

Meeting of Shimpling Parish Council

Monday 11th January 2016

Shimpling Village Hall, 7.30pm

MINUTES

Present:

Chair: Mike Thew

Councillors: Trisch Jackson, Ken Rush, Sue Salmon, Gerald Shrimpton, Jackie Saunders

District Councillor: James Long

Clerk: Jenny O'Reilly-Turner

1. Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Richard Kemp, County Councillor.

2. Role of Chair

Following an application to the Council by Cllr John Pawsey to stand aside as Chair for a period of time because of a personal planning application which would otherwise represent a conflict of interest to his position on the Council, Councillors agreed unanimously to allow him to do so and to review the situation at the May meeting with a view to extending his leave of absence in the event that the planning matter had not yet been resolved.

It was agreed that Cllr Mike Thew would step up to the role of Chair during this time and that the remaining councillors will rotate responsibility as Vice Chair. It was also noted that John Pawsey is not to receive formal Council-related correspondence during this period of absence.

3. Disclosure of Members' Interests

No relevant interests of members were notified to the Council.

4. Approval of minutes of previous meeting

The minutes of the meeting of 14th November were approved.

5. Matters arising

5.1. Playground Inspection Report

Clerk reported that the playground inspection had been largely successful and that there was nothing serious found, but there were a few minor matters which need attention by the end of March. The report and price lists for the items had already been circulated to Councillors.

5.2. Playground Inspection Team

It was noted that given the regularity and intensity of use of the playground, combined with the relative high maintenance of the equipment, fortnightly inspections would be sufficient. Clerk will contact the volunteers to form the inspection team and arrange a date for induction.

5.3. Transparency Code, Policies and Procedures

It was noted that the Council is aware of its manifold responsibilities under the Code and various other recent regulations and is working towards maintaining compliance although there is some considerable amount to be checked. All Council documents will in the future be published on the Parish Council website: <http://shimplingpc.onesuffolk.net>.

6. Police reports

The most recent Police report had been circulated to Councillors but it was noted that a recent attempted oil theft in the village was not recorded. Clerk to contact the Babergh Neighbourhood Team to clarify the situation.

It was also noted that Suffolk Constabulary has invited parish councils to contribute towards paying for their own PSCOs following a change in financing for these roles from central government. It was noted that it was not felt necessary to comment further on this situation at the current time.

7. Chair's report

No formal Chair's report was submitted as all matters were dealt with as individual agenda items.

8. County Councillor's report

Cllr Richard Kemp was absent from the meeting.

9. District Councillor's report

Cllr James Long spoke of the Community Infrastructure Levy Charging structure which is in the final stages of approval for all planning applications. An additional charge will be imposed on each application dependent on the site of the structures on the land and the size of the area which is to be developed.

10. Financial Report

The financial report previously circulated to Councillors was accepted unanimously.

It was agreed to set up a Budget sub-committee chaired by Cllr Gerry Shrimpton to consider budgetary and financial matters for the coming financial year.

11. Planning

11.1. Croft's Farm

Cllr Thew read out a letter received from a parishioner regarding Mr Scott and the extent of this involvement in the village. No response from either Mr Scott or his representatives was made.

Further to receipt of email correspondence from Mr Scott's representatives (who were also in attendance at the meeting) the Council sought clarification on a number of matters:

Trespassing signs

Ms Doe stated that whilst there had been a number of no trespassing signs erected in 2003, a number of them have disappeared over time. She agreed that at present there was no replacement signage in place but that new signs would be erected "within a week".

Light Industrial Use

Having made more specific plans available to the Council explaining the “light industrial use” for the site, Ms Doe stated that the proposed industrial use was “not favourable” to the applicant and that the ultimate preference would be for residential development.

Asbestos

Ms Doe stated that there asbestos can be left in place for the time being until development takes place or until someone is working on the site at which point it needs to be removed.

Adoption of Gents Lane

Ms Doe stated (and it was confirmed by the Council having received the same information from Suffolk County Council) that the entirety of Gents Lane has been adopted.

11.2. Gents Lane, Shimpling

It was noted that in previous Council documents, the land in question had incorrectly been referred to as ‘Land South of Shimpling Park Farm’ but that it should instead be correctly described as Gent’s Lane, Shimpling.

In response to a question by email from Mr Barry Whymark on behalf of the applicant as to whether the Council could give any feelings yet on the proposed plans to develop the area, Cllr Thew with the support of the Council noted that any discussion would be subject to pre-planning application procedure.

Councillors also agreed that where there are alternative proposals for planning in the same area, the Council felt it inappropriate to comment at present, as it might be perceived as unreasonable or unfair in all the circumstances to do so. It was also noted that it would be important to listen to the views of parishioners before considering whether a comment would be suitable in the future. The Council concluded that it is not only difficult but it would also be improper to make any recommendations or specific comments unless or until a formal detailed application had been made.

12. Correspondence received

12.1. Attempted oil theft

Clerk had received a report of an attempted oil theft from private land in the village which was reported to Police. Parishioners were reminded to be vigilant and report any suspicious activity.

