

Minutes of the Tuddenham St Martin Parish Council meeting held 5th March 2024 commencing at 7.30pm at the village hall.

Present: Mr W Pipe, Mrs J Ellinor, Mrs P Procter, Mrs K Lindsay, Mr C Hedgley (District Councillor) and Mrs C Frost (Clerk). There were 13 members of public present.

1. **Chairman's Welcome and Apologies** Mr Pipe welcomed everyone present to the meeting. Apologies were received from Mr Bird, Mr Lugo and Mr Brightwell (Parish Councillors). These were approved. Apologies were also received from Cllr Bryce (County Councillor). It was unanimously approved to move the order of Items to accommodate attendance at the meeting. It was also agreed to provide an additional brief public forum specifically in respect of Item 6 (a).
2. **To receive declarations of interest** Mr Pipe in respect of Item 6 (a).
3. **Public Forum** There were no additional matters raised.
4. **Minutes of Meeting held on 5th December 2023 and 16th January 2024** These were approved.
5. **Matters arising** There were none.

Mr Pipe left the meeting.

6. **Appointment of Chair during the absence of Mr Pipe** Mrs Ellinor proposed Ms Procter. This was seconded by Mrs Lindsay and unanimously approved.

- 6 (a). **Update on Planning Application DC/22/3748/FUL. Residential Development for 25 new dwellings in Keightley Way. The Street, including actions to consider following the recent East Suffolk Council Planning Committee (South) meeting** Ms Procter welcomed everyone and explained that the Parish Council would be considering any updates about the application and actions to take following the recent Planning Committee meeting which had caused concern about the way voting on the application was carried out.

Note - A recording of the Committee meeting is viewable via the East Suffolk Council website and showed that the approval of the application had been voted upon. There had been a majority decision against the application being approved. Members then put forward their reasons for voting against the application but there had been interventions by a Senior Planning Officer. This resulted in a subsequent proposal being put forward for Members to vote upon (to defer the decision until an independent highway safety report was available for The Hill). Some Members were unwilling to vote on the subsequent proposal as they believed the matter had already been voted upon and a decision had been reached. The subsequent vote however, went ahead and was unanimously approved.

A public session would be held for 10 minutes for residents to put their views forward prior to the Parish Council considering the Item. The meeting was temporarily adjourned in order to receive public comments. These included:

- Expressions of serious objection to the process and outcome of the recent Planning Committee meeting.
- There had been a clear vote against approval of the application.
- Not happy with what had transpired at the Committee meeting.
- The actions of the senior Planning Officer following the initial vote were questionable.
- The outcome was nonsensical.
- The Parish Council should pursue a complaint at the way the first vote was ignored and the resident happy to help with complaint.
- Seconded by another resident.
- Excellent work so far carried out by Ms Procter and resident at the Committee meetings. Thank you.
- The decision to ignore the first vote on the application is purely on a cost basis because of the possibility of the application going to appeal.
- East Suffolk Planning Alliance (ESPA) representative reported that several had watched the recording of the Committee meeting and concurred with earlier comments by Tuddenham resident.
- ESPA fully behind everyone that is objecting to the way the Committee meeting was carried out.
- Input from SCC Highways was queried.

- Now hiring consultants for a highway safety report. This should have been done before the application got to this stage of the process.

Mrs Ellinor reported that the Parish Council position about the safety concerns of The Hill had been clear from the outset of the Local Plan consultation and through the application process. The Parish Council had continually raised concern about the safety issues of The Hill and had asked Suffolk County Council (SCC) Highways for details of how the issues of The Hill would be resolved but without any response.

A question was raised about why SCC Highways initially had a holding objection to the application but this had been removed on their most recent comments? The Clerk reported that in response to the consultation on the Local Plan, SCC Highways had put forward the requirement of £100,000 from the developer towards pedestrian facilities from the site to local amenities, or drawings, showing these proposed works. Their holding objection to the application was with regard to other highways issues (parking, layout, sustainable routes from the site to Keightley Way), but SCC Highways had not expressed any concern about safety issues on The Hill. They had continued to request, in line with the Local Plan, either £100,000 or drawings from the developer for pedestrian facilities from the site to local amenities. As previously reported by Mrs Ellinor, they had been pursued as to how the £100,000 for pedestrian facilities would be spent. This was especially when they had previously informed the Parish Council that a footway on The Hill was not possible due to the geography of the location. This was also being followed up by our County Councillor. In preparation for this meeting, and in light of the independent highway safety report only now being sought, the County Councillor had been asked who should be contacted at SCC Highways to justify why they considered the development safe (in regard to the lack of an adequate footway to the main part of the village from the site (via The Hill)) and why no objection had been raised as part of the Local Plan consultation or as part the application process. **It was agreed that the Clerk would email a copy to Mr Hedgley** who would kindly follow up with Cllr Bryce.

