

BENHALL & STERNFIELD PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Benhall & Sternfield Parish Council Meeting, which took place at Benhall Ex-Servicemen's Club on Wednesday 24th July 2024, 7.00pm.

Present: Cllr Bev Barclay (Chair), Cllr Riven Brace – Vice Chair, Cllr David Secret, Cllr Alan Woods, Cllr Chris Durrant, Cllr Sue Nicholson, Cllr Charlotte Fox.

In Attendance: 15 members of the public, the Clerk/RFO & invited speaker Fiona Gilmore

OPEN FORUM

A member of the public mentioned seeing a gent measuring at the bottom of Aldecar Lane. Did anyone know why? No response but noted he was clearly an official of some kind.

A resident expressed concern at the proposed sale of four garages behind Forge Close. Cllr Woods elaborated on it being a small plot and the only permission currently given was for use as storage facilities, but the meeting recognised the concern of residents for future use as parking is already difficult in that part of the village. **Action:** Cllr Woods to research and report back.

A resident took the floor with concerns about the maintenance of the cemetery noticeboard in the church porch. Contact details are out of date and the plan is so faded it can't be used. A former councillor is happy to continue with cemetery admin until an alternative is found. Cllr Durrant explained that the auditor requires any contracts agreed to be with a sitting councillor. **Action:** Cllr Stebbings and Cllr Fox agreed to take on the cemetery responsibilities as time allows, but the faded documents to be replaced as soon as possible.

Fiona Gilmore from Suffolk Energy Action Solutions (SEAS) took the floor to detail the impact of upcoming energy projects on the area particularly around Friston which will, in turn, impact on the parishes of Benhall & Sternfield. After a detailed overview of disruption, she asked for people to become part of the discussion, the consultation and proactively demand answers from local authorities and energy companies by writing letters and emails. Full details, templates and the petition can be found at <https://www.suffolkenergyactionsolutions.co.uk/>.

The Chair offered thanks to Fiona for clarifying the position, which is still unfamiliar to many.

Once again, a report, long and largely irrelevant to B&S, had been received from SCC Andrew Reid, just ahead of the meeting, and no reports were received from District Councillors for the second time in a row. The Chair asked that an email be sent to all our District and County Councillors expressing disappointment at their lack of engagement at such a crucial time. **Action:** Clerk to send email as soon as possible.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Received from Cllr John Slade – work commitments, Paul Nicholson – holiday and SCC Andrew Reid.
All approved.

2. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS. None.

3. CO-OPTION OF NEW COUNCILLOR

The Council has appointed Paul Nicholson to the councillor vacancy. Unfortunately, he had to send his apologies for the meeting but is looking forward to taking his place at the table. **Action:** Clerk to send Declaration of Acceptance to Paul. Clerk has already added him to the Register of Interests.

4. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING (AGM)

Approved and seconded. Initialled by Chair. Cllr Durrant asked to point out that he is Data Protection Officer, not Data Processing Officer.

5. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES AND ACTION POINTS

a/p 1 Clerk to arrange the signing of Declaration of Acceptance Forms. Partially completed

a/p 2 Cllr Secret to draft letter regarding traffic through Sternfield. Done, but no response. Cllr Secret and Clerk to follow-up.

Chair's initials.....

a/p 3 Cllr Durrant to contact resident regarding play area. Cllr Durrant had a good response from the resident. After useful discussions it was decided to advertise in the village for volunteers to assist with keeping the play area tidy. As yet no response.

a/p 4 Clerk to write to resident at source of loud music. Done but no response. For residents to escalate to ESDC.

a/p 5 Cllr Nicholson and Clerk to update Welcome Pack. Rolled over. Cllr Nicholson would prefer to revisit when a new resident moves in.

a/p 6 Chair to write article for Newsletter. Done

a/p 7 Cllr appointed to oversee cemetery arrangements. See above. Cllrs Stebbings and Fox to consult with Archie Bhatia.

a/p 8 Clerk to add Anglian Water consultation to next agenda. See item 10.

a/p 9 Clerk to agree dates of next meetings with Chair. Done.

6. NATIONAL GRID SEALINK RESPONSE

Cllr Secret discussed his draft response as circulated before the meeting. It is a starting point following the online meeting he and Cllr Fox attended on 22nd July. There seems little co-ordination between different projects and councils are not being kept informed. The intention is still to begin in the 1st quarter of 2025. The meeting arranged for the 30th July at B&S Club will determine local feeling. Cllr Secret will then produce a further draft to be circulated and ratified at an EGM before the deadline of end 11th July. **Action:** Clerk to organise an EGM after emailing for availability.

7. SID

Cllr Secret had circulated a paper prior to the meeting. The device's batteries and necessary connections are no longer functioning properly. Cllr Secret can no longer take full responsibility for it as it needs a team to deal with it effectively. It requires repair or retirement.

