

STOKE BY NAYLAND PARISH COUNCIL
MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD 9 JANUARY 2024
AT 7.30PM AT THE VILLAGE HALL

Present:	Stevie Bezencenet – Chairman (SB) Sean Fry (SF) – Vice-chairman Martin Nielsen (MN) Fred Grosch (FG) Adam Sedgwick (AS) Steve Green (SG) (from 7.45)
Apologies:	Rosemary Emeny (RE); Vicki Gibbins (VG), Vivienne Klimowicz (VK) BDC Councillor Isabelle Reece (IR)
In attendance:	James Dark, Parish Clerk (JD), SCC Councillor James Finch (JF) (7.30pm – 8.25pm), 1 other member of the public

24.1.1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

See above. Apologies and the reasons given were accepted. The Clerk reported that VG had resigned. SB said she would reply thanking VG for her service.

24.1.2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST IN ANY AGENDA ITEM

None.

24.1.3 CO-OPTION OF A NEW COUNCILLOR

Both candidates for the vacancy made statements to support their written applications. A number of councillors stated that they considered both candidates well suited for the role and expressed their hope that the unsuccessful candidate would apply for the additional vacancy arising from VG's departure. Following a vote it was agreed that Steve Green would be co-opted to the parish council. The unsuccessful candidate confirmed that she wished to be considered for the vacancy created by VG's resignation. The clerk confirmed that this vacancy would be advertised shortly.

24.1.4 PUBLIC FORUM

No members of the public wished to raise any issues.

24.1.5 MINUTES

24.1.5.1 Minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes of the meetings held 7 November were approved and signed.

24.1.5.2 Actions from previous meeting not covered elsewhere on the agenda

- SF reported that he would be speaking to the new PC covering Hadleigh shortly to request enforcement of speed limits in the parish.
- SB reported that she had not been able to gain any clear information on whether the wall linking the village lock up and the adjoining property is a party wall.
Action: MN and FG to visit the lock-up and report back on the form of the shared wall and any related matters.
- SB reported that she, VK and RE had distributed a note to houses on Crossfields requesting car owners are mindful of issues caused by parking on pavements.

24.1.6 REPORTS OF/REQUESTS TO BDC & SCC COUNCILLORS

24.1.6.1 District Councillor's report

It was noted that IR had provided a brief update stating that she would contact the parish council when public realm maintenance to a green space on Butt Road is scheduled and would

remind the relevant BDC officers to respond to a letter from the parish council regarding the condition of garages on Crossfields.

Action: SB to write to IR requesting a discussion with her on these issues at the March parish council meeting, if not already resolved.

It was noted that IR had not replied to a follow up email expressing concerns over the lack of opportunity for the parish council to input on potential boundary changes before the first draft of the Joint Local Plan 2 is published.

Action: Clerk to ask IR for an urgent response, and place the matter on the agenda for the February planning and environment committee.

Information that had been provided by JF on land in the parish owned by SCC was noted. It was noted that information on land owned by the district council is available on their website.

24.1.6.2 County Councillor's report

The written report and oral update were noted. In addition JF reported that SCC would be cutting arts funding for the county from April 2025 due to financial pressures which are increasingly forcing it to focus on statutory responsibilities.

Vacant Housing

JF confirmed that SCC will be retaining two former caretakers' houses on the former Middle School site and is considering their future use.

24.1.6.2.1 Traffic and highways issues

Report from parking group

SB said she would report on this matter under agenda item 24.1.9.1.

Thorington St verge

FG reported that communication with the SCC community liaison engineer following a site visit appeared to indicate that she had not fully appreciated the issue raised regarding a dug out bank.

Action: JF to brief the community liaison engineer for a further visit.

Diversions during roadworks

It was noted VK and JF had arranged a public meeting for February at which residents could air their views on diversions and their preferred outcomes, which JF would take back to SCC.

MN reported that that SCC had approved diversions and traffic control measures between Thorington St and Higham for forthcoming Anglian Water pipeline works, some of which are unsuitable. He had asked for a meeting with Anglian Water on this matter and would report back.

Speed control

SF reported that the Community Speedwatch has 4 members and needs a minimum of 6. SG and FG agreed to join the group.

24.1.6.2.2 Bus service improvements

JF reported that he had been in discussions with the local bus company regarding potential service improvements through the parish using bus service improvement plan funding, but it was not possible to give any assessment at present on the likelihood of the route benefiting from the limited funding available.

24.1.7 FINANCIAL MATTERS

24.1.7.1 RFO's report

Members received the RFO's report and were satisfied it was a correct record of the parish council's financial position. The clerk reported that UKPN had made a wayleaves payment of £302.83 which included backdated payments.

24.1.7.2 Orders requested for payment

It was agreed to approve orders set out on the RFO's report totalling £3,897.96.

24.1.7.3 Budget and precept for 2024/25

The draft budget report was noted. Minor adjustments were agreed to the sums budgeted for insurance and clerk's salary.

The clerk confirmed that no CIL funding had been received to date during 2023/24, and that CIL funding received in previous years had been used to pay for repairs to the well housing.

A request for c.£2,000 funding for the community pantry from Rev Javelle was noted. AS confirmed that there is a clear need for financial support and a number of local parishes had confirmed support for 2024/25, although the overall extent was not clear at present.

