

MINUTES OF METHWOLD PARISH COUNCIL
VIRTUAL MEETING HELD
THURSDAY 10th DECEMBER at 7.00pm

Parish Councillors present: J Marriage – Chairman, R Gibson – Vice Chair, S Crump, P Crawley, D Charlesworth-Smith, C West, D Scott, L Burge, B Horton, R Scott

Also in attendance: R Buckle (Parish Clerk)

Cllr A Ryves

Cllr M Storey

2 members of the public

The Chairman welcomed all to the virtual meeting and thanked all for joining onscreen and on the telephone.

1. The parish council to receive and resolve to agree apologies for absence – S Burbridge submitted apologies, the parish council accepted apologies.

2. To receive declarations of interest in items on the agenda and consider any requests for dispensations – JM declared an interest in Item 8b Footpaths, R Gibson will take the Chair for this item.

The Chairman reminded the council that all councillors have a duty to declare any interest in any item on the agenda.

3. To approve the minutes of the meeting held on November 12th 2020 – C West proposed to approve, R Gibson seconded – APPROVED R Scott abstained because he was not present at the last meeting.

4. Matters arising from the last minutes - None

5. Reports

5.1 There was no Open Spaces meeting in November – updates, there have been a series of emails from the Public Rights of Way Officer regarding the Footpaths in the parish, the Clerk is responding to these.

a) Kissing gate on Blackberry Lane, this may have to be removed as it is not considered necessary, the parish council have explained the safety aspect of having a gate here to prevent children running out onto the road and that buggies and wheelchairs could not access the footpath because the surface is not suitable but the PROW Officer is under pressure from the Secretary of the Outside Spaces Group to have the kissing gates removed.

b) The kissing gates across Hall Farm fields are probably ok because they are used to retain cattle in the fields.

c) The kissing gates on and off the recreation ground might able to remain because they predate the registration of public footpaths, the PROW Officer proposes to add these to the footpath description. However, the Secretary of the Outside Spaces Group wants these removed until the description is added, when they can be replaced, there seems little sense in this option.

The questions from the Secretary of the Outside Spaces Group has also questioned the PSPO on the recreation ground and what is allowed.

There has been a meeting with the grass cutting and grounds maintenance contractors, hopefully there is a better understanding of what is required for the next season. Grass cutting will resume in April 2021.

5.2 Update and report from the virtual meeting of Hall and General Purposes Working Party and to consider recommendations made at the meeting held on 3rd December 2020, the Handyman is working his

way through the list of jobs. PC has installed panels on the ladies toilet door to cover the holes and tidy them up.

The main door at the Fenton Room end needs attention, this will be done before the next meeting.

Re-opening the Complex in Tier 2 – to date only Zumba have decided to re-start. Due to the post office using the corridor, toilet and kitchen during the day in the week, the dividing doors will be closed so that there is a single entrance meaning additional cleaning is not required.

6. Finance

6.1 Approval of payments list – Council has received a copy of the Bank Rec and Income & Invoice List. D Charlesworth-Smith proposed to approve payments, S Crump Seconded - APPROVED P Crawley abstained as he is due to be reimbursed for purchasing materials to repair the door.

There was a Finance Committee meeting held on Tuesday 1st December 2020 to discuss and agree the following for approval by full council. All councillors have received a copy of the proposed Budget 2021/22, Precept 2021/22 and Draft Financial Reserves Policy before the meeting.

a. Approval of proposed Budget for 2021/22 – the proposed Budget includes a small amount of income from the Complex for the latter part of 2021/22. The budget balances. P Crawley proposed to accept the Budget 2021/22 seconded C West APPROVED

b. Approval of proposed Precept 2021/22 – As the group had not received the Parish Precept Setting Information from the Borough Council at the time of the Finance meeting the calculation was based on 2020/21 figures of 498.8 Band D houses in the Parish. The Finance Committee proposed that there should be an increase to the Precept but this should be a reasonable amount, proposal was for a 5% increase, this is the same as last year. A 5% increase to last year's figure equates to an increase of approximately 43p per month per Band D house on the Precept 2021/22.

Is there a breakdown of the numbers of houses in each council tax band, Clerk to ask the Borough Council for this information.

S Crump proposed a 5% increase to the Precept, R Scott seconded - APPROVED

c. Approval of updated Financial Reserves Policy – Circulated to the council – updated to reflect the Budget for 2021/22, this is a moveable document which is regularly revised to ensure the parish council adhere to the approved Budget. D Scott proposed to accept the updates, C West seconded – APPROVED.

