Council so VAT can be reclaimed where appropriate. The Clerk was also asked to obtain quotes for grit bins.

5) County & District Councillor's Report:

In Cllr Lindsay's absence the Clerk went through his report which covered the following points, and a copy of which is kept on file,:

- a) New Look County Council: Following the County Council elections in May, when Cllr Lindsay was re-elected, the Green Party became the main opposition group to the ruling Conservatives. They agreed to again join forces with the 4 LibDems and 2 independents to make a 15 strong group which will give them a seat on all major committees. Cllr Lindsay is group deputy leader for the first year.
- b) New cabinet: The report listed those who now fill the major roles at County level. Matthew Hicks remains the leader with Richard Rout as his deputy.
- c) School travel: Cllr Lindsay has approached Rachel Hood, cabinet member for education, regarding the problem of split villages where siblings have to go to a different school in order to get a free bus and she has agreed to talk to a senior officer regarding this problem.
- d) SEND Review: A team from Lincolnshire County Council will carry out the provision review, but Rachel Hood is to order an independent review in the way Suffolk County Council communicates with parents and carers of SEND (Special Educational Needs) children. The report will be published on the Council's web site. cont....

e) Bus Services: Although the Government had offered Suffolk the benefit of some bus funding which must agree 'enhanced partnerships' with commercial bus operators by the autumn, it does not appear to affect large parts of rural areas like ours where bus services are already non-existent or minimal and largely dependent on dial a ride services.

f) Babergh agreed £32,849 funding to identify wildlife corridors: Babergh and Mid Suffolk Councils have agreed to jointly fund £72,000 towards biodiversity mapping and a tree canopy survey to determine suitable tree and hedge planting locations and to identify wildlife habitats and local green spaces.

g) Council property company delays £1.5m interest payments to Babergh and Mid Suffolk: Cifco, the commercial property venture set up by Babergh and Mid Suffolk four years ago is having to defer the £1.5m interest payments over the next three years. There is a chance the Council may never recoup this money. The retention is to ensure Cifco can continue to service its properties and cover other running costs as it recovers from the effects of the Covid pandemic.

6) Police Report:

Nothing has appeared on the police reporting portal since the last meeting and neither has anything been reported to the Parish Council direct.

7) Community Play Area Report:

a) A decision on whether to replace the broken gate or close the gap and use the other gate off the back footpath needs to be made.

b) It was agreed that when possible a village work day to carry out basic repairs could be advertised. When appropriate Mr Scott and the Clerk will sort a date.

c) Adult fitness equipment: There had been a mixed reaction to this suggestion, but there was quite a lot of enthusiasm and interest and it was agreed to look into the possibility further. Mel Reiger had offered to assist with instruction if any equipment was installed. It was agreed Mr Scott and Mel would do a feasibility study and Mr Scott would report back. There are grants available for part of the cost.

8) Chairman's Report:

Mr Scott had nothing further to add above items being discussed at the meeting.

9) Correspondence:

a) The Clerk had received a couple of concerns from residents regarding the hoardings and flags along the roadside in front of the new development on the Causeway. She had replied with official details of what is allowed with noise and safety being the main reasons for the hoardings. With regard to the advertising there were Town and Country planning regulations that have to be met. The planning enforcement department had been contacted with regard to the hoardings and flags and they are looking into it. It was noted from the floor that as the development was less than 10 dwellings only one flag should be displayed and although the developer can advertise on the hoardings, the residents concerned felt that it was too much for the surroundings. The name of the new road is incorrect on the hoarding and although confirmation has been sent to Babergh the Clerk will check the correct name has been noted.

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3/cont...(12.7.21/correspondence)

b) Welcome booklet: The Clerk has found a copy of the most recent booklet and will see how up-to-date it is and how relevant the information it contains is now. It was agreed that the inclusion of a footpath map would be helpful.

c) An anonymous letter had been received regarding the responses to the survey on the bells chiming the hours. Regrettably the Parish Council cannot respond to anonymous correspondence.

d) Queens Platinum Jubilee bank holiday weekend June 2022: Information has been received regarding a beacon lighting ceremony to take place on 2nd June 2022. It was suggested that the Village Hall committee may be interested in this event and the Clerk will forward the information on to their chairman.