It was considered that:

- The pantry is an appropriate means of assisting parishioners in need in a rural environment and an appropriate use of the parish council funds at this time
- The sum requested is a considerable amount of the annual precept - c15%
- It is not clear for how many further years requests for funding may continue

Therefore it was agreed that the parish council should look to increase the precept over a number of years to take account of the possibility of funding for the pantry becoming a business as usual expense while looking to decrease the annual sums provided to a more sustainable level. This could be reviewed should subsequent requests for funding be made. In line with this approach, it was agreed that:

- £1,500 would be provided for the pantry 2024/25, ringfenced for the Stoke by Nayland pantry, and payable on request. This would be included in the 2024/25 budget.
- The precept would be raised by 3% on household bills. Given changes to the tax base, this would amount to a 3.7% rise in the precept to £14,000.

The increase in the precept took into account the overall position of parish council reserves, the projected underspend vs the business as usual budget in 2023/24, potential inflationary cost rises and the possibility of further annual requests for funding for the pantry.

With inclusion of the adjustments to the draft budget noted above and funding for the pantry, the budget for 2024/25 was agreed. Therefore the BAU budget for 2024-25 was set at £13,563 with a further £19,900 allocated as reserves for projects, including funding for the community pantry. A number of these projects are anticipated to be delivered beyond 2023-24.

Action: Clerk to amend the draft budget to include the adjustments agreed and funding for the pantry.

24.1.7.4 High interest accounts

SF reported that higher interest accounts are available than offered by the current Barclays savings account.

Action: SF to present a proposal for changing the savings account at the March meeting.

24.1.8 NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

24.1.8.1 Neighbourhood plan progress

SB reported that the BDC's People and Places team had drafted an initial People and Places Plan for the parish based on information provided by the parish NHP Group. The group would meet at the end of January to review this early draft. SB would report on this at the March parish council meeting.

24.1.8.2 Correspondence from Hastoe

It was noted that Hastoe had informed the NHP Group chairman that it does not consider there is a demand for a further social housing project in the parish at this time.

24.1.9 COUNCILLORS' AND CLERK'S REPORTS

24.1.9.1 Meeting with Tendring Hall Estate agent on land matters

AS reported that a meeting with Tendring Hall Estate's new managing agent had been a productive introduction.

- The agent appeared to share the parish council's view that certain land on the Downs registered to the Estate should be registered to the parish council. This could be followed up in due course.
- The estate would be willing to consider making land available on a field next to The Crown for parking but a number of obstacles may arise to any proposal, including the cost of creating a car park and a potential objection from heritage bodies on the impact. AS noted that the parish council is the only body likely to take responsibility for seeking to overcome these issues.

Action: MN agreed to draw up a potential scheme for parking on the field next to The Crown and present it to a future parish council meeting, potentially in March.

24.1.9.2 Website

FG reported that he would contact the clerk regarding the structure of the file format for parish council documents on the new site and circulate the draft website design to all councillors for comment. He stressed the importance of receiving feedback on the draft.

FG confirmed that the new site would meet the legal accessibility standard for public authorities.

Action: Councillors to contact FG with any comments on the draft website.

Action: Clerk to investigate whether there are any legal requirements to charge local commercial organisations (e.g. shop, pub, garage) for a listing on a parish council website.

24.1.9.3 Arrangements for organising parish council working parties/site visits

AS reported that there had been minimal response to a recent poll he had circulated to arrange a site visit to The Downs, and agreeing a date for such arrangements at a parish council meeting had sometimes been problematic. It was agreed that this matter should be kept under review if councillors experience future issues in making arrangements.

SB reported that VK had offered to host a social event for councillors, as had been held annually prior to the Covid pandemic.

Action: SB to circulate the dates proposed by VK.

24.1.9.4 Representation of Suffolk parish councils on Dedham Vale AONB Project

AS reported that it had been agreed previously that Suffolk parish councils should be represented on the AONB Project, but there is no known representative at present. The previous process used to appoint a representative had been through SALC Babergh area meetings.

Action: Clerk to ask SALC if appointment of a representative can be taken forward through a Babergh area meeting, and inform the AONB Project.

24.1.9.5 Beacon Fund arrangements

Correspondence from the Parochial Church Council was noted suggesting that the Fund could become the responsibility of St Mary's church. It was noted that under the fund's constitution this would require agreement from the parish council and replacing the current constitution.

Action: Clerk to write to the PCC stating that the parish council would not object to current arrangements for the fund being wound up and the withdrawal of the parish council. This should include no residual liabilities for the parish council.

24.1.10 DATE/SPEAKER FOR 2024 ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

It was agreed to ask the new managing agent for Tendring Hall Estate to give the presentation.

Action: Clerk to request that the managing agent give the presentation at the APM and ask for available dates.

24.1.11 CLERK AND CHAIRMAN'S CORRESPONDENCE

None.

24.1.12 TO AGREE ITEMS FOR REPORT IN COMMUNITY NEWSLETTER

- Need for vigilance following recent burglaries and attempted burglaries in the parish
- Community pantry funding
- Budget/precept, including increase to part cover pantry funding

24.1.13 OUTSTANDING ISSUES/FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

- New website
- Co-option of new councillor
- Condition of garages and public realm on Crossfields
- Parking

24.1.14 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Tuesday 5 March 2024 at 7.30pm at the Village Hall