7. Planning

7.1 To receive planning decisions –

20/01494/F Poppylot Bungalow Southery Road Feltwell Thetford Norfolk IP26 4EP - Continued use of land for dog breeding business along with the continued stationing of a mobile home Application Permitted
4 December 2020 Delegated Decision

20/01467/F The Green Man 1 Whiteplot Road Methwold Hythe Norfolk IP26 4QP - Proposed retrospective siting of temporary caravan (for use in conjunction with building works) Application Permitted
4 December 2020 Delegated Decision

7.2 To receive planning applications

20/01846/F Horizontal cylindrical tank 8.5m long by 3m diameter installed on the outside of an existing building on an open steel structure. at British Sugar PLC Wissington Sugar Factory College Road Wissington Wereham KINGS LYNN - NO OBSERVATION

20/01277/F Construction of one dwelling at 15 Feltwell Road Methwold Hythe Thetford Norfolk IP26 4QJ
NO OBSERVATIONS

7.3 To consider planning applications received after the agenda was published

2/TPO/00006: Horse chestnut (T1) - Crown lift to 5.4m above ground level along roadside only, only pruning secondary smaller branches to allow for vehicle clearance. Crown lift to 3m above ground level over green space allow sufficient space for seating and grounds maintenance Open for comment icon
Street Record Old Methwold Road Feltwell Norfolk – NO OSERVATIONS

20/00121/TPO Hedgerow Removal Notice: To incorporate the field parcel with an adjoining field to make farming more efficient Open for comment Land South of Severalls Road Methwold Hythe Thetford Norfolk – NO OBSERVATIONS

8. Items received for agenda

a. The parish council have been approached with a proposal for a shop from a local commercial concern seeking to establish a shop in St George's. The proposal is to take over the whole of the newer part of the building, the Fenton Room, kitchen, storage areas, parish office and the post office, the proposal states they have been in negotiations to incorporate the post office within the proposed shop area. They have specifically excluded taking over St George's Hall, Spencer Room and lobby area.

The parish council recognises that some people feel a shop is required in the village and will investigate the feasibility of incorporating a shop into the Complex, to do this the parish council have set up a shop working group.

Had it not been for Covid-19 preventing the Annual Parish Meeting in April 2020, the parish council would have had a representative from the community shop at Great Ryburgh come and speak on the success of their community shop, this is on hold at present but can still happen once public meetings are allowed again.

There are several key issues that the parish council has identified:

- There is a difference between a commercial shop business and a community shop, and these would be set up, run and managed in different ways.
- A community shop would be able to access help and advice from the Plunkett Foundation but this would require volunteers to come forward to set up a working group to take the project forwards and run the venture.
- The parish council are required to provide village hall facilities for the community therefore any proposed changes need thorough investigation.
- Where does the funding come from for alterations required to start up a commercial business?
- Planning permission required for change of use to any part of the building for commercial use.
- Implications in respect of the rateable value of the building especially if a commercial business.
- Split of services - it would be essential to separate the services heating, water and electricity for a commercial venture from those areas remaining with the parish council. This could include a new separate boiler/heating system.
- It is possible that the grant received by the parish council for the refurbishment of the kitchen might have to be repaid if it became a commercial business.
- There will be costs for Solicitors fees for a commercial lease agreement to include maintenance this will be essential, who pays for this?
- What happens if the venture did not prove profitable and the lease is terminated; would the parish council be faced with the (considerable) cost of converting the building back to its former use?

The loss of facilities-

- Pre COVID-19 rooms were hired regularly by groups and privately hired for parties and wedding receptions, not all of these could be accommodated elsewhere due to size restrictions and regular groups would have to compromise on their preferred times to use the facilities available.
- The excess of table and chairs recently purchased to support large functions in St George's would be surplus to requirement.
- It would be impossible to hold the wedding receptions in St George's Hall without the benefit of the Fenton Room and kitchen.
- Storage will become a serious issue in the Complex.

The hall group and the parish council discussed the set up in the complex or whether a temporary building sited in the car park to trial this enterprise without the need to make alterations to the building would be feasible.

The parish council cannot and does not wish to take the lead with a commercial operation.

A possible solution to the problem of a suitable premises could be, to establish a shop in a temporary facility, a modular building or converted shipping container, in the village hall car park. This would offer the opportunity to establish a shop without the significant cost. Such a facility could be established by individuals looking to set up a private venture or by a community interest group wishing to establish a community shop.

Whilst there would be a number of aspects to consider including planning permission (for a temporary building/shop) and servicing the building, it is believed to be a solution that offers an immediate opportunity to establish the viability of the venture without the capital costs of permanent premises.

The Chairman proposed to thank people for their interest, at present no decisions will be made. The parish council welcome any other interested parties to come forward with proposal/suggestion, please contact the Clerk.

