

# **BENHALL & STERNFIELD PARISH COUNCIL**

Minutes of the Benhall & Sternfield Parish Council Meeting, which took place at Benhall Club on Monday, 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2024, 7.00pm.

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

In Attendance: 3 members of the public, the RFO/Acting Clerk & Katie Graham ESC

## **OPEN FORUM**

Katie Graham, ESC, presented her report which included information regarding a project in Leiston to look at general emissions; local energy projects; and the Well Minds project. Her report had not been received by the Clerk prior to the meeting, and Katie agreed to resend it.

Cllr Fox updated the meeting about a fringe meeting at the Labour Party Conference, led by Offshore4Sure.

A member of the public highlighted that a “no parking” sign alongside Benhall Village Green had been removed. **Cllr Stebbings agreed to investigate a/p 1**

## **1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Received from Cllr Paul Nicholson – holiday and Cllr Durrant – ill health. Both approved.

## **2. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS.** None.

## **3. MINUTES OF THE PARISH COUNCIL MEETING 24<sup>TH</sup> JULY 2024**

Agreed by all. Signed by the Chair.

## **4. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES AND ACTION POINTS**

- 1 Clerk to send Declaration of Acceptance to Paul Nicholson - done
- 2 Cllr Woods to check terms of sale of garages behind Forge Close - done
- 2 Cllr Secret and Clerk to follow up on Highways issue in Sternfield- done
- 3 Cllrs Stebbings and Fox to consult with Archie Bhatia regarding cemetery - done
- 4 Clerk to organise EGM to address Sea Link response and admin issues- done
- 5 Cllr Stebbings to speak to Anglian Water- done
- 6 Cllr Secret and Clerk to contact Planning regarding footpath diversion as nothing heard as yet – c/f now a/p 2 Cllr Sue Nicholson to chase with ESC Planning Dept
- 7 Cllr Fox to check Nautilus consultation - done
- 8 Clerk to research contract with Botanica regarding dead tree in the orchard - done
- 9 Cllr Nicholson to consult with editor re newsletter - done
- 10 Cllrs Woods and Stebbings to continue with development of Emergency Plan - done
11. Clerk to email AEPA – done (see item 11 Energy Reports)

## **5. RESIGNATIONS OF PARISH CLERK AND CLLR JOHN SLADE**

Katherine Abbott is the Clerk for Farnham & Stratford, and is also keen to take up the job of Clerk for Benhall & Sternfield. A start date of 1<sup>st</sup> October 2024 is planned. Cllrs unanimously agreed to appoint Katherine as Clerk.

The new Clerk will need a dedicated lap-top. A member of the public at the meeting suggested that he may be able to donate a used laptop and would let the PC know. If a new laptop needs to be purchased, it was envisaged that this would be less than £500. Cllr Secret proposed, Cllr Stebbings seconded, if a donation wasn't possible, that a suitable laptop should be purchased within the £500 threshold.

***Chair's initials.....***

A vacancy notice has been published following the resignation of Cllr Slade. This will expire on the 3<sup>rd</sup> October, and then the PC will be able to co-opt a replacement. The vacancy is for a nominated Sternfield Councillor. It was agreed that Cllr Fox, at present a nominated Benhall Councillor, be transferred to the Sternfield vacancy. This would then result in a Benhall vacancy. **a/p 3 Clerk to speak with ESC to agree the process for this changeover.**

## **6. FEEDBACK ON PARISH MEETING 11<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER 2024**

It was agreed that the meeting was extremely successful with an excellent turnout. Good feedback had been received from those in the parish.

Cllr Sue Nicholson raised a problem regarding email addresses for Councillors. At the moment, Councillors are using their own personal email addresses when communicating with ESC. However, ESC planning department has said that it will only respond to Parish Council email accounts. This was now becoming an urgent issue. **a/p 4 Cllr Durrant to investigate asap.**

## **7. CYCLE/WALK/WHEEL**

Cllr Sue Nicholson reported that a CWWW Group meeting took place on 12 September. It was excellent to hear that the plans for the installation of a modal filter (bollards) for School Lane, Benhall is well under way and could be in before Christmas. What a great Christmas present that would be!

