

**MINUTES OF THE EXTRA ORDINARY MEETING
OF CONEY WESTON PARISH COUNCIL
HELD ON THURSDAY 7th MARCH 2024 AT 7.00PM
AT CONEY WESTON VILLAGE HALL**

PRESENT: Councillors Bedford, Clarke (Chair), Flood, Francis & Lock
5 members of the public

Councillor Clarke, Chairman, opened the meeting at 7pm.

Prior to the official Agenda items, Chairman paid tribute to Fran Craig, Parish Councillor, who recently passed away. Her enthusiasm and personal approach to her role as a Councillor over the past 3 years was very much admired and her contribution to the work of the Council will be very much missed in particular her work on village initiatives.

AGENDA ITEM	ACTION
1. To receive apologies for absence and approve the reasons given – apologies received from County Councillor Spicer due to annual leave.	
2. Declarations of interest – declarations of interest were received from Cllrs Francis & Lock (item 11 - relating to bank signatories), Cllr Francis (Village Hall) and Cllr Clarke (Bowls Club).	
3. To approve the draft minutes of the last Parish Council meeting (4 th January 2024) – approval of the Parish precept to be added to item 9. The remainder of the minutes are deemed to be correct and a true record of that meeting – proposed by Cllr Clarke, seconded by Cllr Lock and voted unanimously.	
4. Councillor Vacancy – an application for co-option onto the Parish Council has been received from Tina Bedford. Clerk confirmed criteria met and was voted on unanimously. Tina signed and dated the 'Acceptance of Office' declaration and Chair welcomed her to the Council.	
5. Scheme of public speaking (public participation about a specific agenda item) – 1 member of the public requested to speak on items 3 (approval of precept for 2024-25 in last minutes), 4 (procedural correction on co-opting to the Council), 6 (update on flooding), 9.3 (what is happening to Playing Field Committee & governance), 9.5 (request consideration be given to dog waste bins) & 10.1 (concern that the Clerk's salary is going to exceed this year's budget & what is the process for agreeing additional hours) and 1 member on items 6 & 9.3.	
6. Update on flooding in the village – Cllr Clarke reported the following update on flooding:	

The Replacement Drainage System in The Street

The current plan for the replacement surface water drainage system has been posted on the Parish Website. It was designed by Suffolk County Highways and their then engineers, Kier Construction in 2022. The project is considered a priority by Highways and funds are available. However, as parishioners are aware, there have been delays. Highways changed their main contractor to 'Milestone Infrastructure' in late 2023. The new engineers are in the process of reviewing the Kier plans and visited the village on 8th February 2024 to walk the drainage system with members of the Parish Council working group. From that visit, we expect new amendments to the existing plans. The bottom end of The Street drainage system runs across privately owned land by the village hall. Highway's original approach there involved digging a new ditch, this was considered unacceptable by the landowner. Questions were also raised as to whether the existing drainage pipe actually crossed the land. The recent repair of the inspection chamber in the village hall car park and the use of the original plans from 1917 have confirmed this to be the case. Highways revised thinking therefore involves replacing the existing pipe work with larger more efficient pipes. We understand that negotiations between Highways and landowner are ongoing.

Once the above activities are resolved and finalised, Highways will then begin to plan works and provide expected project timelines. Consideration needs to be given to wild-life and as such no activity will commence prior to winter 2024, at the earliest.

Other Village Flooding Issues

The blocked culvert under the road by the village sign was formally reported to Highways on 13th February. They have committed to attend to this within 20 working days. Hopefully this should reduce the amount of water from flowing down The Street.

Paddock Farm – Clearing gullies and jetting drainage pipes in January 2024 improved matters, but there is still an issue after heavy rain with water collecting at No. 10, entering the garage. A further report has been submitted to Highways seeking further work.

7. **County Councillor's report** – no report from CCllr Spicer.

8. **District Councillor's report** – DCllr Smith paid tribute to Fran Craig.
Warm spaces – working with Cllr Francis on this initiative – work-in-progress.
Fly tipping – tyres have been dumped along Norwich Lane towards Knettishall – this has been reported to WSC by a member of the public but no action taken to date. Cllr Smith to follow up.
Dog waste bins – a member of the public requested consideration be given to the provision of bins for dog waste to be installed in locations around the village. DCllr Smith confirmed that new dog bin waste collection would be subject to a separate charge from WSC and undertook to look into this and report back.

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The WSC Development Control Committee met on 6 March to further discuss the Jaynic/Copart planning application at Stanton – Committee were ‘minded to refuse’ the application so have deferred pending further research and committee meeting. Copart have withdrawn their application but Jaynic are asking for the site to be used for a similar function with another organisation.