- An ESPA representative commented that members of the Planning Committee can only deliberate and have to make their decision on what's in front of them. This was the 2nd deferral on this application.
- Feel that the ESC Constitution has been breached.

Mr Hedgley agreed that the Planning Committee have to make their judgement on what is in front of them and he explained the Committee meeting procedure. He had considered that the planning application had been voted upon and the majority decision had been to refuse permission. The Democratic Services Officer had told members at the meeting that the subsequent vote could be taken. Mr Hedgley recounted what had happened at the site meeting and the Committee meeting later the same day. Following a question about the site visit, Mr Hedgley reported that he did not know about the potential alternative footpath route that had been put forward to the Committee members (on fields at the back of the playing field and on private land yet to be secured and towards an existing PRoW, which had been considered feasible by Planning Officers following their meeting with SCC Highways) until the actual site meeting was taking place.

- A resident commented that the alternative route should have been disclosed before the Committee site meeting.

In answer to a question, Mr Hedgley commented that if the Committee meeting decision to refuse the application had gone to appeal, ESC would have to pay the costs in the event of the appeal being upheld. There might also be the possibility that going through the appeal process may also result in ESC stated Conditions on the application not being applied.

There followed a discussion about the similarity to the Grundisburgh development and that outcome. That process had also caused concern. It was commented that some Conditions on the Grundisburgh development had not been met and the footway issue in Grundisburgh had still not been resolved.

The Local Plan history was discussed and Mrs Ellinor reported that alternative sites in the village had been considered viable by ESC, but Keightley Way had been the preferred site. Comments from residents continued and included concern raised about the lack of response from SCC Highways about the safety of The Hill (as a route from the site to local facilities) and the behaviour of the Senior Planning Officer at the Committee meeting which followed the initial decision from members of the Committee.

It was also commented that some of the Committee members that had voted in favour of the application had also voiced concern about the application but had stated 'but we've got no choice'.

A discussion followed about the valid arguments of why the application did not meet the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). It was commented that:

- if the development sits within the NPPF it is hard to object to it.
 - The application does not take into account the surrounding area, but this is not as strong an argument as
 - The lack of safe access from the site to village facilities (bus stop, etc.)
- Additional comments were:
- The job of the planning office is to get applications through the system as long as they are legal.
 - There are grounds for complaint when looking at the behaviour of the senior planning officer on recordings of the meeting. The behaviour was out of order, coercive and intimidating.
 - The Parish Council should get to see the Terms of Reference for the highway safety report.
- There was further discussion about the problem of the vote of the Committee meeting and the outcome of the Grundisburgh development application at the Committee stage.

The Clerk reported that in preparation for this meeting, and following the Committee meeting, the ESC Case Officer had been asked questions about the highway safety report that was now being sought about The Hill. The questions were:

- Will the Parish Council be consulted about the appointment of the independent provider of the highway safety report to be sought in regard to The Hill?
- Will the Parish Council be consulted as part of the process for completing the report?
- Presumably the report will be carried out on site and not as part of a desk top report remotely?
- Will the Parish Council receive a copy of the report?

In response it had been confirmed that there was a need to establish a clear brief for the report, and will likely agree this with the Chair and Vice Chair of the Committee in advance. This might involve statements or any points from the Parish Council and the applicant. This had not yet however, been agreed and it would need to be fair to all parties. The Case Officer would get in touch when able to provide further information.

Ms Procter reconvened the meeting for the Parish Council to consider any further actions. Parish Councillor comments included:

- Complaint should be sent to the Chief Executive and Leader of East Suffolk Council
- There should be a complaint about the process of the meeting and the pressure put upon Members.

Ms Procter had started a draft statement of a complaint for consideration and read extracts from the draft. Comments continued:

- The proposed alternative footpath was news to everyone and should not have been part of the Committee meeting.
- The first vote taken should stand.
- Concern at the behaviour of the senior planning officer.

A complaint to the Chief Executive and Leader of East Suffolk Council was unanimously approved against the processes adopted by the Planning Committee in considering the application. Ms Procter's draft statement would be used as the basis for the complaint and it was agreed that the complaint would include statements about:

- The vote that was taken and ignored.
- The behaviour of the Senior Planning Officer.
- The alternative footpath was raised at the date of the Committee meeting and not before.
- The first vote taken at the Committee meeting should stand.
- A meeting about the alternative footpath route happened without reference to the parish council.
- Ask for Terms and reference of the highway safety report.