Cllr Durrant formally proposed SID is retired and the matter left in abeyance for future consideration, with the situation speed-wise monitored in the meantime. Vote taken and unanimously passed. Cllr Durrant can store SID in his workshop for the time being.

8. CYCLE/WALK/WHEEL

Cllr Nicholson gave the updates since the previous meeting. There has been positive feedback from Saxmundham Town Council. The school was also supportive, as were the parents. Cllr Nicholson will attend a further meeting of the project before the public meeting at the club on Tuesday 30th.

Members of the public expressed their concerns about access issues following installation of any bollards in School Lane. It was acknowledged that the plans are not yet finalised but that it is important that residents give their views as it is the District and County who are funding and taking this forward, rather than the Parish.

Agreed that everyone present should make sure as many residents as possible were present on the 30th, by word of mouth. The meeting will also go up on the Facebook page again.

9. EMAIL ADDRESSES.

Cllr Nicholson requested a discussion about the provision of individual email accounts for Councillors to ensure privacy. Cllr Barclay, as Chair, proposed the matter of emails and overall communications and admin be included on the agenda for the EGM discussed earlier. Unanimously agreed.

10. CONSULTATION WITH ANGLIAN WATER

Cllr Stebbings confirmed that there has been no recent communication with Anglian Water. **Action:** Cllr Stebbings to contact AW asap for an update on the current position.

11. FINANCE

a. Statement of Accounts & Finance Report. The Clerk is now officially also the RFO. She reported the bank balances as at 22nd July 2024, HSBC £671.22, Suffolk Building Society £26,588.50. Clerk read out the receipts and payments since the last meeting.

The statement of accounts was signed by Cllr Fox

b. Spend against budget: Overall, running to budget with the exception of 'maintenance' which is now over-budget after work to the Wadd and Village Green undertaken by James Abbot and Terry Gissing.

c. Receipts: None, but Clerk to invoice History Society for contribution to newsletter costs.

CILS holding remains the same.

Chair's initials.....

d. To approve the new Finance Regulations as prepared by Carol Durrant

Proposed and vote held. Unanimous acceptance. **Action:** Clerk to take draft off the paper and sign it for Cllr Durrant to upload to website.

e. Public Rights period

The Clerk confirmed that the Public Rights period has now expired.

12. PLANNING

Cllr Secret and Clerk will contact ESC planning department re the footpath diversion at Hall Farm as nothing further has been heard.

13. ENERGY REPORT

As dealt with previously on the agenda. However, Cllr Secret raised the issue of the Nautilus consultation. **Action:** Cllr Fox to check dates.

14. REPORTS FROM PARISH REPRESENTATIVES

The Wadd – nothing to report

Village Green – nothing to report.

Trees – A tree in the Orchard is dead. **Action:** Clerk to check back through old paperwork to see if there is a contract/invoice with Botanica to suggest they would include maintenance of trees planted.

Cemetery – Discussed earlier in the meeting

Newsletter – after consultation indicated a desire to keep the newsletter as it is, and as the current editor will continue it was proposed that he will check on printing costs and the possibility of sharing costs of printing with Benhall Club. **Action:** Cllr Sue Nicholson to consult with editor.

Emergency Planning – Cllrs Woods and Stebbing said that after appeals in newsletters no one came forward to volunteer in emergency situations. There was one offer at the meeting. The list of equipment and volunteers needs updating. **Action:** Manual to be reviewed at November meeting.

Benhall Club – Thanks minuted to all those who had helped make Music Day such a success.

15. CORRESPONDENCE

16. AOB

Action: Clerk to email Victoria at AEPA to put PC name to letter to Ed Miliband regarding meeting on energy issues.

17. DATES OF FORTHCOMING MEETINGS.

25/9/24, 27/10/24, 15/1/25, 19/3/25, 28/5/25.

List of Action Points:

- 1 Clerk to send Declaration of Acceptance to Paul Nicholson**
- 2 Cllr Woods to check terms of sale of garages behind Forge Close**
- 2 Cllr Secret and Clerk to follow up on Highways issue in Sternfield**
- 3 Cllrs Stebbings and Fox to consult with Archie Bhatia regarding cemetery**
- 4 Clerk to organize EGM to address Sea Link response and admin issues**
- 5 Cllr Stebbing to speak to Anglian Water**
- 6 Cllr Secret and Clerk to contact Planning regarding footpath diversion as nothing heard as yet.**
- 7 Cllr Fox to check Nautilus consultation**
- 8 Clerk to research contract with Botanica regarding dead tree in the orchard**
- 9 Cllr Nicholson to consult with editor re newsletter**
- 10 Cllrs Woods and Stebbing to continue with development of Emergency Plan**
- 11. Clerk to email AEPA.**

Signed (Chair) Date