

Minutes of the Meeting of Groton Parish Council held on Wednesday 11th January 2023 at 7.00pm in Groton Village Hall

Present: P Roberts (Chair), R Cheeseman, N Chapman, S Price, R Jones (Clerk)

Guests: J Finch (Suffolk County Council, B Hurren (Babergh District Council)

- 1. Apologies for absence – G Becker, A Dixon-Smith, J Long**
- 2. Councillors' Declarations of Interests in any item on the Agenda - None**
- 3. Minutes of the Meeting of 2nd November 2022 - Approved**

4. Reports from

4.1. Suffolk County Council

Councillor James Finch reported the following:

Devolution Deal – Suffolk awarded Government funding worth £500 million towards Investment, Housing, Education, Transport and The Environment by way of devolved powers, giving Suffolk leaders and residents more choice in how money is spent. As part of the deal a new Leader, directly elected by residents will be appointed in May 2024 to oversee the changes.

Budget 2023/24 – 75% of the whole budget to be split between Adult Care Services and Children's Services as these services had seen a huge increase in demand. Following consultation with residents a number of other services would receive increased funding including Special Educational Needs, Tree Management and Citizens Advice.

Ukrainian Refugees – Still looking for help to accommodate refugees including some who had been with host families for 6-months and needed to move on.

Cassius Elderly Care Technology – The Council's digital care technology had won a national award at the Health Tech Digital Awards 2022 and the Council was looking at ways to 'branch out' the service to more people.

2022/23 Road Gritting – Residents being reminded to contact SCC if more salt was needed following the icy spell in December 2022.

Suffolk Archives – An online gallery had been created commemorating the life of Queen Elizabeth II's visits to Suffolk and the Curator's were asking for residents or groups to provide materials recording how the death of Her Majesty was marked.

4.2. Babergh District Council

Councillor Bryn Hurren reported the following:

Parish Council Liaison Group Meetings – Face to face meetings were starting again on 1 February in East Bergholt and 7 February in Stowmarket. Among the subjects for discussion were Council Budget, Joint Local Plan and the forthcoming Elections. There would also be an opportunity to speak with District Council Officers.

Budget 2023/24 – Budget was not yet set at the Council was waiting for other organisations such as Parish and Town Councils to set their budgets although the aim was to keep any increase below 2%.

Council Vehicles – Eight new state of the art refuse collection vehicles had been purchased at a cost of £250,00 each. These would operate alongside vehicles that had been retained from the Council's existing fleet.

Council Tax – The Council had agreed to levy zero Council Tax on families suffering severe financial hardship as there was no chance of ever recovering arrears and adding to people's financial burden.

Housing Development – The proposed development of 64 houses in Boxford which had previously been refused was now going to appeal. The Council would be opposing the appeal.

A development of 6 houses at Goodlands Farm had been given approval despite being in conflict with the Boxford Neighbourhood Plan. A discussion followed on the purpose of a Neighbourhood Plan when District Council Planning Officers could seemingly override it at will. It was agreed to write to BDC Planning about this and the negative impact on traffic the new development would have.

5. Questions From Members of the Public - None

6. Financial matters:

6.1. The Statement of Finances and Orders for Payment were approved as follows:

Unity Trust Current Account as at 31 December 2022	£7,709.70
Unity Trust Deposit Account as at 31 December 2022	£2,713.53
Nat West Current Account as at 31 December 2022	£494.80
Nat West Deposit Account as at 31 December 2022	£0.01
Total	£10,918.04

Payments received:

Bank Interest £8.77

Cheque No	Amount £	Payee	Purpose
300033	£450.00	A Adams	Footpath Cutting
300034	£10.00	R J Jones	Clerk's Expenses Dec 22 – Jan 23
300035	£25.00	Royal British Legion	Poppy Wreath

6.2. The Adequacy of the Budget for 2022/23 was approved.

6.3. The Budget for 2023/24 was agreed with the Precept set at £4,566 which was the same as the previous year and considered the 'responsible' thing to do.

6.4. Other financial matters – It was agreed to replace the existing Village Green bench with a new bench to commemorate the coronation of King Charles III. Councillor Hurren reported that some money would be available from his Locality Budget to help fund this. Councillor McGrath reported that Genesis Mencap in Ipswich had a workshop which made furniture and it would be nice to support a local project. It was agreed that she would request a quote from them.

7. Neighbourhood Plan Update

Councillor Chapman reported the following:

The steering group had agreed to apply for an initial grant but there were concerns as the current round of funding ended in March, with no confirmation from the government that funding would continue after that date. 43 completed surveys had been received and the Steering Group had met on 10 January and finalised a draft including a mission statement and key objectives.

The next step was to appoint a consultant and carry out a Housing Needs survey. Public meetings to be held on 19 and 21 January.

8. Planning Matters

8.1. Planning Applications - None

8.2. Planning decisions received and noted – Appeal Ref: APP/D3505/W/21/3288045

The Forge, Church Street, Groton CO10 5HD – Appeal Allowed

Prior Approval - Agricultural to Dwelling - DC/22/05279 Land and Agricultural Building, Parliament Heath – Prior Approval given. Concerns were expressed over this decision as the Council had objected to the application. It was agreed to include a section in the Neighbourhood Plan about conversions from agricultural to dwelling.

8.3. Any Other Planning Matters

9. Re-siting of Noticeboard

It was agreed that the Village Green was still the best site for this. Although the Clerk had not been able to establish ownership of the land, it did appear to be on the SCC grass cutting programme. Councillor Finch agreed to find out from SCC officers whether the land was owned by the County Council.

10. Coronation of King Charles III

Correspondence had been received from a Parishioner asking if the Council would be arranging a community event to mark the King's coronation. The Clerk had contacted SALC who had confirmed that the PC was under no obligation to do so and it was agreed that, although the Council was not in a position to arrange an event itself, it would financially support, within reason, an event arranged by the community. The Clerk to reply to the correspondent.

11. Chairman's and Clerk's reports and correspondence

12. Highway and Footpath matters

12.1 Footpath Cutting 2023 – It was agreed to continue with Andy Adams carrying out footpath cutting.

12.2 Other Highways and Footpath Matters - None

13. Renewal of Village Hall Lease – Still awaiting confirmation from the landowner that permission to renew the lease had been granted.

14. To set future Agenda items – Noticeboard. Neighbourhood Plan, Grant Applications, Use of CIL Grant

15. Next meeting –Wednesday 1st March 2023 at 7.00pm

The meeting closed at 9.00pm