12.2. Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service Consultation

Parishioners were reminded to complete the online Suffolk Fire and Rescue Consultation document if they felt strongly about proposed cuts to local fire services.

12.3. Possible threat to rural postboxes

Cllr Thew reported that Cllr Kemp had been advised that a number of rural postboxes may be at threat of removal if their continued use was not considered viable (i.e. less than 25 letters a day collected) and reminded parishioners to keep writing letters.

13. Matters for discussion

It was agreed that that all matters had been successfully covered at other points in the meeting so there were no additional matters for discussion arising.

14. Public Participation

Cllr Thew explained the Public Participation session guidelines to the Council and members of the public in attendance. He explained that the Council has the right to control the conduct of the meeting and to set strict rules about the length of time for which members of the public could speak. It was therefore explained that there would initially be a five minute time slot for any individual submissions to the Council on any matter relevant to the Parish and the Parish Council remit but that at the discretion of Councillors, the time limit could be waived.

A representative of the Gents Lane Preservation Group spoke and raised the following points:

- The Group is opposed to both prospective developments and that whilst opposed in principle to the developments, the Group will await the details contained in formal planning applications.
- The smaller development is outside the planning envelope and puts pressure on the meadow at the western end. The meadow gives Gents Lane part of its character.
- Insufficient note has been given to the landscape appeal of the Lane as expected by the Babergh and Mid Suffolk Landscape Guidance 2015 and developers appear to ignore that the area is an important recreation area which links up the footpaths in the village.
- There is a range of objections to each development site and very generally these relate to traffic and access.
- Shimpling has a limited road system with no services other than a pub therefore development should be directed to areas where there are better services and access routes.
- The developments are an attempt to break up the sensitivity of a built-up area boundary which currently defines the character of the village.
- Both developments are essentially about money (“greed not need”) and are inappropriate for the village environment.
- The Group opposes development in Gents Lane and requests that when plans for either site are submitted that the application(s) be sent to the Planning Committee at Babergh so that residents can have a voice.
- The Group requests Cllr James Long to oppose the development and to back up the request to take the applications to Committee by writing to the Head of Economy at Babergh to explain that it is a controversial application which would necessitate a Committee hearing.
- The Group considers that residents have very little power and that power is weighted in favour of developers. The Group stated that there are only 3 weeks from the publication on the Babergh website of the planning application to submit objections which is a very short window. The Group feels that the issues are on the one hand a major quality of life decision as compared on the other hand to a financial decision or investment for the developers.

Mr Pawsey (attending as a member of the public) responded and said that before he submitted any application, he would wish to meet and discuss with residents before making it. He said that he was keen to work with parishioners and to listen to their concerns.

Cllr Thew thanked the Gent Lane Preservation Group for bringing the issues to the early attention of the Council although no formal planning applications had yet been made.

15. AOB

15.1. Noticeboards

Clerk stated that no offers of assistance for mending the noticeboard had been received, hence it was agreed that quotes would be obtained for such so that the work could be completed as soon as possible.

15.2. Playground fencing and s.106 funds

Cllr Ken Rush stated that Mr Clem Warner was keen to get on with the fencing work as soon as possible, therefore it was agreed that he should be formally instructed to do so. It was noted that S. 106 funds are available until April and that the Clerk would find out from Babergh whether these could be released before the work was completed so that fencing posts could be purchased.

15.3. Lawshall School bus

Clerk reported that Suffolk County Council had written to a number of families in the village in December to state that the appeal had been successful and that the Slough Hill route to Lawshall was indeed considered unsafe after all, therefore pupils of All Saints Lawshall resident in the village of all ages and regardless of distance from the school would be entitled to free bus transport.

15.4. Potholes

Cllr Gerry Shrimpton stated that the condition of the verges in the village this year was deteriorating making the pothole situation worse. Cllr Sue Salmon also pointed out that there were a number of potholes on Slough Hill which were worsening. Cllr Trisch Jackson stated that the large pothole on Walnutree Lane needs building up. These would all be notified to Suffolk County Council for action.

15.5. Tree planting

Mr Pawsey (as member of the public) stated that following a meeting towards the end of 2015, it was agreed that Babergh would supply stakes and trees and that these should be arriving shortly. They would be planted around the play area.

15.6. Church Rooms

Following an invitation to update the Parish Council on the progress of renovation to the Church Rooms, the owner attended and explained that whilst it was safe, Babergh was aware of the situation and were due to be in attendance with a structural engineer. It was also explained that there had been difficulties with a previous contractor which has resulted in delays to the project.

Cllr Thew stated that the Council was very much in support of the project and was prepared to offer support in any way possible. Cllr Long also offered his support at District Council level.

15.7. Parking on the play area

Cllr Jackson stated that she was aware that there had recently been car tracks on the grass opposite the play area and that the grass had been churned up. It was agreed that the Council would explore options for signage in the area to remind motorists to keep off the grass.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 8:57pm.

Date of next meeting: Monday 14th March