

Minutes of Coney Weston Parish Council Meeting held on Monday 15<sup>th</sup> July 2024 at 7:00pm in Coney Weston Village Hall.

**Present** Cllrs P Clarke, B Francis, T Bedford, WSDC A Smith & SCC Cllr J Spicer.

**1. Welcome to the New Parish Clerk. Introduction of Vicki Gay, our new Parish Clerk and receive update on proposed administration changes. PAYE, under accounts item 11.4**

The Councillors present welcomed Vicki Gay as the new Clerk for Coney Weston Parish Council. The Parish Clerk advised the Councillors that, as she has previous experience with Parish Council administration, they may see some changes to the way documents are presented. These would primarily be slight changes in the appearance of the agendas and minutes. There will also be some changes to the way the accounts information is presented. The Clerk is looking forward to working with the Councillors. It was acknowledged that, as there was no handover, and a short lead into the first meeting, that some items will take longer to address but she will do her best to get on top of any outstanding matters. It was agreed that 260 annualised hours would be worked. This is to enable flexible working to accommodate the needs of the Parish Council.

**2. Formal Resignation. Acknowledge the formal resignation of Councillor C Flood.**

The Parish Council formally accepted the resignation of Chris Flood from the Parish Council. Her input will be greatly missed. It is understood that she will continue to help administer both the Parish Council website and Facebook page with the input of both the Clerk and Cllr Francis. The Clerk will inform West Suffolk Council of Cllrs Flood resignation. **Action Clerk**

**3. Apologies for Absence.**

The Parish council accepted and agreed the reason for apologies for the absence from Cllr M Lock.

**4. Co-option of new Parish Councillor**

No applications received.

**5. Members' Declarations of Interest and Dispensations.**

5.1. Receive declarations of interest from Councillors on items on the agenda. Cllr T Bedford declared an interest in item 11.2 on the agenda.

5.2. Receive written requests for dispensations for disclosable pecuniary interests. A written request was received from Cllr T Bedford, for a dispensation relating to item 11.2 on the agenda.

5.3. Grant dispensations as appropriate under Section 33 of the Localism Act. None.

**6. Minutes.** The minutes of the Annual Parish Council Meeting held on Thursday, 9th May 2024 as amended, and the Extraordinary Meeting held on Wednesday 19th June 2024 were agreed and approved as a correct records.

**7. Public Participation.** Open the meeting to the public for a maximum of 20 minutes, with each speaker limited to 3 minutes.

No members of the public present.

**8. Report from Suffolk County Councillor: J. Spicer.**

Cllr Spicer has been alerted to an issue with a car parking on the path and green at the bungalows in Thetford Road. She is referring the matter to the SCC Enforcement Team. Cllr Spicer confirmed that the bridge at Rushford Road will be closed for repair from 1<sup>st</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> August. Cllr Francis will put this information on Facebook. Cllr Spicer did not have any update on the flooding issue in the village. In collaboration with the Parish Council, a resident, John Hogg, has been in communication with SCC (Highways) regarding the issues - a disappointing reply has been received – a) still no progress in persuading the Riddlesworth Estate to agree to replacement pipework access and b) no firm commitment to Jet-wash the pipework by the village sign nor to

digging out the top end of the Parish Ditch. Further communication will likely be necessary, prior to the next meeting. There was a discussion about the requirement for replacement 30mph repeater signs. There are six small replacements needed. The Clerk has some information about replacement plates, rather than stickers, that she will share with Cllr Spicer. The repainting of 'SLOW' on the road, - heading out of Coney Weston on Rushford Rd towards The Cattery, needs to be priced. Cllr Spicer confirmed that she would make a grant of £2,000 towards the cost of a new VAS device for the village. She will liaise with the Clerk regarding the application for this.

**Action Cllr Francis/Clerk**

## **9. Report from West Suffolk Councillor. A. Smith.**

Cllr Smith noted that we were discussing the issue with items on the grass verges under item 10.2 on the agenda.

As the Councillor are aware West Suffolk Council is planning changes to the way that household waste is collected. Part of their plans include the introduction of roadside glass collection. There are concerns that this will have a negative financial impact on organisations who currently receive an income from having bottle banks on their land, in particular Village Halls. Cllr Smith, working with Cllr Thorndyke, is committed to trying to secure a 12-month trial, allowing the bottle banks to remain an option for residents, once the new roadside collection is in operation.

