

Minutes of the Meeting of Groton Parish Council held on Wednesday 5th July 2023 at 7.00pm in Groton Village Hall

Present: P Roberts (Chair), R Cheeseman, N Chapman, S McGrath, C Hearn, R Jones (Clerk)

Guests: J Finch (Suffolk County Council) B Hurren (Babergh District Council) M Mackay Morris, A Dixon-Smith

- 1. Apologies for absence – None**
- 2. Co-option of Councillors –** Following due process carried out in adherence to the Co-option Policy for Parish Councils mandated by Babergh District Council, May Mackay Morris and Adam Dixon-Smith were co-opted as members of the Council. Formal co-option of both new councillors is to take place at the next meeting of the Council.
- 3. Councillors' Declarations of Interests in any item on the Agenda – None**
- 4. Minutes of the Meeting of 17th May 2023 –** Approved. The word 'Chairman' to be amended to 'Chair'.

5. Reports from

5.1. Suffolk County Council –Councillor James Finch reported the following:

Ukrainian Refugees - £2,000 one-off support grants to assist with finding private rented accommodation being given to refugees who had been living in the County for a minimum of 2 months and been registered on the Suffolk Homes for Ukraine scheme.

Future of Library Services – Being discussed at the next SCC Cabinet meeting on 11 July as current contract was due to end on 31 July. The Council was keen to procure a new contract and was proud that no libraries had recently been closed in the County. A 10-month extension of the current contract was being recommended to enable a public consultation to take place.

Suffolk Water Supply – A revised infrastructure policy had been agreed to support the County's water supply. A key part of the policy was to ensure the protection and maintenance of supply and resources including reservoirs, pipelines and water recycling plants.

Recycling – As part of a new campaign *#shakeitout*, Residents were being urged to ensure they do not contaminate recycling waste by making sure plastic bags were emptied and not put into recycling waste.

Fostering and Adoption – Councillor Finch presented a story of a successful young man who had been fostered and shared his experiences. Online Foster Care Recruitment events were still being held on the first Wednesday of every month and Adoption events on the first Thursday. Interest could be registered by e-mailing Claire.Gwatkin@suffolk.gov.uk or calling 01473 264800.

Item 13 was brought forward as follows to be discussed whilst Councillor Finch was still present.

- Poor quality of pothole repairs** – Several comments had been made to councillors by villagers regarding the poor quality of recent pothole repairs. Councillor Finch reported that this was acknowledged by SCC which is consequentially in the process of changing contractor due to poor service. All poor-quality repairs were to be made good. Any issues could be reported via the SCC Website Highways reporting page <https://highwaysreporting.suffolk.gov.uk/>

- **Cars coming at speed** Again, several individual complaints have been made to councillors over the past few weeks regarding car speeds on the village roads. A recent example is of certain cars speeding past the Fox & Hounds and going straight across junction. Concern was expressed regarding vehicle speeds in general – not just cars as a number of offenders are clearly delivery drivers, posing a danger to cyclists and horse riders (typical village road users), all of which is accentuated in the summer months when verges haven't been cut – Councillor Finch offered to arrange for speed checks to be carried out at locations to be agreed. Groton Street and Church Street were particular areas of concern. Once data had been gathered, then the best course of speed control action could be agreed.

5.2. Babergh District Council

Councillor Bryn Hurren reported the following:

New Council – A coalition between the Green Party (10) Independents (9) and Liberal Democrats (5) was now in place with a 'rotating leader'.

Unitary Authority – Officers were looking into the possibility of fully combining Babergh and Mid-Suffolk District Councils

Car Parking Charges – Still under discussion. Councillor Hurren was still hoping that some parking would remain free of charge but Business Rates payable on Car Parks meant the Council had to raise money to keep them maintained.

Climate Change – The Council was doing all it could with regards to 'green' energy, etc, but needed more support from national Government. It was hoped that the adoption of the Joint Local Plan may change things.

