

GROTON PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Annual Meeting of the Council held on Wednesday 17 May 2023 in Groton Village Hall at 7.30 pm

Present: Piers Roberts, Sarah McGrath, Nigel Chapman, Roland Cheeseman, Catherine Hearn, Richard Jones (Clerk)
Others: Adam Dixon-Smith, Gerald Becker

1. The Chairman welcomed new Councillor Catherine Hearne to the meeting.
2. **Election of Chairman** - Piers Roberts was elected as Chairman. Proposed by Sarah McGrath, Seconded by Roland Cheeseman.
3. **Election of Vice-Chairman** – Sarah McGrath was elected as Vice-Chairman. Proposed by Piers Roberts. Seconded by Nigel Chapman
4. **Election 2023 and Co-Option of Councillors**
The Clerk confirmed that following the election on 4th May, the Council had been left with two vacancies for Councillors. Former Councillors Adam Dixon-Smith and Gerald Becker were present and had indicated previously that they would like to be Co-opted to the Council to fill the vacant positions. The Clerk said that the Council had the option to Co-opt both if it so wished, without the need to advertise or could open the positions up to other interested parties. The Council discussed this point and decided that it was in the best interest of the village for the vacant posts to be advertised to give other Groton residents the chance to apply. The Clerk advised that costs for the advertisement were likely to be in the region of £170 (possibly more due to short notice of the request). It was accordingly agreed to place an advert in Box River News advertising the two vacant Councillor positions. Due to time constraints, it was agreed that Nigel Chapman would liaise directly with the BRN Editor to ensure the advert was placed in the latest issue.
5. **To receive apologies for absence** – None
6. **Councillors' Declarations of Interest in any item on this Agenda** - None
7. **Appointment of representatives (if required)**
 - 7.1. Babergh Area Committee of SALC – None (position to be held open pending any interest from councilors)
 - 7.2. Boxford Community Council – Nigel Chapman
 - 7.3. Groton Village Hall – Catherine Hearne
8. **Minutes of the meeting of 1 March 2023** - Approved
9. **Questions from Members of the Public** - None
10. **Chairman's and Clerk's reports and correspondence** - None
11. **Planning matters:**
 - 11.1. Planning applications received - None
 - 11.2. Planning decisions received - None
 - 11.3. Other Planning Matters - None

12. Neighbourhood Plan Update – Nigel Chapman reported that progress had slowed as neither the Government nor Babergh DC had been able to give any guarantees as to how the pilot project would move forward. However, as part of the development of the plan, he had carried out some research into local Housing and how easily residents could access services; further meetings of the steering group were in process of being arranged.

13. Report from the Wildfires & Emergency Planning Meeting (WEPM) Held on 18 April 2023

Piers Roberts and Roland Cheeseman had attended an inter-village (Boxford, Edwardstone, Milden, Great Waldingfield), meeting held on 18th April to receive a briefing from Freddie Gulliver, the Suffolk County Council -Emergency Planning Officer. Freddie Gulliver explained that the main focus of the SCC sponsored Community Emergency Plan was to look at 'short-term' solutions such as evacuation of properties and setting up of rest centres. The Groton Councilors discussed the minutes of the WEPM and felt that from a Groton perspective, although the Village Hall was an obvious choice to use as an emergency site, it was suggested that the Church may be more practicable due to the Village Hall's wooden construction. It was also felt that more emphasis should be placed on landowners to provide natural barriers to the possible spread of fires. Roland Cheeseman and Piers Roberts would raise this at the next WEPM. The Council also discussed and approved Groton PC's further involvement in the WEPM planning process as it was felt that Groton's interests in developing an emergency plan very much align with those of Edwardstone and other villages.

14. Village Hall Lease Renewal – The Clerk reported that he had been in contact with Goatlee Solicitors, who had handled the previous lease renewal (in 2013) and was awaiting their quote to proceed with the renewal. The Clerk advised that renewal of the lease is to be completed by September 2023 and no issues are envisaged.

15. Highway and Footpath Matters – Andy Adams was continuing to carry out the work and the first cut had already been completed.

16. Financial Matters:

16.1 Statement of Finances and Orders for Payment – Approved as follows:

Unity Trust Current Account as at 30 April 2023	£7,786.71
Unity Trust Deposit Account as at 30 April 2023	£2,726.27
Nat West Current Account as at 30 April 2023	£649.40
Nat West Deposit Account as at 30 April 2023	£0.01
Total	<u>£11,162.39</u>

Payments received:

BDC 1st Part of Precept - £2,283.00

Cheque No	Amount £	Payee	Purpose
300044	£150.00	Suffolk CC	Street Furniture Licence
300045	£223.34	Babergh DC	Bin Emptying 23-24
300046	£117.49	HMRC	Tax on Clerk's Salary
300047	£158.37	SALC	Membership Fee 2023/24
300048	£10.00	R J Jones	Clerk's Expenses Apr – May 23

16.2 To approve the end of year accounts - Approved

16.3 Annual Governance Statement (s1 of the Annual Return) - Approved

16.4 Annual Accounting Statements (s2 of the Annual Return) – Approved

It was agreed that Nigel Chapman, Sarah McGrath and Roland Cheeseman would be added to the list of authorized signatories for the Council's bank accounts.

17. Future Agenda items – Millennium Book to be updated and a new format published to reflect Groton in 2025. The Council discussing the matter recognized that this is likely to be a complex project and that the Council should take a lead in the process.

18. Date of next meeting – Wednesday 5 July at 7.00pm

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