A discussion was held about who is responsible for the grass cutting in the village, particularly at the Village Sign and in front of the bungalows on Thetford Road, as these areas do not seem to have been cut recently. West Suffolk carried out an in-depth review of their grass cutting recently, and it was understood that they now cut on a three-week rota. In most villages different organisations are responsible for different areas of grass maintenance in a village. Ordinarily West Suffolk Council, Suffolk County Council, Havebury Housing Partnership and the Parish Council all have their own areas of responsibility. For clarity the Clerk will ascertain who is responsible for the different areas of grass cutting in the village and ensure the areas discussed above are on a schedule for cutting.

**Action Clerk**

Cllr Smith reported that the application for the solar array at Bowbeck has been granted planning permission. There is likely to be a nine-month construction period which will bring a level of disruption to the area.

Cllr Smith brought an audio system to the meeting for the Parish Council to try in a bid to address problems reported that audience members sometimes struggle to hear the Councillors at meetings. The system we tried, although improving the acoustics, was not practical for use during a meeting. This was because the microphones needed to be handheld and shared. Cllr Smith will continue to explore options, ideally with desk mounted, goosenecked microphones.

**Action Cllr Smith**

Cllr Smith offered to make a grant £600 towards the cost of a new VAS device for the village. Cllr Smith will liaise with the Clerk regarding the application for this.

**Action Cllr Smith/Clerk**

## **10. Councillors' Reports.**

### **10.1 Cllr Clarke: Defibrillator,**

The purchase of a new battery and replacement pads for the defibrillator was confirmed at a cost of £347.88, including VAT and delivery. The items will be delivered to Cllr Clarke's home. The Clerk will liaise with Cllr Francis about arranging the payment.

Village Group Liaison. There was no report this month.

Volunteers. It is understood that there is some work that needs to be done in the village. The Clerk reminded the Councillors that they are not insured to carry out works on the highway unless they have a member of the Parish Council trained under the Suffolk County Council Self Help Scheme. The Clerk will share some information about this, Cllr Francis expressed an interest in undertaking the Community Self Help Scheme training. The Clerk will make enquiries about course dates.

**Action Cllr Francis/Clerk**

## 10.2 Cllr Bedford:

First Aid/Defibrillator Awareness Sessions,

Cllr Bedford reported that so far 26 people have expressed an interest in attending a First Aid/Defibrillator Awareness Session. There are going to be two courses, the first one will be held on 19<sup>th</sup> July, in the Village Hall and the second one will be held later in the year. It was agreed that a donation of £100 will be made to the St John's Ambulance as the person providing the course did not want payment for running the course. This was much appreciated as these courses can be expensive. Cllr Bedford will find out where this payment needs to be made as, if possible, we would like to support the local branch.

**Action Cllr Bedford**

Objects on grass verges.

A resident raised a query about items on the grass verges. In response to this it was agreed to post the following advisory notice for residents:

### **OBJECTS ON HIGHWAY GRASS VERGES**

*Occasionally the Parish Council receive complaints about objects, like large stones and poles, that have been placed on the grass verges close to the road.*

*This is usually done with good intentions to prevent cars, lorries and tractors from driving over the verges causing unsightly ruts.*

*95% of the verges are owned and are the responsibility of Suffolk County Council's Highways Dept. If consent has not been obtained for objects to be placed on the verge and a complaint is made this will be investigated and if the objects are deemed illegal the Enforcement Team will then become involved.*

*Perhaps more importantly, you need to be aware that if anybody suffers personal injury or damage to their vehicle as a result of these objects, the householder is likely to be held responsible, not Suffolk County Council.*

*More information can be obtained from the Parish Clerk, Vicki Gay at [clerk@coneywestonparishcouncil.gov.uk](mailto:clerk@coneywestonparishcouncil.gov.uk).*

This notice will be posted on the Parish Council website, Facebook and Parish council noticeboard.

**Action Cllr Francis/Clerk**

## 10.3 Cllr Francis: Community Development/ new residents.

Cllr Francis has already provided two new residents with a copy of the welcome letter. It was agreed that we might need to do some work to current letter, including bin collection information. The Clerk will liaise with Cllr Francis regarding this.