The parish council would like to find out if there is interest from anyone who would like to organise a group of volunteers to set up and run a community shop or as a commercial enterprise and will investigate whether there can be a provision of space for a shop. To ensure this is done properly will not be a quick process.

b. Footpath 7 signage – R Gibson took the Chair for this item, Footpath 7 runs through a private garden, it requires a footbridge to enable walkers to cross a ditch, this has been missing for some time, Highways are aware but do not have the funds to replace the footbridge at this present time, there does not seem to be any need to sign a footpath which cannot be used until such time Highways are able to replace the footbridge, this is not acceptable to the person who has complained that the footpath is not signed, PROW Officer suggests the ‘exemption to signposting’ rule is applied at present. P Crawley proposed to agree to ‘exemption of signposting, R Scott seconded – APPROVED J Marriage abstained.

c. Report – Virtual Meeting of Norfolk Police Inspectors Briefing, D Charlesworth-Smith updated the meeting on the Inspectors Briefing.

Please can everyone ensure that any crimes are reported online www.norfolk.police.uk/contact-us or on the 101 number, please do not put posts on Facebook reporting incidents because the Police do not monitor this.

Speedwatch are running sessions in the parish again, it was reported that on one day they recorded a vehicle travelling at 75mph in Brookville. The Chairman commented that it is good to hear Speedwatch are able to operate and hopefully will make an impact.

There have been reports of vehicles using The Avenue as a cut through to the A134, these vehicles are reported as travelling at speed. Anyone wishing to report these incidents/vehicles need to contact the Police on the 101 number, the Police will need time date, vehicle reg no, model and make of the car.

Volunteers required to attend the online Inspectors Briefing on 17th December 2020, D Charlesworth-Smith is attending.

9. Correspondence – already circulated to parish councillors

Open Forum for Public Participation

An opportunity to hear from members of the public, Borough and County Councillors.

Can you say who it is that has proposed a shop? This is not possible at present.

Comment from resident - I don't see why people who pay council tax/precept would pay to provide a private/commercial business on public property, I am against paying precept for a commercial business.

How much extra will be paid in precept by the new houses in the parish? At present we don't have the information on banding to be able to answer this. It is unknown how many houses in Band D are rented by those who don't qualify to pay council tax. Clerk will ask the Borough Council for this information.

Kissing gates on Blackberry Lane, who owns these?

Moles, still causing a problem. The mole man is aware, he has stepped up visits and traps set in these areas. Are both parties who have shown interest in a shop wanting the same area? At present the second person who has expressed an interest is waiting to hear what the parish council is able to offer with regard to size and siting before putting together a business plan.

In September's Methwold Times resident said there was a letter printed in response to Cllr Ryves article regarding the viability of setting up a shop in the village, this highlighted all the points that the parish council have covered regarding setting up a shop in the parish.

Very concerned that if the shop proposal were to go ahead there would be no disabled toilet facility in the St George's side of the Complex meaning a new facility would have to be provided. Who would pay for this and all the other costs that would be incurred for alterations if this were to happen?

The idea of a temporary building in the car park is a better option but there should be no cost to the parish council or community for a commercial venture.

Resident questioned the business interests of Borough Councillor and whether this should have been declared on the Register of Interests statement held by the Borough Council – The Chairman suggested this is for the Monitoring Officer and not for discussion at this meeting.

10. Further items and reports

Section 106 change to the Deed of Variation for the Meadow Development - there has been a small change to the wording, this is at the signature stage and once completed will provide funds of approx. £33k to include the provision of toilets on the recreation ground dependant on planning permission being approved. The Solicitor at the Borough Council has worked hard to get this organised. There will be a change for the variation, but this is not thought to be as much as the £3k which has been allocated in the Budget to cover costs.

Please can councillors try to provide names to the Clerk for those who make contact to comment or complain so that this can be evidenced and responded to?

Co-Option currently there is one space to fill, if anyone would be interested in becoming a parish councillor please contact the Clerk.

Glass recycling – amount we can claim back for recycling glass can be claimed every 6 months, Clerk has submitted the first invoices for payment and has requested the glass bin is emptied before Christmas.

When will the electrical survey be completed, the survey has been done we are now waiting for the electrician to come and carry out the work which has been identified?

CCTV – still collecting information for the Hall group to discuss

Reiterate when an incident is witnessed please can this be reported to the Police rather than on Facebook.

Parking outside The Old Chapel on High Street, this is causing a nuisance for those wishing to use the bus stop, when will the bus stop marking be reinstated, thought the Borough Council were going to do these earlier this year?

The streetlight outside the rec. is on all day. Clerk will report this.

The Chairman wished everyone a very Happy Christmas.

11. To pass a resolution (under the Public Admission to Meetings Act 1960 to exclude members of the public and press for the following confidential items: Conditions of hire, A copy of a hirers public liability is required to be held on file, this has not been received, parish council have instructed the Clerk to write a letter requesting a copy of the public liability insurance.

.

Meeting closed at 9.00pm