The Clerk would email the draft complaint to Ms Procter, Mrs Ellinor and Mrs Lindsay for final approval before submitting to the District Council.

It was commented that permission had not been requested for access to the playground from the Keightley Way allocated site. This would be deferred to a future meeting when permission would be considered at the time of being requested.

The Clerk reported that following previous communications, the SCC Flood and Water Engineer had been advised of the location of the potentially collapsed pipe on the flooded bridleway. Confirmation had been

received that remediation would be dependent on land ownership. The PRoW Team would check ownership and get back to the Parish Council.

Mr Pipe was invited back to the meeting which reconvened with him as Chair.

7. Reports of County Council and District Council Representatives The Parish Council had been emailed prior to the meeting with reports from the County and District Councillors. Copies are available on the Parish Council website www.tuddenhamstmartin.onesuffolk.net. Mr Hedgley highlighted the following from his report:

- East Suffolk Council Budget agreed. Proposals were passed with a unanimous vote.
- The new Chair of the Council hosted a 'Model District Council' for schools and it went very well.
- The funding for loft insulation still available (50% discount) for Suffolk residents.
- Winners announced in the 'East Suffolk Through the Lens' photo competition.

Mr Hedgley gave the reminder to contact him via the usual means for any help that he is able to give.

8. Report on Community Policing There was none for this meeting. The Clerk was instructed to email Mr Brightwell after the meeting to ascertain that he would be providing reports for future meetings. It was commented that there are changes forthcoming in how the local constabulary will be organised but details were not yet available. More information was likely after May 2024.

9. Report on the Community Partnership Mrs Ellinor had emailed Parish Councillors prior to the meeting with the notes from the January meeting of the Community Partnership. The next meeting would be held in Tuddenham on 8th March 2024. This would be the last meeting to be attended by Mrs Ellinor. Mrs Ellinor strongly recommended that a Parish Council representative continue to attend the meetings and engage with the Community Partnership. Mrs Lindsay kindly agreed to represent the Parish Council in place of Mrs Ellinor. **The appointment of Mrs Lindsay as a Core Member of the Community Partnership was unanimously approved.**

10. Clerk's Report, Financial Report, Authorisation of Payments and correspondence

A. The Clerk advised that hours worked since 1st December 2023 to 1st March 2024 were 133 hours (of which 38 hours are paid).

B. The Clerk requested approval, **and it was agreed**, for the following payments, inclusive of VAT where appropriate, which had been made on behalf of the Parish Council:

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| 1. Sand, cement & lay paving under new bench (funded as part of the Garden project) | £250.00 |
| 2. Grass cutting for playing field, playground & Grundisburgh Rd verges (from 1st July 2023) | £592.49 |

C. The Clerk requested approval, **and it was agreed**, for the following payments, inclusive of VAT where appropriate, which were still to be made:

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| 1. Clerk's salary from 1st December 2023 to 1st March 2024 (38 hours) | £530.00 |
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D. As required by the Financial Regulations, the approved schedule of payments had been ruled off and were initialled by Mr Pipe.

E. The amounts held by the Parish Council accounts to date were £5,837.66 (Current Account) and £20,268.32 (Savings Account). The financial accounts for the period 1st April 2023 to date were submitted, **accepted and approved unanimously**.

F. As required by the Financial Regulations, the bank reconciliations were verified at the last quarter. This was completed by Mrs Ellinor and is required to be reported to the Parish Council, including any exceptions of which there were none.

G. As previously reported to the Parish Council, the grass cutting cost (for the playing field, playground & Grundisburgh Rd verges) up to 1st July 2023 (completed by Suffolk Coastal Norse), amounted to £246.86 (plus

VAT). This resulted in a grass cutting total annual charge of £740.60 (plus VAT = £888.72). This matches the quotation received and budgeted amount for 2023.

- H. Thanks had been received for donations made to East Anglian Air Ambulance, Suffolk Accident Rescue Service, Tuddenham St Martin PCC and the village hall committee.
- I. Confirmation had been received that the appropriate sum for the purposes of Section 137(4)(a) of the Local Government Act 1972 for parish and town councils in England for 2024-25 is increased to £10.81.
- J. Parish Councillors had been emailed details from the East Suffolk Planning Forum held at East Suffolk House in January and presentation slides from the event were forwarded to Parish Councillors. Information included details about the consultation that will be launched about the pre-application process. Pre-application details are available via FOI/EIR requests and are not openly available. The pre-application stage is non-binding advice, not a determination before the application is submitted. A questionnaire will be coming out to seek feedback about the best route forward. A specific matter the questionnaire for town and parish councils will be what information should the public have access to in respect of pre-application enquiries.