**Action Cllr Francis/Clerk**

A local resident has offered to do some work on the planters outside 15-25 Thetford Road. The Parish Council will cover the cost of any material required; this is likely to be some compost. Cllr Francis will liaise with the resident regarding this matter.

**Action Cllr Francis**

A water butt is due to be placed at the decommissioned bus shelter. Works are still ongoing.

Three residents cleared the footpath on Thetford Road between the village sign and 1 Thetford Road. The area at the bus shelter needs to be cleared. See also under item 10.1 Village Group.

There will be a police surgery at Coney Weston village Hall on Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> August between 10-12 noon. Another surgery will also take place on Tuesday 13 August (10.00am – 12.00pm) at Stanton Community Village Hall, Old Bury Road, Stanton. The Clerk will see if there is any advertising material available for us to share.

**Action Clerk**

Some residents reported that they were struggling to find out what is going on in the village. We are unsure what we can do to improve this situation as events are advertised on the notice boards, Facebook and the village website. We would welcome any ideas to improve local engagement.

10.4 Cllr Lock: Playing Field “Task and Finish” group,

It was understood that the Playing Field Trustees are considering the removal of some of the play equipment at the playing field. This matter is still under discussion and we will endeavour to set up a meeting to discuss the overall situation moving forward. In the past a document with recommendation for works has been produced. An updated version of this document has been requested.

**Action Cllr Clarke/Lock**

Planning. No applications received.

Speeding device. No report to receive.

10.5 Cllrs Clarke and Lock: Highways,

Flooding, covered under item 8

Hedges, no report to receive.

Footpaths, no report to receive.

## 11. Finance

11.1. Review income and expenditure from 3rd May 2024 to 30th June 2024.

Some information was ahead of the meeting with both the Councillors and the public, on the Parish council website. The Clerk will produce a full summary of payments made and received, for the year so far, for the September meeting.

**Action Clerk**

11.2. Authorise and sign off payments listed on the payment schedule.

The Following payments were agreed for payment/ noted as received:

Payment	Village Hall	Hall hire for PC 2024	£10.00
Payment	Village Hall	Hall Hire, Clerk interviews, PC meeting June, CWAPM	£25.00
Payment	B Francis	Postage, Bank signatories.	£3.05
Payment	SCC	Advert for Parish Clerk	£75.00
Payment	Mrs A Mann	Rent, Village Hall Car Park (10/ 2023-10/ 2024)	£150.00
Payment	Andrea Morris	Clerk Salary - May 2024	£420.83
Payment	Andrea Morris	HMRC - Personal tax for Clerk	£92.00
Payment	Well Medical	Battery and pads, defibrillator.	£347.88
Payment	Mr R Martin	Installation new posts for village noticeboards	£164.69
Receipt	WSC	Precept	£10,676.00

11.3. Review current interest rates on reserve funds.

Cllr Bedford has been exploring options for alternative banking arrangements to give a better return on the Parish Council’s money. There are not many banks supporting Parish Council accounts and Cllr Bedford will continue to work on this. The Clerk will provide information, for Unity Trust Bank, a bank that she has used for another of the Parish Council’s she works for that seems to offer a good rate of interest.

**Action Cllr Bedford/Clerk**

11.4. To consider the use of accounting software for the preparation of Parish Council accounts Accounts, HMRC PAYE, set up a direct debit for direct collection

It was agreed that the Clerk would set up an account with EasyPC accounts. This is an accounts software package, that specialises in Parish Council accounts. The annual cost for this service is in the region of £72. This software enables the easy production of reports and end of year returns for Parish Councils. The Clerk is currently taking advantage of a free three month trial. The Clerk is experienced with PAYE and filling with HMRC, and it is her intention to take over the management of this from SALC. It is also her intention to set up a direct debit to enable HMRC to collect any tax due. The Councillors were all in agreement with the above.

**Action Clerk**

## **12. Village Notice Boards.**

12.1. Discuss current arrangements for the new and existing notice boards. 12.2. Cllr Francis to present a Noticeboards Policy (previously circulated).