However Stage 2, ie the crossing over the B1121, was creating some challenges and the only option appeared to be minor improvements to the current dropped kerb crossings.

Cllr Secret's knowledge and experience of was extremely useful during a site visit on the 18th September and helped formulate a proposal, based on current usage. However, this is unlikely to be adequate for the safety of non motorised users crossing if the National Grid project/s go ahead as they are likely to generate very significant HGV movements, including weekends and bank holidays. Therefore, if these projects are given the go-ahead, the proposal should be reviewed. The proposal for a 40-mph limit from the A12 turnoff through to Saxmundham should also be maintained.

## **8. PLANNED WATER WORKS BY ESSEX & SUFFOLK WATER IN LOW STREET AND AN UPDATE ON ANGLIAN WATER IN ALDECAR LANE**

ES&SW work in Low Street, Benhall, to provide a new water holding tank, will require large vehicles to travel down the narrow lane from the A12 to the site. Cllr Stebbings reported that residents received letters at the beginning of the month; and the NWG project manager has spoken with three residents regarding specific actions needed before delivery of the tank, such as cutting back hedgerows. The tank is due to be delivered in early October and NWG will update residents and the PC once final dates for tree/hedge work are known.

Cllr Stebbings reported that the works taking place at Benhall WRC treatment station continues and although the estimated completion date was late 2024, Anglian Water have advised that the timescale for completion has extended into spring of 2025. He has been advised that all is progressing well though and he will continue to request updates.

***Chair's initials.....***

## 9. FINANCE

- a. Statement of Accounts & Finance Report.** The RFO reported the bank balances as at 18<sup>th</sup> September, 2024: HSBC £1,270.96 and Suffolk Building Society £22,867.36. The receipts and payments since the last meeting were read out and explained. The statement of accounts was signed by Cllr Secret
- b. Spend against budget:** All going well at the end of Q2. There is an underspend on the Play Area as work to demolish the climbing frame wasn't necessary this year. In addition, an underspend on Village Maintenance, but planned work to cut the hedge between The Wadd and the back of Nos 27 – 29 Benhall Green is yet to take place.
- c. Approval of Clerk's monthly salary:** The payslip for the outgoing Clerk has not yet been received from SALC Payroll but will require payment by the end of September.
- d. Replacement of RFO:** Carol Durrant will carry out the RFO role until the new Clerk takes over.
- e.** Covered in (a) above, the yearly payment has now been made.

## 10. PLANNING

Cllr Sue Nicholson's report had been circulated prior to the meeting. She highlighted two points: firstly - rumour has it that the extension of Shotts Meadow may well be back on the table soon. At the moment there is a Holding Objection from Highways. Cllr Sue Nicholson has contacted the Planning Officer for an update. Secondly – plans for the South Saxmundham Garden Neighbourhood continue to be delayed. Cllr Sue Nicholson will be attending Saxmundham Town Council meetings as an 'active observer'.

## 11. ENERGY REPORT

Cllr Secret is attending the Transport Forum and said that work at the Friday Street junction for the two-village by-pass is planned to start in Spring 2025. Construction work for the Fen Meadow project is reported to be winding up, but a site visit recently makes it unclear what will happen next. **a/p 5 Cllr Secret to follow-up with EDF**

Plans for roadworks between Sternfield and Friston appear to show work starting late October 2024 and continuing until August 2026. It is unclear what exactly is happening, but an assumption is that this is for access to the Scottish Power Site and may well involve HGVs travelling through Sternfield. **a/p 6 Cllr Secret to contact SCC asking for a site meeting.**

It was agreed that the PC would endorse the East Suffolk Communities Energy Partnership (ESCEP) draft Constitution that was sent on 10th September.

It was agreed that the PC would endorse the ESCEP draft response to the Secretary of State that was also sent on 10th September.