Information from the session also included the following advice about commenting on planning applications:

- When submitting comments, the Parish Council need to be clear if it is 'in support of' or 'object to' an application.
 - Keep to material planning considerations - please follow this link to the relevant ESC webpage <https://www.eastsuffolk.gov.uk/planning/planning-applications-and-enforcement/view-and-comment-on-a-planning-application/comment-on-a-planning-application/>
 - Keep it clear at the start so that the Planning Officer can easily tell if you object or support.
 - If you want to remain neutral, please clearly say it, but take care with any accompanying text.
- K. SALC had emailed Parish Councils to confirm that both the SALC and NALC membership subscription fee will increase by 3% from 1st April 2024 for the 2024-2025 period.
 - L. Parish Councillors had been emailed at the start of February with details of the SALC member survey. There were no comments.
 - M. The Parish Council had received a courtesy email about the Norfolk & Suffolk group of the Long Distance Walkers event which is being held on Saturday, 24th May 2025. The event will be starting and finishing from Rushmere Sports Centre and passing through Tuddenham St Martin parish in the first few miles. It will start at 10am on 24th March and finish by 10am on the morning of Monday 26th. It is a 100-mile walk to be completed in 48 hours, known as The Hundred. There will be approximately 500 entrants.

Information had been received that the event is fully insured, has qualified first aid cover and all entrants will be tracked. Entrants will also be fully aware of the need to be respectful and quiet in residential areas. A map of the section of the route that passes through Tuddenham had been provided and the Parish Council had been asked if there were any comments, concerns or issues to raise to the organisers. Also, the organisers would be grateful if the Parish Council feel there are any particular landowners or people they should contact. They will be contacting other parish councils along the route to inform them of the event. The details were noted.

11. Planning Matters, including:

- (a) To note East Suffolk Council decisions on planning applications since the meeting of 5th December 2023
 1. DC/23/4385/FUL – First & second floor rear extensions in Keightley Way. **Refused**.
 2. DC/23/4828/TCA – To fell 1no. Robina. The Street. **Responded** (no objection).
- (b) DC/23/4743/FUL & DC/23/4744/LBC. Structural upgrading, re-cladding & increasing height of building. The Street
This was discussed. There were no comments.
- (c) Update on the East Suffolk Planning Alliance Ms Procter had attended the ESPA conference at Grundisburgh village hall on 17th February 2024. The ESPA are working on a range of concerns that have been raised by parish councils. There was a Q and A session and Minutes from the meeting would be forwarded to Parish Councillors when received. Topics covered at the conference included new planning guidance, the levelling

up plan and planning legislation. It had been discussed that legislation is complicated and there is possibility of parish councils being in need of legal help to interpret it. Details of the conference had also been included in the recent issue of The Grundisburgh News.

- 12. Highway Matters including** an update on outstanding highway issues, including 'SLOW' road markings, an update on the SAVID, Speedwatch and the ANPR initiative, to consider the volume and speed measures on the village highway, including consideration of 20's plenty on any of the village highways and to consider parking issues in the village

The suggestions received from SCC Highways following the October 2023 site meeting were considered.

Mr Hedgley gave his apologies and left the meeting.

The suggestions were considered further. Cllr Bryce had emailed conformation of being able to partially fund the scheme but funding would also be required from the Parish Council. **It was unanimously agreed that the Parish Council were very interested in pursuing the improvements suggested but would first of all need to know the costings.** What would the financial burden be for the Parish Council? What funding is available from Cllr Bryce? **The Clerk was instructed to email SCC Highways.**

At the same time, the Clerk would:

- **highlight both stretches of SCC land on the carriageway (between the 'S' bend) in need of vegetation being cut back.**
- **Enquire about the update on the SCC Highway investigation about 'unsuitable for HGV' signs which had been discussed at the October 2023 site meeting.**

Consideration of parking issues in the village was deferred to the next meeting.

Ms Procter had emailed a Highways Report to Parish Councillors prior to the meeting. For a copy of the report, please see the Additional Notes on Minutes of this meeting, which are viewable on the Parish Council website www.tuddenhamstmartin.onesuffolk.net Ms Procter gave an overview of her report. Ms Procter referred to forthcoming changes in the local constabulary and how these may impact on highway matters. Ms Procter's report had included reference to the possible need of an additional pole for the ANPR camera to accommodate a solar panel. Feedback about how long the ANPR device had been able to operate without the solar panel would be given to the Parish Council at the next meeting. Ms Procter reported that the consideration of 20's plenty on village highways would be an Item for considered at the next SAVID meeting.

