

Debenham Parish Council

**Minutes of a meeting of the Debenham Parish Council held on Monday, 18th of March 2024, at 7:00 pm,
Dove Cottage, High Street, Debenham.**

Present: Cllrs F Winrow-Giffin (Chair), K Barlow (Vice-chair), J Baldwin, L Cockerton, A Finnissy, L Robbins, J Sweet, K Barlow, Ian Collins, K Grimshaw (from 7:30pm), Mrs D Bedwell (Parish Clerk), District Cllr T Davis, County Cllr M Hicks, and five members of the public

DPC/24/35: To consider apologies for absence: Apologies were received (and approved) from Cllrs S Phipps and G Helm.

DPC/24/36: Declarations of interest with regard to items on the agenda: Cllr F Winrow-Giffin declared a pecuniary interest in grass-cutting contract matters.

DPC/24/37: Public participation section: There were no comments from the public.

DPC/24/38: Reports

- a) District Councillor's report: A brief report was provided by the District Councillor, in addition to her written report. Cllr J Baldwin stated that she had asked Cllr Davis for Mid Suffolk District Council specific information to be added to the monthly report, but this had not materialised; and that although the Parish Council had been informed that a recent application (Low Road) had been recommended to be heard by the Planning Committee, the planned meeting date had been cancelled with no explanation. Cllr J Baldwin also reported on a recent incident, where multiple members of the public had contacted the Parish Council and relayed their concerns about movements on the Low Road site, which had attracted Ecology Officers and Rural Police. This matter had been reported to MSDC's Enforcement Team, but it would have been helpful if the Planning Department were actively engaged and aware of ongoing actions.

Cllr L Cockerton added that although two dwellings on "Barley Fields" were already occupied, the footpath was yet to be created – Did Building Control not monitor the various stages of a development?

Cllr M Hicks answered with a suggestion that the matter should be reported to Enforcement.

Still on the subject of "Barley Fields" Cllr F Winrow-Giffin indicated that the drains that flowed into the flood attenuation tanks had plastic bags placed over them, and the consequences of such practice were unknown.

Cllr T Davis replied with a suggestion that all the authority could do was enforce the terms of the planning consent, and that she would follow up both concerns raised.

Further concerns were raised about "Otters Holt". There had not been any new applications for the site, but it was alleged that houses would be built instead of bungalows, which the original planning permission had been for. Cllr Davis again suggested that she would investigate it.

Cllr J Baldwin had been disappointed with some recent miscommunication involving third parties about a Spring Clean, as it had caused some confusion. Cllr Baldwin had had to clarify to the third parties that the matter was yet to be discussed by the Parish Council. Cllr Davis explained that the Green Team had worked with Public Realm on previous occasions and may have been keen to

progress such a worth-while initiative. Cllr J Baldwin explained that it had been a Parish Council initiative, and as such, enquiries should have originated from the Parish Council, after it had been discussed in more detail. Cllr L Robbins asked whether it made any difference who led the initiative, and Cllr J Baldwin clarified that she just wished to provide feedback on how matters had escalated unnecessarily and caused confusion.

- b) County Councillor’s report: Cllr M Hicks added to his written report and spoke about the consultation on Devolution, the statistics in terms of road defects caused by the unprecedented winter weather, a newly purchased pot-hole repair machine, and the 149,000 drains that were due to be cleared over the coming months.

DPC/24/39: To approve the minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on February 19th 2024: It was resolved to approve the minutes as an accurate record of the meeting held.

DPC/24/40: Planning matters

- a) **Application: DC/24/00924 - 28 High Street** - Conversion and extension of barn to form 1No Dwelling: Following some debate, members were unable to reach a decision due to the lack of information within the planning documents, and the resulting loss of parking spaces.
- b) **Application: DC/24/00659 - 48 Low Road** - Erection of an ancillary annexe outbuilding: It was resolved to recommend the approval of this planning application.
- c) **Decision: DC/23/05945 - 56 High Street** - Discharge of Conditions Application for DC/22/01072 - Condition 9 (Hall Window)- Conditions discharged: Noted.

