

DEBENHAM PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of Parish Council Meeting and AGM

Monday May 20th 2024 7:00pm

Pre-meeting

At 6:30pm prior to the commencement of the full meeting County Councillor Matthew Hicks circulated some draft papers and ideas for consideration by the Parish Council concerning traffic management issues in the Parish. These papers will be discussed at a future meeting in consultation with the public date and time to be determined.

1. Chairpersons announcement

“Welcome to this meeting of Debenham Parish Council. The Council, members of the public and the press may record / film this meeting when the public and the press are not lawfully excluded. Any member of the public who attends a meeting and objects to being filmed should advise the Parish Clerk. Please switch all mobile phones to silent. May I remind all those present to be courteous and not to have private conversations whilst the meeting is in progress.”

AGM – Election of Officers

DPC/24/74: Election of the Chair.

The Chair stood down, and the Vice Chair asked for nominations.

Nominations - Cllr Winrow-Giffin
Proposed – Cllr Barlow
Seconded - Cllr Collins
In Favour 10, Abstentions 1

Cllr Winrow-Giffin was duly elected as Chair.

DPC/24/75: To Consider Apologies for Absence

Chair – Cllr Winrow-Giffin, Vice Chair – Cllr Barlow, Cllr Baldwin, Cllr Collins, Cllr Cockerton, Cllr Helm, Cllr Finnissy, Cllr Robbins, Cllr Roberts, Cllr Grimshaw, Cllr Sweet.

County Councillor Hicks, temporary Clerk Mr Grogan

Cllr Phipps was expected but not present at the start of the meeting

There were no apologies

DPC/24/76: Declarations of Interest relating to items on the Agenda

Cllr Baldwin and Cllr Sweet declared they had interests in having expenses for approval and allotments

DPC/24/77: Election of Vice-Chair

Nominations - Cllr Barlow
Proposed – Cllr Cockerton
Seconded - Cllr Finnissy
In Favour 10, Abstentions 1

Cllr Barlow was duly elected as Vice-Chair.

DPC/24/78: Public Participation Section

A member of the public asked about progress with the Neighbourhood plan. The Council was able to assure the resident that it was under review and that members of the public would be encouraged to attend a future meeting to discuss developing the next iteration of the plan.

DPC/24/79: County Cllr and District Cllr reports

County Cllr Hicks had submitted his annual report but reported verbally on key issues in person. He confirmed the lifting of the Eye ETRO which should see a reduction in the number of large lorries coming through the village.

He also reported that contractors were to be appointed to clear blocked drains and culverts across the County but that dates for Debenham were not yet available. He specifically addressed the issue of flooding in Low Road saying Highways were aware of the seriousness of the matter and it would be a priority.

The District Councillor submitted a written report which was considered at a previous meeting.

DPC/24/80: To approve minutes of PC meeting April 15th 2024

It was noted that the minutes would be amended on page 2 as it was not the PC but the Green Team Lead (no name) who made the suggestion.

An issue was also raised on page 3 over the planning application concerning the Angel Public House for which no objections had been submitted. This was to be placed under matters arising. The Chair would write to the planning officer confirming the Parish Councils objections.

Proposed – Cllr Barlow
Seconded - Cllr Baldwin
In Favour 11 - APPROVED

DPC/24/81: To approve minutes of PC meeting April 22nd 2024

Proposed – Cllr Finnissy

Seconded - Cllr Sweet
In Favour 10 - Abstentions 1 - APPROVED

DPC/24/82: To approve minutes of PC Extraordinary meeting May 8th 2024

Proposed – Cllr Grimshaw
Seconded - Cllr Collins
In Favour 10 - Abstentions 1 - APPROVED

DPC/24/83: Planning Matters

a) Application DC/24/01786 15 Moores Close

Proposed – Cllr Baldwin
Seconded - Cllr Barlow
In Favour 11 – SUPPORTED

b) Application DC/24/02102 18 Priory Lane

There was some discussion over this matter due to the proximity to the conservation area and overlooking the Grade 1 listed Church.

A motion was suggested not to support the application as it overlooked the Grade 1 Church, it was adjacent to the conservation area and was not in character with the surrounding buildings.

Proposed - Cllr Robbins
Seconded - Cllr Barlow
In Favour 8 - Abstentions 3 – **application not supported**

Note: Councillor Steven Phipps arrived at the meeting at 7:30pm and apologised for being delayed

c) Decision DC/24/0069 48 Low Road – GRANTED - Noted

- d) Decision DC/24/00290 & 00292 72 High Street – GRANTED - Noted
- e) Decision DC/24/0001624 – Unit 2-4 Kenton Road – GRANTED - Noted
- f) Decision DC/2400801 – Greenkeepers Cottage, Great Back Lane – GRANTED - Noted
- g) Decision DC/24/00852 Land South East of Low Road – SPLIT – Noted

Note : in respect of DC/24/00852 An attendance invitation was sent in response to Taylor Wimpey’s request for a meeting, the meeting will be next month.