9. Councillor’s Reports

- 9.1. **Defibrillator, village group liaison and volunteers** – Cllr Clarke confirmed that the defibrillator was operating well although the battery is showing half full. Cllrs Clarke and Bedford working on possible defibrillator and first aid courses in the village – work-in-progress. Bowls Club toilet block completion due end March. PC/TB
- 9.2. **Community Development, new residents** – Cllr Francis reported that a sign is now up at the bus stop indicating that sand bags are kept for residents’ use and appealed to residents to return the sand bags for future use. No new residents have been notified to the Clerk.
- 9.3. **Playing Field ‘Task & Finish’ group** – Cllr Lock reported that the lawnmower has now been sold for £1,650 which will be added to the Charity’s funds. Given health and safety concerns the trustees intend to arrange for the main tower structure to be removed in the near future. The trustees are also aware that we are overdue a meeting and we understand that the Chair will hopefully be attending the Parish Annual Village meeting. Discussion took place regarding the legal status of the Playing Field Committee with 1 member of the public volunteering to join as a Trustee, and another questioning the safety of the play equipment. Signage at the play area states that the Parish Council is responsible for the play area – Cllr Clarke to remove the signs as they are misleading. Cllr Clarke reiterated that the Parish Council is mindful of these concerns but wish to work with the current Trustees to resolve the situation – possibly for the Parish Council to provide volunteers to help with the running of the facility. PC
- 9.4. **Planning, speed device** – no new local planning applications for discussion at this meeting, but a meeting has been arranged for the 14th March to discuss one new application in Swan Lane.
- SCC Housing Plan Review** – The third and final consultation round has commenced for the West Suffolk Local Plan considering any legal objections. For information, Coney Weston is classified as a Type ‘B’ village in the plan – basically meaning we have limited facilities. The plan states that “in order to cater for appropriate small scale local growth, developments of five homes or less within the designated housing settlement boundary would be permitted.”

In the other conurbations in the vicinity of Coney Weston:

15 new homes are planned in Bardwell.
37 homes in both Barningham and Hopton.
145 homes on a mixed development land in Ixworth.

Action: Given the Type 'B' classification for Coney Weston, we Parish Councillors have informally agreed that given the plan runs until 2040 it seems sensible and not to raise any objections. Cllr Lock proposed to formally respond to the plan with 'no objection' – seconded by Cllr Flood and voted unanimously.

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Separately, the **SCC Local Transport Plan** is also under review a link seeking responses to their questionnaire to capture parishioners' thoughts has been shared via the Parish Website.

Speed device - Speeding Vehicles through the village, particularly on the Thetford and Rushford roads continue to be a concern with 35% travelling above the 30mph speed limit. One vehicle was recently recorded travelling at 70mph.

Speed data has been shared with the local Police – a meeting was set up, attended by Cllrs Lock & Francis our local Community Police Officer, Rachel Reeves and her sergeant. The key outcomes were:

- (1) The data was not being looked at due to a lack of resource.
- (2) PC Reeves covers 30 plus Parish Councils and speeding resources are therefore focused on accident hotspots.
- (3) New training within the district is being undertaken by Officers in the use of speed guns.
- (4) It was agreed that the PC would continue to monitor speeding and should a significant number of high speeds be observed over a given two week period then we would advise PC Reeves who would take action.
- (5) PC Reeves also enquired as to whether the village was observing other types of crime, we advised that we were not aware of any significant issues.

CCllr Spicer has confirmed a £2k grant to the Parish Council in the 2024/25 tax year for speed calming initiatives – for which we are very grateful. This will be used to secure another speed detection device.

A further £2k was included in the Parish Council Budget for the same period. Cllr Bedford has commenced investigations into options for a new SID. Findings will be brought for discussion and approval at either the May or July 2024 meetings.

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9.5. **Highways inc flooding, hedges and footpaths** – flooding covered at item 6. No new updates on hedges and footpaths.

10. Financial Report

- 10.1. To review income and expenditure from **1st April 2023** to **26th February 2024** against budget and to confirm that the bank reconciliation agrees with the bank statements and sign off – proposed as accurate by Cllr Clarke, seconded by Cllr Lock and voted unanimously;

- 10.2. To note, the payment schedule items approved:
- Village Hall – hire January 2024 - £10.00 (no VAT);
 - Village Hall – hire for SCC Engineer visit 08/02/2024 - £5.00 (no VAT);
 - SALC – The Parkinson Partnership LLP (Clerk training) - £30.00, VAT £6.00, total £36.00;
 - Clerk’s Salary – confidential data (no VAT);
 - HMRC - personal Tax Clerk (Jan & Feb 2024) – confidential data;
 - Ronald Jeffrey Martin – 2 x village noticeboard replacement - £626.28 (no VAT);
 - Suffolk Cloud – migration to new website domain name, new email addresses & storage for 2 years - £350 (no VAT);
 - Verse Facilities Management – printing costs for 2 leaflets flooding & Annual Village Meeting - £37.00.
11. **Bank signatories – approval of new signatories** – as Cllr Flood, who is a bank signatory, will be stepping down in May 2024, 2 new bank signatories are required. Cllr Clarke proposed to add Cllrs Lock and Francis as new signatories, seconded by Cllr Bedford and voted by 3 remaining Councillors. Cllr Flood will initiate the admin process for this. CF
12. **Policies & Procedure Reviews:**
- 12.1. **Grant Awarding Policy** – Cllr Clarke – updated policy, which had been previously circulated, was proposed by Cllr Clarke, seconded by Cllr Lock and voted unanimously. Updated policy to be uploaded to website. CF
- 12.2. **Safeguarding Policy** – Cllr Francis – this is still work-in-progress and will be brought back to the May meeting.
13. **80th anniversary of DDay Landings – 6th June 2024** – discussion took place on options viz – lighting beacons at 9.15am on 6th June and/or purchasing a ‘peace flag’ to fly from a flagpole in the village. Further information gathering to take place before a decision is made.
14. **To note dates for Council meetings for 2024-25** – dates (which have been published on the website) are duly noted.
15. **Items for consideration for inclusion on the Agenda for 9th May 2024:**
- 15.1. Options for the purchase of a new speed device;
 - 15.2. Sound system for parish council meetings;
 - 15.3. Provision of dog waste bins in the village.
16. **Date of next meeting** – Thursday 14th March 2024 at 7pm in the Village Hall (Extra Ordinary meeting)

Public meeting closed at 8.40pm.