DPC/24/41: Finance and Administration

- a) To approve accounts for payment and note receipts and bank balances/reconciliations: It was resolved to approve the accounts for payments, receipts, and reconciliations.

Payments:	March
	£
Salaries, HMRC, pensions	2,219.94
Clerk expenses	136.30
Website Editor	120.00
Public Conveniences	946.40
Pest Control Solutions (Street Warden)	1,408.00
DPCC – Warm Hub venue hire, annual council meetings and storage	210.00
R Blackwell -SID maintenance and repositioning (3 months)	20.00
Cllr K Barlow- Warm Hub sundries	48.19
Westrup Contracting- Willow tree works	1,080.00
Community Action Suffolk- SSSL certificate	39.00
MSDC- Cemetery rates (50% relief)	523.95
E-ON (Telephone kiosk)	41.06
E-ON public conveniences energy	177.55
BT Group (Dove Cottage Wi-Fi)	37.99
Total:	7,005.83
Woodland:	
Ian’s Home Improvements- Handrail	100.00

E M Fencing	250.00
Total:	350.00
Balances on 14th March 2024	
PC Current account	10,388.66
PD Deposit account	189,157.22
Woodland Deposit account	7,380.08
Woodland Current account	966.27
Total:	207,892.23

- b) Council Action List: The action list had been circulated. There were no further updates from members.
- c) To consider alternative arrangements for venue hire for DPC related activities (Deferred from previous month): It was resolved for the current position to remain unchanged for the time being.
- d) To approve the appointment of the Responsible Financial Officer - Section 151 of the Local Government Act 1974 (Statutory Requirement): It was resolved to approve the appointment.
- e) To approve the appointment of the Internal Auditor (SALC) Suffolk Association of Local Councils (Statutory Requirement): It was resolved to approve the appointment.

DPC/24/42: To review and approve the following Parish Council's policies: The listed Parish Council policies were approved by Councillors. It was also noted that the Standing Orders and Financial Regulations may need to be reviewed again in May 2024 should any changes from central government be forthcoming.

- a) Standing Orders
- b) Financial Regulations
- c) Financial Risk Assessment
- d) Funding Policy and Forms
- e) Statement of Internal Controls
- f) Risk Assessment
- g) Electronic Communications Policy
- h) FOI Publication Scheme
- i) Community Engagement Policy
- j) Anti-Harassment and Bullying Policy
- k) Pre-planning Application Meetings with Developers Policy
- l) Complaints Policy
- m) Equality Diversity Policy
- n) Environmental Policy
- o) Safeguarding Policy
- p) Health and Safety Policy
- q) Reserves policy
- r) LGA Model Councillor Code of Conduct

DPC/24/43: Committees, working groups and representatives -To receive reports and consider recommendations / agree on actions:

- a) **Emergency Plan Review:** Cllr J Baldwin provided a brief update on progress.

- b) **Debenham Neighbourhood Plan Review:** The Clerk informed members of the process that was due to be followed, and that funding from Central Government was yet to be confirmed. Members agreed that in order to progress matters, the Council would need to: Set up a meeting with the NP team at Mid Suffolk District Council, request quotes from NP Consultants, and that Cllrs K Barlow and A Finnissy would lead on this matter, so that there was a clear local point of contact. It was also noted that two former Councillors, who had worked on the existing NP, had indicated they would be willing to offer their support.
- c) **Allotments** - To Consider recommendations from the Committee regarding the Allotment Rules Review: Cllr K Barlow had circulated a report with the recommendations agreed by the Allotment Working Group. The main item pertained to the change of the rule regarding bees, as this would now be permitted under certain conditions. It was resolved to approve this recommendation, as well as those previously circulated to Council when the Allotment Rules document had been reviewed in 2023.