DPC/24/83: Finance and Administration

- a) **To approve accounts for payment and note receipts and bank balances / reconciliations.**

There were no payment approvals sought. Cllr Baldwin asked the Council to note that there was a balance in excess of £10,000 in the current account. All balances will be posted to SLACK in the next couple of days.

Proposed – Cllr Barlow

Seconded – Cllr Winrow-Giffin

In Favour - 8 abstentions - 4 (Expenses under consideration) – APPROVED.

b) Council Action List

- a. Letters not sent regarding posts on fencing at Dove Close
- b. The Chair thanked all Cllrs for their support during the difficult period in the absence of a Clerk especially Cllr Baldwin

c) To approve the Council Annual Insurance

For the purposes of the renewal, it was noted that the policy in place will cover the Council for the holding of the Debenham Day Street Party.

Proposed - Cllr Winrow-Giffin

Seconded – Cllr Helm

In favour – Unanimous – APPROVED

d) Continued adoption of the Members code of conduct

No amendments were tabled

Proposed - Cllr Sweet

Seconded – Cllr Baldwin

In favour – Unanimous – APPROVED

e) To approve the list of Standing Orders / Direct Debits / Direct Bank Payments etc.

Salaries, HMRC and Pensions, contractors and sundries, Clerk and Councillors' expenses. Subscriptions to SWT, NSALG, SALC and RIALTAS. Electricity supply to public conveniences and telephone kiosk. Water rates to allotments, cemetery and public conveniences. Dove Cottage Wi-Fi connection and meeting venue storage fee.

Proposed - Cllr Finnissy

Seconded – Cllr Barlow

In favour – Unanimous – APPROVED

f) Confirm CIL Annual Return to MSDC 31.03.24

This has been completed and posted to the web-site

g) To consider and approve Policies

It was noted that the Millennium Gates policy needs to be renewed and the wording in the Agenda should read “NALC model Disciplinary and Grievance policy”.

With regard to the continued adoption of the Clerk Delegation, GDPR (x3), Procurement Thresholds, Operation Menai Bridge and NALC D&G policies.

Proposed – Cllr Baldwin

Seconded - Cllr Winrow-Giffin

In favour – Unanimous – APPROVED

DPC/24/84 To appoint membership of Committees, Working Groups and liaison representatives.

The list of current committees, working groups etc was circulated.

There was some discussion about the lack of TOR and Protocols for the Employment Appeals working group. Assurance was given that this would be revisited as a matter of urgency.

Cllr Sweet asked to be re-added to the Allotments Committee this was agreed.

It was agreed the Vice-Chair would be added to the Communications/ Press Releases Liaison and also to the SALC Liaison to provide better cover.

As there had been significant activity regarding Re-wilding some areas in Debenham it was suggested a Re-wilding working group should be set up. Cllrs Barlow, Sweet, Robbins and Collins all asked to be part of this new working group.

The Eco and green projects working group is to be linked to the possibility of establishing a Community Nature Reserve. Cllr Baldwin will be the liaison for this project.

DPC /24/85 Committees, Working Groups and representatives to receive reports and consider recommendations and agree on actions.

- a) **The Emergency Plan review:** This is currently on hold to due attention elsewhere on the flooding etc. The First responders are currently working on their aspects of the document. There was discussion around working with other surrounding Parishes such as Winston on a joined-up approach.

Cllr Phipps brought the Council's attention to a number of folders, a USB key which contain all the background information to assist in the review.

The plan needed to be reviewed in light of the recent flooding and this would require engagement with landowners and farmers to maintain water-courses, culverts and drains etc. It as highlighted that many are willing to do such work but cannot act as they are constrained by the restrictions placed on them by Environment Agency, Water Companies and other agencies.

There was a meeting last month to start work with the above agencies, surrounding Councils and the landowners to try and ease the problems of drainage around Debenham.

The Debenham Green Team asked to be included in any discussions so it could provide input to the discussions.

- b) **Debenham Neighbourhood Plan Review:** a meeting is to be held with Paul Bryant from MSDC. This will be followed up with a meeting of Councillors.
- c) **The Allotments – review of correspondence relating to the BBC interview.** The review of correspondence has not revealed anything substantially new from that originally seen and that provided by the allotment holder. It was proposed the best way forward was to invite the allotment holder to a meeting and discuss with them the full correspondence held by both parties to resolve the issue.

Proposed – Cllr Barlow

Seconded – Cllr Finnissy

In favour 11 – Abstention 1 – APPROVED

ACTION: Cllrs Robbins and Sweet to invite the allotment holder to a meeting.

d) Highways

- a. **To consider preparation and guidance for weed spraying by the Warden.** There is concern that the current guidance for the Warden is not clear regarding the spraying of plants on the pavements in and around Debenham. There is a conflict between the need to provide safe rights of way and prevent damage by roots etc and the need to preserve the colourful flora in the town provided by Hollyhocks etc.