10) Planning Matters:

The following had been received since the last Parish Council meeting:

a) Araucaria, The Causeway: severance of garden and erection of single storey detached dwelling and garage: The application papers had already been forwarded to the Parish Councillors and although there was no objection with regard to the building there was concern about the entrance off The Causeway due to the possibility of increased vehicular use. The Council was assured that the driveway would be widened by the cutting back of a hedge with the agreement of the property owner at the entrance to the driveway.

b) Brick House, Bury Road: This is a second application for a single dwelling and detached cartlodge. The previous application was refused by Babergh and the following appeal was also turned down. The building plan remains the same, but the driveway appears to be amended due to previous concerns over the position and size of the entrance splay. The application papers had been forwarded to Councillors and there was still concern about the entrance and it was still felt that the house design was not appropriate for its position in the village. The Clerk would report these concerns to Babergh Planning.

c) Prior Approval for erection of single storey rear extension at Eastwood Farm, Battsford Road: Babergh Planning Committee had agreed no approval for this development was necessary.

d) Brettfields, Fen Lane: erection of three stables. It was agreed that there was no objection to this application.

e) The Old Guildhall, Church Lane: Babergh Planning has approved discharge of conditions regarding proposed roof repairs.

f) Hill House, The Causeway: replacement/rebuilding of retaining wall holding back the garden from the drive. It was agreed that this was very necessary and had no objection to the application.

11) Finance Report:

a) The RFO had forwarded the current detailed financial position and budget update to the Councillors prior to this meeting, copies of which are kept on file.

b) The current bank balances are as follows:

Hitcham Parish Council a/c	£12,972.36	
Outstanding payments: Chq 408	£224.40	projected balance: £12,747.96
Hitcham Community Play Area a/c	£691.73	
Outstanding payments: Chq 152	£143.33	
Chq 153	£143.33	projected balance: £405.07

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4/cont.... (12.7.21/Finance)

c) The following payments were approved and cheques drawn accordingly:

Hitcham Parish Council a/c

Babergh District Council	£208.75	Dog & litter bin emptying 2021/22
SALC	£24.00	Audit webinar 11.3.21
Tanya Limited	£153.37	SID batteries x 4
Paul Marshall	£30.00	June/July Roundabout delivery
Information Commissioner	£40.00	Annual data protection renewal

Hitcham Community Play Area a/c

Tye Farm Contracting	£143.33	June/July Play Area maintenance
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Payments approved by Mr Hubbard. Seconded: Mrs Crease

d) Annual Audit Review: This has now been received from the internal auditor. The RFO had already forwarded the report to the Councillors for their perusal and arranged for it to be uploaded on the village web site. The comments and recommendations were brought to the attention of the meeting. The Review was approved by the Councillors and action will be taken where necessary and noted at the next meeting. The RFO will forward the Internal Control document to Councillors as per the comment in the Review. The document is on the web site but it had not been presented to the Councillors.

e) Mrs Squirrell thanked the Council for paying for the wood needed to repair the memorial bench.

f) Ladywell Accountancy Services, who have dealt with the Clerk's salary and PAYE, are unable to continue. Enquiries have been made with Payroll for Town and Parish Councils (eSlip). The cost would be £30 per quarter plus £30 admin fee, exc. VAT. The service would be exactly the same as we have now and the Parish Council would still arrange payment to the Clerk and HMRC if required. It was agreed to proceed with this company. Proposed: Mr Scott. Seconded: Mrs Crease.

12) Any Other Business:

a) Village Hall roof repair: The village hall roof needs to be replaced following a recent leak. The cost will be £34,000, although it may be possible to obtain grants for part of the cost. The Village Hall Committee have asked if the Parish Council would agree to put the £1,500 they had offered towards the car park expansion towards the roof repair. The car park expansion would not now be happening in the near future. After discussion it was unanimously agreed to assist with the roof repair when requested to do so. This contribution would come from the CIL fund balance. Proposed: Mrs Crease. Seconded Mrs Squirrell

b) Mr Scott had contacted Babergh's Biodiversity Task Force at Babergh to ask them for more information about the tree planting funding scheme which is open to anyone with land or a garden. They have agreed that the Parish can take part in the scheme. Mr Scott proposed that the Council put something on Hitcham Noticeboard saying that if anyone wanted to plant a tree(s) or wild flowers on their property to get in touch with the Parish Council as the application has to come from Council not individuals.

c) There had been queries about why Highways were not cutting verges. This could be a question to go on the Babergh reporting portal.

13) Date of Next Meeting:

This is already arranged for Monday 13th September in the Village Hall at 7.30pm.