Cllr Fox reported that she had sent two consultation responses to Ofgem in August. One related to Ofgem's decision to bring the Nautilus project back from the Isle of Grain to Saxmundham/Sternfield. The other was regarding the "proposed regulatory funding and approval framework for onshore transitional Centralised Strategic Network Plan 2 projects". Another Ofgem response will be sent before 8th October and she will update the PC on this at the meeting.

## 12. REPORTS FROM PARISH REPRESENTATIVES

**The Wadd** – Some of the planks on the boardwalk are showing signs of rot. This needs to be monitored closely.

**Village Green** – Cllr Durrant has made safe the commemorative bench which was unsteady.

**Trees** – nothing to report.

**Chair's initials.....**

**Cemetery** – Cllr Stebbings reported that a review of the cemetery administration will be carried out as soon as possible. This review will include preparation and retention of documents; risk assessments and regulations; health and safety and maintenance audits; display of information in the Church entrance; and the working relationship between the PC, Church Wardens and PCC. Cllr Paul Nicholson will be taking over responsibility for the cemetery, and will be involved in the review.

**Newsletter** – Cllr Sue Nicholson has met with the editor of the newsletter. The RFO explained that she has agreed with the Benhall Club accounts person that the PC will invoice the Club quarterly for 50% of the cost of printing the newsletter (£55.50 per quarter). Cllr Stebbings felt confident that the Club would be able to fill one of the two pages each month to communicate Club news and events etc.

**Emergency Planning** – Cllrs Stebbings and Woods are aiming to re-activate a local volunteer recruitment drive by insertion of a statement into Ebb & Flow, the Benhall Newsletter and Facebook along with notice boards in the parish. Other actions will include a review of equipment and storage and production of a CEP manual.

**Benhall Club** – Cllr Stebbings reported that the current stewards, Carl & Rachel, have been at the helm of the club for nearly a year where there have been both visible and subtle changes made to the operation, decoration and activity within the premises during their first 12 months. Refurbishment is still in progress - and much more is planned - although funding continues to be an ongoing challenge. Events over the past 12 months have been well attended and included the Benhall Show, Dog Show, Music Day and a celebration of the exploits of Benhall's oldest resident! The Club committee would welcome feedback and suggestions for future events to continue to bring the community together.

**13. CORRESPONDENCE**

Concern had been raised by residents regarding the fencing being erected on the Fen Meadow site. The Chair met with the residents for a site visit and this is now resolved.

**16. AOB**

Two incidents of Fly Tipping had occurred in Benhall over the past couple of months. The response from ESC when asked to remove a large, broken glass structure was disappointing to say the least, given the danger to the public. In both cases local residents kindly helped with the removal and safe disposal of the items. An apology has since been received from ESC. Doorbell camera footage and paperwork found where the items were dumped has been given to ESC, which hopefully will lead to prosecution.

Cllr Woods said that plans are afoot to light the beacon on the 8<sup>th</sup> May 2025 to celebrate the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of VE day.

Complaints have been received about the overgrowing hedge along the footpath from Whitearch to the Railway Farm Shop. **a/p 7 Clerk to write to the Railway Farm Shop** and ask that the hedge be trimmed.

***Chair's initials.....***

**17. DATES OF FORTHCOMING MEETINGS.**  
**25/11/24, 13/1/25, 17/3/25.**

**List of Action Points:**

- a/p 1 Cllr Stebbings to investigate the missing ‘no parking’ sign**
- a/p 2 Cllr Sue Nicholson to chase ESC Planning Dept re footpath diversion**
- a/p 3 Clerk to speak with ESC to agree the process for moving Cllr Fox to the Sternfield vacancy**
- a/p 4 Cllr Durrant to investigate PC email addresses urgently**
- a/p 5 Cllr Secret to follow-up with EDF regarding the Fen Meadow Project**
- a/p 6 Cllr Secret to contact SCC asking for a site meeting re roadworks in Sternfield**
- a/p 7 Clerk to write to the Railway Farm Shop re the overgrown hedge**

**Signed ..... (Chair)                      Date .....**