It was agreed guidance from Highways on the health and safety aspects would be useful

ACTION – Cllr Sweet to write to Highways and ask for guidance.

Note: The Council wishes to express its thanks and appreciation for the work carried out by the Warden who is seen as a valuable asset to the town.

b. To consider the support of a bench placement in Priory Lane by a householder (approved by SCC).

The bench is an asset as it provides a resting place for those on the way to the doctor's surgery.

Proposed – Cllr Winrow-Giffin

Seconded - Cllr Finnissy

In favour - Unanimous – APPROVED

c. To note the lifting of the Eye ETRO - Noted.

The Parish Council and County Cllr. Hicks wished to thank all the residents of Debenham who had written to the County Council in support of removing the ETRO.

e) Parish Greens: to consider action regarding the encroachment of wooden posts on the Greens at Lock Close and Andrews Close.

It is clear that the situation cannot be allowed to continue and the residents must be encouraged to find a permanent solution to the fences in question.

ACTION : Cllr Barlow to write to the residents of both addresses to ask them to repair the fences and remove the posts within a month.

f) Eco / Green Projects:

- a. **Rewilding North Field:** Cllr Sweet had had a recent meeting with the Bio-diversity officer from Mid-Suffolk regarding rewilding the North Field. As the site needs to be assessed in full bloom he will be visiting again shortly. It is likely the field would need a 2m deer fence and a 1m rabbit fence to maintain the rewilding environment for any new growth. It is estimated the cost would be in the region of £11,000 but 60% of this could be met by grant funding.

It was noted that if the field were subject to rewilding income to the Council from sheep grazing would be lost.

ACTION: Cllr Sweet to return to a later meeting with a full proposal.

g) Festivities and Local Events.

- a. **Debenham Day road closure:** Cllr Barlow updated the Council on recent news. The date and time set are for the 20th July between 14:00pm and 20:00pm.

Mid-Suffolk will waive the £1,000 fee for the road closure which has still to be confirmed. Discussions will begin with Eye regarding the need for a diversion.

There has been a donation from Aspals /Corrs of £500 and £200 from Debenham Antiques for the Debenham Day. The Parish Council might be required to contribute up to £1,500 but details will be deferred to a later PC agenda.

Some 4 to 5 people will be needed as stewards to meet Health and safety regulations and First Aiders will need to be arranged possibly from St John's Ambulance.

b. The Commission of a sustainable Remembrance Wreath.

Deferred.

h) Play Areas:

Nothing to report

i) Debenham Sport & Leisure Centre

The AGM was last week which included the great news of welcoming some additional female members to the Committee.

The solar panels are up and running there is a plan to buy the batteries that are needed to store the generated power. However, the toilets refurbishment was not yet completed.

j) Public Conveniences update on Tender.

Cllr Sweet reported that the current contract finishes on the 24th of May. Cllrs Sweet and Collins will cover the opening, closing and cleaning until another contractor is found. Cllr Barlow offered to cover if there was a gap in the rota.

Further discussion highlighted the difficulty of covering 365 days a year and options around sharing contractors with another Council or finding a temporary contractor.

Cllr Collins offered to look into other ways around the issue.

Cllr Sweet is also working on getting some of the maintenance work carried out.

DPC/24/86 To note any further correspondence

Cllr Barlow is to follow correspondence with Matthew Hicks in Highways regarding the clearing of ditches.

DPC/24/86 To receive reports from Councillors / requests for addition to a future agenda

1. District Cllr Davis arrived and addressed the meeting concerning the assistance that could be offered with regard to flood prevention.

ACTION: The Chair to write to Cllr Davis to arrange a meeting to discuss what might be done in association with other Councils.

2. Cllr Davis raised a question of the governance of the Parish Council without a clerk and qualified RFO referencing section 151 of the Local Govt Act.

The Chair assured Cllr Davis that the PC had checked with SALC and that under section 112 of the same legislation the PC was able to continue its functions until a new clerk and or RFO were appointed.

3. Correspondence regarding the management of ditches and waterways. Cllr Baldwin will have more for the next meeting.

ACTION: Clerk to add this to agenda for next meeting.

4. Cllr Barlow requested that the contribution to the Street Party added to the next agenda.

ACTION: Clerk to add to agenda for next meeting

5. There are concerns over unlicensed fishing and youngsters swimming in the lake, the PC needs to consider signage to keep the lake safe.

ACTION: Clerk to add to agenda for next meeting.

6. Records retention policy, in order to meet requirements under GDPR, FOI and the Records Act the PC must keep accurate and relevant records for the prescribed time. A policy needs to be adopted

ACTION: Clerk to add to the next agenda

DPC/24/88 Exclusion of Press and Public

Confidential matters discussed

DPC/ 24/89 Meeting Closed at 21:30pm

Date of next meeting 17 June 2024 at 7pm at Dove Cottage Debenham

Peter Grogan
Temporary Clerk
9 April 2026