After discussion the following Noticeboards Policy was agreed and adopted:

### *Introduction:*

*The purpose of this policy is to provide guidelines regarding the usage of the Parish Council noticeboards and the material which can be displayed.*

### Location of noticeboards

*opposite Coles Path*

*outside The Swan pub*

*the Village Hall, next to the defibrillator*

### Use of the noticeboards

*The noticeboards are to be used for the posting community and local information along with official Council notices.*

*1 & 2 are designated for community and local information*

*3 is designated for Parish Council notices which include:*

### Election notices and results:

*In accordance with Government Legislation, if an election of members of the Council or Government is necessary, the Parish Clerk or designated Councillor, must publish a notice on the official notice board and website of the Parish Council as soon as possible.*

### Parish Council Agendas and Minutes:

*The agendas of Coney Weston Parish Council meetings and committee meetings will be displayed on the official notice board at least 3 working days prior to the meeting.*

*Minutes of these meetings will be displayed as soon as possible after the meeting.*

### Display of local/community notices:

*Community/local information will be displayed in 1 & 2. Local business information will be accepted on a discretionary basis. Events and activities outside the parish will only be displayed if there is space available and with permission.*

### Size of Notices

*In order to make best use of the limited space, the notices need to be A5.*

*Parish Council notices can be A4.*

### Notices not permitted

*Political notices will not be permitted.*

### Upkeep

*Volunteers manage the noticeboards, which are kept locked.*

*Contact information is displayed on each boards 1 & 2.*

*The noticeboards will be checked regularly with notices being removed and added as appropriate.*

*Cllr Francis will put an abridge notice to this effect on the noticeboards for information. A resident, who had previously wanted to put up a poster on one of the noticeboards will be advised that they would be welcome to put their poster up, if it is reduced in size to A5 and carries some local contact information. Alternatively, they would be welcome to put up their original, A4 poster on the open noticeboard at the Village Hall.*

**Action Cllr Francis/Clerk**

## **13. Derelict Land Between No. 2 and 3 Rushford Road.**

13.1. Discuss possible future uses of the land owned by West Suffolk Council.

A query had been raised about the use of the derelict land between no. 2& 3 Rushford Road.

District Cllr Smith informed the Councillors that this land is in the ownership of Barley Homes. This is a commercial company limited by shares, for the purpose of developing housing for sale and private rent, and affordable rent and low-cost home ownership in line with the Council's existing planning policies. The company is wholly owned by the West Suffolk Council. The land is looking neglected, and the Parish Council would like to know if there are plans for it and who maintains it in the meantime. Cllr Smith will make some enquiries about the land and report back. The Clerk will make some general enquires regarding the use of Section 106 monies in parishes, other than where it has been raised.

**Action Cllr Smith/Clerk**

#### **14. Purchase of New Speed Indicator Device (SID).**

14.1. Cllr Bedford to present the final report/recommendation on the most appropriate SID. Cllr Bedford has done a lot of work around the purchase of a new Vehicle Activated Sign (VAS) for the village. After consideration it was agreed to go ahead with the purchase of the Morelock device. This is priced at £2,740 plus VAT £548. With the grant from Cllr Spicer and Cllr Smith the Parish Council will be funding the device to the cost of £140, reclaiming the VAT at the end of the financial year. The Clerk will make a formal request for the grants from both Cllr Spicer and Cllr Smith and once these have been confirmed will place an order for the new device

#### **15. Improving Speech Volume and Clarity at Village Hall Meetings.**

15.1. Cllr Francis to present the latest findings and recommendations. As discussed under item 9 some sound equipment was used at the meeting and Cllr Smith will continue to explore options.

#### **16. The Swan Pub (Currently Closed).**

16.1. Discuss whether the Parish Council should initiate listing the pub as an Asset of Community Value.

The Councillors discussed the option to list The Swan public house as an Asset of Community Value (ACV). The Community Right to Bid (Assets of Community Value in legislation) was introduced in the Localism Act 2011. The Community Right to Bid allows communities and parish councils to nominate buildings or land for listing by the local authority as an asset of community value. An asset can be listed if its principal use furthers (or has recently furthered) their community's social well-being or social interests and is likely to do so in the future. When a listed asset comes to be sold, a moratorium on the sale (of up to six months) may be invoked, providing local community groups with a better chance to raise finance, develop a business and to make a bid to buy the asset on the open market. Historically, The Swan has been a central hub for the community, and has served as a key venue for socializing, eating, and drinking over many years. It was understood that the pub has recently been put on the market and closed just after Easter this year. This means we would need to list the pub as an ACV as a matter of urgency. The Clerk will submit an application to West Suffolk Council to list the pub as an ACV. If the listing is accepted this would give the parish a period of time to put together a plan to take the pub on as a Community Asset. The Parish Council are supportive of this and will do what they can to support this initiative.