There was a further consideration regarding the tenant who had volunteered to maintain a pond under the guidance of the Suffolk Wildlife Trust, that the plot was exempt from rent for a period of three years. This would be reviewed at the end of that period and contingencies should be put in place in case the works were not carried out as agreed when checked during regular allotment inspections. This was also agreed by all.

- d) **Highways** - Update on meeting held 13 March 2024: The Working Group reported that the meeting had been very encouraging, and that further progress would be notified to full Council.
- e) **Eco/Green Projects:** To consider inviting the Debenham Green Team to do an informative presentation to the Council (Cllr LR) (Deferred from previous month): Since the last meeting, the Group had sent the Parish Council a statement about their work and had invited any Councillor interested in finding out more to meet with one of their representatives.
- f) **Festivities and Local Events:** To consider holding a Well-Being gathering for parishioners affected by the floods; To consider proposal for a village fete and associated costs: Cllr K Barlow provided a brief update: The Clerk had been making enquiries regarding a road closure for a section of the High Street, a band had been secured to provide some entertainment, and Aspall Cyder had been approached for some fundraising. The event was likely to take place in May or June and local businesses would be contacted for additional funding.
- g) **Woodland Group** - To note minutes of the last meeting and consider any recommendations: Noted.
- h) **Employment Appeals:** To review membership and consider Terms of Reference: Deferred.

DPC/24/44: To note any further correspondence (all correspondence circulated to members ahead of the meeting or included on the agenda for consideration)

- a) MSDC Parish Services Survey 2024: Cllr L Cockerton volunteered to complete this survey and was thanked by Councillors.
- b) Correspondence from resident inc. matters such as Pharmacy: No further action was required.

DPC/24/45: To receive any reports from Councillors/requests for addition to a future agenda (no decision can be made unless exempt or under delegated power): Several Councillors reported on the matter of a

flatbed recovery lorry which was causing visibility/access problems, as well as churning the verge grass- Cllr T Davis suggested that details could be forwarded to her so she could make enquiries with the Licensing authority. Alternatively, the Clerk could also prepare a letter to the resident in question, highlighting the various concerns raised and asking for the practice to stop.

Cllr K Barlow reported that a property in Water Lane had flower beds which were encroaching on the Highway and would send the Clerk the relevant details so a letter could be prepared.

Cllr L Cockerton suggested that a letter was sent to “Barley Fields” confirming there was no right of access through the Recreation Ground and asking for the planting of a barrier hedge near the Urn Garden to be completed. Members agreed that there should also be a letter available to post through letterboxes in the new development and in their showroom to indicate that there was no right of access through the Recreation Ground.

Cllr A Finnissy had been made aware of a sustainable option for a Remembrance Wreath and would like to ask the Council to consider commissioning one, instead of the regular paper/plastic one. Cllr J Baldwin added that a prototype of the proposal should be available for members’ consideration at the next Council meeting.

DPC/24/46: Date of the next meeting: 15th April 2024: Noted.

DPC/24/47: To consider the temporary exclusion of press and public: *That pursuant to the Public Bodies (Admission at meetings) Act 1960 the Public and Press be excluded from the meeting due to the confidential nature of the business to be discussed. Members of the public were excluded from the meeting at this point.*

DPC/24/48: To consider correspondence from resident re. damaged fence: The correspondence was discussed, and it was agreed that the members would not be able to give the matter any further consideration as the item that had caused the damage did not belong to the Parish Council. Clerk to write to the resident.

Further communication had been received from a resident about an encroachment on one of the greens. Members considered the content of the letter and agreed that the installation referred to had a number of risks associated with it. It was agreed that the Clerk should write to the resident in question and ask them to remove the installation within 28 days of the date of the letter.

DPC/24/49: Employment Committee: To consider and approve recommendations from the Employment Committee (Stage 1): Cllr F Winrow-Giffin recommended that the matters being considered were not approved at the meeting, as she believed some of the recommendations needed to be reviewed or amended. The item was deferred.

With no further matters to be transacted, the meeting ended at 9:00pm.

Signed: _____ Date: _____