

Minutes of the Meeting of Groton Parish Council held on Wednesday 1st March 2023 at 7.00pm in Groton Village Hall

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

Guests: B Hurren (Babergh District Council)

- 1. Apologies for absence – None**
- 2. Councillors' Declarations of Interests in any item on the Agenda –** P Roberts declared an interest in item 6.2 due to his position on the Church Committee.
- 3. Minutes of the Meeting of 11th January 2023 - Approved**

4. Reports from

4.1. Suffolk County Council
Councillor James Finch was unable to attend.

4.2. Babergh District Council
Councillor Bryn Hurren reported the following:
Budget – Very difficult due to increased costs across the board. An Council Tax increase of 2.9% had been agreed which was an average of £5.90.
Empty Homes – with homelessness increasing and over 1,000 empty private sector homes in the District the Council was offering grants of £20,000 to owners to enable properties for letting.
Election 2023 – Purder period starting on 23 march which means District Councillors would be limited in which duties they could carry out.
Locality Budget – Pleased that Groton PC had been granted £412.00. The Chairman wished to place on record the Council's gratitude for this payment, which would help pay for the replacement of the bench on the village green.

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 28 February 2023	£7,7249.70
Unity Trust Deposit Account as at 28 February 2023	£2,713.53
Nat West Current Account as at 31 January 2023	£494.80
Nat West Deposit Account as at 28 February 2023	£0.01
Total	£10,458.04

Payments received:

Bank Interest £8.77

Cheque No	Amount £	Payee	Purpose
300036	£42.03	R J Jones	Clerk's Expenses Feb – March 23

6.2. Charitable Donation applications were discussed and agreed as follows:

Boxford Playing Fields £300.00

Groton PCC £350.00

Groton Village Hall £175.00

French's Care Haven £175.00

This was in accordance with the Council's Annual Budget which allowed for £1,000 to be used for donations to local groups as set out in the Council's Charitable Donations Policy.

6.3. Community Infrastructure Levy – As stated in item 4.2 the Council had received a payment of £412.00 from the District Council's Locality Budget towards the replacement of the bench on the Village Green with a bench to commemorate the coronation of King Charles III. However, as there would be a shortfall in the amount needed for this project, it was agreed to pay the balance of approximately £50.00 from the CIL budget.

It was also agreed that the full cost of erecting a new notice board would be paid for out of the CIL budget.

6.4. Other financial matters – None

7. Neighbourhood Plan Update

Councillor Chapman reported the following:

Two public consultation/information sessions had been held concentrating on the draft statement and objectives. Positive discussions had taken place which would be carried forward. A suggestion had been made regarding the forthcoming 25th anniversary of the book Groton – A Garland of Hamlets which had been produced in liaison with Parishioners in 2000. The idea of updating the book with the inclusion of a digital version had been put forward. Councillor Chapman had also been in discussions with Babergh DC Planning regarding a new Government backed initiative to introduce 'Lighter Touch' Neighbourhood Plans called People and Place Plans and he was pleased to report that Groton had been chosen as a 'pilot' scheme. This would reduce cost and workload associated with the original Neighbourhood Plan and would also give the Parish Council access to BDC expertise. He had already met several times with BDC representatives, and a tour of the Parish had taken place. He emphasised that the final agreed plan would be Parish Council not District Council led. He added that the Neighbourhood Plan Working Group believed that this option would be the best way forward whilst acknowledging the possible risks involved in a previously untested project.

8. Planning Matters

8.1. Planning Applications - DC/23/00243 2 Castlings Heath Householder Application - Erection of a two storey side extension and single storey rear extension – No objections.

DC/23/00693 Crown House, Groton Street Application for Listed Building Consent - Insertion of a ground floor partition wall and door – No objections

8.2. Planning decisions received and noted - None

8.3. Other Planning Matters - None

9. Re-siting of Noticeboard

The clerk was currently awaiting permission from Suffolk County Council to site the notice board on the village green. It was agreed to allocate this work to B D Hurren who had provided the most competitive and comprehensive quote tailored to the Council's requirements. Councillors to meet on site to agree the best position.

10. Election 2023 – The Clerk reported that all current councillors and potential new members would need to complete a nomination form. There were concerns expressed that it would be difficult for any prospective new nominees to access the forms and information required to complete them. The Clerk emphasised that the Election process was the responsibility of the District Council and the PC had to wait for the information to be provided. He added that, should it be necessary to hold an Election, the cost to the PC would be around £900.00.

11. Coronation of King Charles III

As per items 4.2 and 6.3 a new commemorative bench would be sited to replace the current bench which is in poor condition.

There was still a possibility of some parishioners holding an event to commemorate the coronation and asking the Parish Council for a donation towards the cost. It was agreed that, if a request for funding was made, a decision would be made via e-mail as the PC was not due to meet again until after the Coronation.

There was also a suggestion that a commemorative tree be planted on the Croft to mark the coronation. However, it was pointed out that only the trustees could make such a decision and the policy had always been not to plant any new trees but to keep the Croft as an 'open space'.

12. Wildfires and Emergency Support Plan

The chairman had been contacted by the chair of Edwardstone PC regarding pooling resources to set up a plan to deal with wildfires and emergencies following the field fires that took place during summer 2022. It was agreed to support this idea and Councillor Cheeseman agreed to be the Council's representative.

13. Chairman's and Clerk's reports and correspondence - None

14. Highway and Footpath Matters

Councillor Chapman reported that during the Neighbourhood Plan public sessions, Parishioners had expressed concern about cars speeding through the village. He agreed to take this matter up with SCC Highways.

15. Renewal of Village Hall Lease – It was confirmed that the Landowner had no objections to the lease being renewed and so it was agreed to move forward with this matter. The Clerk to contact the Solicitors who hold the documentation to start the renewal process.

16. To set future Agenda items – Millennium Book 25th anniversary

17. Next meeting –Due to the elections taking place on Thursday 4th May, it was agreed to move the AGM and Annual Parish Meeting to Wednesday 17th May.

The meeting closed at 9.00pm