- 13. Management of the playing field and playground, including an update on the playing field garden project**

Parish Councillors had been emailed prior to the meeting that the invoice of £250.00 had been settled for the supply of sand and cement, and to lay paving under the bench of the garden project. This resulted in a total amount of £194.53 remaining from the grants received for the project. Mrs Ellinor reported that the playing field garden had been put to bed for the winter and the tete a tete bulbs would look lovely when they appear. Thanks to the volunteers maintaining the area. The 500 daffodil bulbs, which had been donated by ESC, had been planted by volunteers in various locations around the village. They all seemed to be coming through and were looking promising. It should be a good show. Thanks again to volunteers for this planting.

- 14. An update on the purchase of the replacement Speed Indicator Device (SID)**

It had been reported that

the total funding of £3,000 had been received from the following grants:

- £1,000 – East Suffolk Council Enabling Communities Budget (Councillor Hedgley)
- £1,000 – East Suffolk Council Enabling Communities Budget (Councillor Clery)
- £1,000 – Suffolk County Council Locality Grant (Councillor Bryce)

Mr Bird (Parish Councillor) had completed the necessary purchase order and confirmation had been received that the replacement SID should be delivered before Easter. Ms Procter reported that she would be taking delivery of the device.

- 15. An update and review of the Internal Control Statement and Report, including the Asset Register**

The Clerk had emailed Parish Councillors prior to the meeting with a draft of amendments to the Asset Register for consideration. **These were discussed and an update was approved. Mrs Lindsay kindly agreed to complete the Report for this year. The Clerk would email the necessary documents to Mrs Lindsay for completion.** The member to complete the report following this year would be considered at a future meeting.

- 16. Progress of land registration**

Parish Councillors had been emailed prior to the meeting with quotes and information about the land registration as well as an alternative route that had been suggested. The cost to register the land was significantly higher than the cost for a letter to the insurance company. Advice received was

that there is no obligation to register until there is some form of disposal. Alternatively, government advice was that voluntary registration with Land Registry could serve as one of a number of preventable means of safeguarding assets, such as third-party adverse possession or protect against boundary disputes. The matter was discussed and it was commented that land registration was unnecessary. The boundary around the land had all recently been established. **It was unanimously approved to proceed with the letter to the insurance company. The Clerk would contact the solicitor to action.**

- 17. To note the resignation, and consider the replacement, of the Parish Clerk** It was noted that the Clerk had submitted her resignation early February to take effect at the latest 30th June 2024, earlier if a replacement could be found. Parish Councillors had been emailed prior to the meeting with templates for the Clerk job description, person specification, examples of 3 similar job adverts and a draft advert for the replacement Clerk role. **Mr Pipe proposed a sub-committee for considering the replacement of the Clerk. The members of the sub-committee would be Mr Pipe, Mrs Lindsay and Mrs Ellinor, who would be co-opted following her resignation from the Parish Council later in the month. This was unanimously agreed.** After further consideration **it was agreed to advertise the role based on 5 hours per week with a deadline of 08 April 2024 to receive applications.** The Clerk expected that the advert could be submitted to Suffolk Association of Local Councils by the end of this week. **The Clerk would action.**
- 18. To consider the co-option of a Parish Councillor to fill 1 vacancy and the recruitment of new Parish Council members** No further interest had been shown in the existing vacancy and possible recruitment options were discussed.
- 19. To note the resignation of a Parish Councillor** Mrs Ellinor had emailed the Chair prior to the meeting that she would be resigning from the Parish Council as from 31st March 2024. Mrs Lindsay wished to express grateful thanks to Mrs Ellinor and this was endorsed by everyone present. Mr Pipe commented that Mrs Ellinor had contributed a lot to the Parish Council which was very much appreciated. She would be missed. Mrs Lindsay had kindly agreed to take over the roles on the Community Partnership meetings, as well as becoming the member appointed to verify bank reconciliations each quarter. The appointment of the Parish Council Planning and ESPA representative was deferred to a future meeting.
- 20. To consider the Suffolk County Council consultation on active travel schemes in Woodbridge** There were no comments.
- 21. To consider the Suffolk County Council update of the Local Transport Plan** There were no comments.
- 22. Items for the next Agenda** Parish Clerk replacement and other Items to be decided.
- 23. Date of next meetings:** 7th May 2024, which would be the Annual Parish meeting starting at 7pm. The Annual Parish Council meeting would follow immediately afterwards on the same evening. The dates of the next schedule meetings would then be: 2nd July 2024, 3rd September 2024 and 3rd December 2024.

The meeting closed at 11pm.

Mrs C Frost – Parish Clerk. Tuddenham St Martin.