**Action Clerk**

16.2. Discuss whether the Parish Council should hold a public meeting to assess support for developing a community pub.

It was agreed that, if our request to list The Swan as an ACV was successful, we should hold a public meeting, potentially in September, to see if there is an appetite amongst the residents of Coney Weston, to take this project forward. Cllr Bedford will speak to someone from The Fox, at Garboldisham, who successfully run the pub as an ACV, to try and find out more about the process.

**Action Cllr Bedford/Clerk**

#### **17. Complaint from Resident.**

17.1 To note receipt of complaint from a local resident.

A complaint has been received by the Parish Council from a local resident. This matter is in hand with a working party meeting being arranged to discuss the issue further.

#### **18. Policy Reviews.**

18.1. Discuss and approve the updated policies listed below:

18.1.1 Complaints Procedure. The updated Complaints Procedure was discussed and agreed.

18.1.2 Safeguarding Policy. A new Safeguarding policy was discussed and adopted.

18.1.3 Data Protection Policy. This policy is still being worked on by Cllr Bedford and the Clerk.

**Action Cllr Bedford/ Clerk**

18.2. Consider the adoption of the Behaviour and Expectations Policy.

The following Behaviour and Expectations Policy was discussed and adopted.

*We treat everyone with courtesy and respect and ask for the same in return. In accordance with our Standing Orders members of the public may make representations, answer questions and give evidence at a meeting in respect of the business on the agenda, during the session allocated for this on the agenda. It is requested that this session does not exceed 20 minutes in total and that any member of the public shall not speak for more than three minutes. We ask that only one person speaks at a time and that any comments are directed to the of the meeting. A question shall not require a response at the meeting nor start a debate on the question. The Chair of the meeting may direct that a written or oral response be given outside of the meeting if that is the most appropriate course of action.*

*Bullying, verbal or physical abuse will not be tolerated. Anyone behaving in this manner will be asked to leave the meeting. We expect everyone to be kind and courteous.*

The supporting Bullying and Harassment statement, shown below was also agreed and adopted. *We treat everyone with courtesy and respect and ask for the same in return. We ask that you treat your Councillors and council staff courteously without violence, abuse or harassment. Councillors and council staff have the right to carry out their civic duties and work without fear of being attacked or abused. Any behaviour whether that be verbal, physical or in writing, which causes either Councillors or council staff to feel uncomfortable, embarrassed, or threatened, is totally unacceptable. The zero tolerance policy includes abuse, aggression or threats made in person, over the telephone or in written communication, including on social media. The council considers threatening behaviour to be: Attempted or actual aggressive, or physical action made towards any Councillor or member of staff. The use of aggressive, or abusive language (including raising of the voice, swearing, shouting or in writing) which threatens, or intimidates Councillors or council staff. This policy applies throughout all council meetings, but it also applies to any Councillor or council staff away from council meetings.*

## **19. Standing Orders – Amendment to Section 19.**

19.1. Amend the heading to: "Handling Staff Matters & Management of the Parish Clerk and RFO."

The statement below was agreed and will be added to our Standing Orders.

19.2. Approve a new subsection, Sec. 19 (h): "Responsibility for managing the Clerk lies with the Parish Council. A Councillor will be appointed as line-manager, to manage the day-to-day contact with, and to support, supervise and appraise the work of the Clerk. Specific areas of responsibility for the line-manager will include leave requests, absences from work, informal grievances, discipline matters, and monitoring time sheets."

The Clerk recommended a review of the both the Standing and Financial Orders. This will be an agenda item for a future meeting.

## **20. Councillors Reports and Items for Future Agenda**

It was agreed that a review of Councillor's roles and responsibilities will be an agenda item for the next meeting.

**Action Clerk**

## **21. Correspondence for Information**

Barningham Parish Council have just started their consultation on their Neighbourhood Plan. The Clerk has agreed an extension of time for Coney Weston Parish Council to allow them time to review the document and discuss it fully at their September meeting.

**22. Date of Next Meeting.** This was confirmed as 12<sup>th</sup> September 2024, 7pm in the Village Hall. The intention thereafter will be to meet on the first Thursday of the month, bi-monthly.

The meeting closed to the public at 9.55pm