Housing – Ever higher Homelessness in the district not helped by the 'wrong' type of Housing being built in recent years.

Tourism Strategy – The Council was working on a tourism strategy in the hope of encouraging more visitors to the area.

- 6. Questions from Members of the Public** – A discussion took place about the proposed electricity pylons crossing the county to Bramford. Although the current plans are not seen as a direct concern to Groton, Councillors felt that the siting of the pylons should remain an item of interest to the council.

7. Financial matters:

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

Unity Trust Current Account as at 30 June 2023	£6,431.35
Unity Trust Deposit Account as at 30 June 2023	£2,726.27
Nat West Current Account as at 30 May 2023	£649.40
Nat West Deposit Account as at 30 May 2023	£0.01
Total	£9,807.03

Cheque No	Amount £	Payee	Purpose
300045	£200.00	Box Media	Councillor Vacancy Advert
300046	£460.96	R J Jones	Clerk's Salary Apr – Jun 23
300047	£115.20	HMRC	Tax on Clerk's Salary
300048	£557.80	B Hurren	Supply and Fitting of Noticeboard
300049	£10.00	R J Jones	Clerk's Expenses Jun – Jul 23

7.2. Solicitor's Fees for Renewal of the Village Hall Lease – The Clerk presented 3 quotes for carrying out the legal work for the renewal of the Village Hall Lease for a further period of ten years from September 2023. The Council expressed its thanks to the owner of the land on which the village hall is located for making the land available on extremely generous terms for a further ten years. The Quotes were from the local solicitors (i) Goatlee, Hadleigh, (ii) Holmes & Hills, Sudbury, and (iii) Wayman & Long, Sudbury. All quotes were delivered in response to the same particulars for the provision of service. The councillors discussed the quotes and it was agreed that the contract be awarded to Holmes & Hills on the grounds that their quote presented the best value for money. The Clerk is to confirm that these fees could be paid for out of Community Infrastructure Levy funds.

7.3. Clerk's Salary – It was agreed to approve the backdated salary increments due since 2021.

7.4. Any Other Financial Matters - None

8. Nomination of Boxford and Groton United Charities' Trustee – The Council had been asked to approve ratify Truusje Barkham as the nominated trustee for the parish of Groton to Boxford and Groton United charities. In accordance with the charity's charter, the trustee must be a Groton resident but does not have to be a parish councillor. The council ~~and~~ unanimously ratified Ms Barkham's nomination as trustee.

9. Neighbourhood Plan Update

Councillor Chapman reported the following:

A meeting with Babergh DC officers was scheduled for 18 July to translate and transfer data collected so far. As it was a pilot project this would also be of benefit to Babergh as an example to take forward. Councillor Chapman is also pushing for a meeting with a senior Planning officer to test some 'hypothetical' scenarios. Other considerations were how to include a climate change plan and adapting the area to enable better access to services, in particular, pedestrian access between Groton and Boxford. The council discussed the NP and recognised the continued good progress being made as a result of Councillor Chapman's actions.

10. Planning Matters – None

11. Wildfires and Emergency Support Plan

The Chair and Councillor Cheeseman had attended a further meeting with representatives from local Parishes and it had been agreed to produce a joint plan to include Edwardstone, Boxford, Great Waldringfield and Little Waldringfield Parishes. A further meeting will take place with the other local parishes and SCC Emergency Plan representative on 11 July to determine the next stages.

12. Chair's and Clerk's reports and correspondence - None

13. Highway and Footpath Matters

See item 5.1

14. To set future Agenda items – Millennium Book 25th anniversary sub-committee. Siting of another Groton Parish Sign which has been masterfully created by Bryn Hurran by using the seat back of the replaced village bench. The Council formally expressed its thanks for the expert craftsmanship of Bryn Hurran in creating and siting the Village notice board and for installing the new village bench.

15. Next meeting – Monday 5th September 2023 at 7.00pm

The meeting closed at 8.45pm