

**FARNHAM WITH STRATFORD ST ANDREW PARISH COUNCIL**

**Minutes of the Meeting held on Monday 11 March 2024 at the Riverside Centre**

**Councillors present:** Ian Norman (Chair), Richard Ayres, Rosemary Conibeer (Vice Chair), Tim Plant and Annabel Warne

**In attendance:** Katherine Abbott (Parish Clerk)

**1 Apologies for Absence**

Apologies were received and approved from Councillors Jill Pass, Richard Sayer and Jeremy Williams.

**2 Declarations of Interest for items on the agenda**

There were no declarations of interest related to the agenda.

**3 Minutes**

Councillor Conibeer advised that the report of the railings at Farnham having been repaired was incorrect. Councillor Plant reported continuing issues with the drain in the same location and the Clerk was asked to report this.

The unconfirmed minutes of the meeting held on 12 February 2024 were approved, without amendment, as a correct record.

**4 Matters arising from the last minutes.**

There were two matters outstanding from the January meeting. As Councillor Pass and Councillor Sayer were not present to update the Council the two items (reporting blocked footpaths due to ploughing and an insert for the *Ebb and Flow*) were deferred to the April meeting.

The formal final costing of the skirting of the footpath adjacent to the A12 at Farnham was £1628.45. This cost would be met from County Councillor Andrew Reid's locality budget and the Parish Council recorded its thanks to Councillor Reid. The works had been ordered and the contractor had 14 weeks in which to deliver the work. The estimated date for completion was mid-June.

The Environment Agency had responded with a summary of the water quality results and reading the data. The Clerk had further requested an assessment of what the testing meant for the parish waterways.

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The Clerk advised that, as resolved at the February meeting, an application had been made to Unity Trust Bank to switch the Council's account from Barclays Bank. The Clerk would advise the Council when the switch was completed.

The Clerk had written to two landowners regarding the flooding issues raised by residents at Gromford and also to another landowner at Langham Bridge Road, Farnham. The Chairman advised that he had spoken to one of the landowners for the Gromford site. It was hoped that formal responses to the Council's letters would be received shortly.

The Chairman had visited the location of a complaint about an overgrown hedge and spoken to the complainant.

The Chairman updated the Council on an historic matter related to Low Barn Farm and the findings of East Suffolk Council in this regard.

## **5. Reports from the County and District Councillors**

Councillor Noble and Councillor Reid had both submitted written reports which were received and noted.

Councillor Reid summarised the key issues from the detailed report.

- A 10-week public consultation on the proposed devolution deal with the Government would start on 18 March and run through until 26 May. The consultation would be in two main parts – an open survey, hosted by Suffolk County Council, that any resident could complete and a sample survey of 1000 Suffolk residents conducted independently by Ipsos Mori. The consultation would be available at [www.suffolk.gov.uk/devolution](http://www.suffolk.gov.uk/devolution) and social media. There would also be media coverage highlighting the consultation.
- Suffolk County Council had confirmed its financial budget for 2024-25. The £752.8m package was approved at the Full Council meeting on Thursday 15 February 2024, with the priority to protect vulnerable adults and children across the county.
- Suffolk Highways had welcomed a new pothole-repairing machine to help fix the growing number of potholes experienced nationally during the winter season, with a trial set to initially target defects in rural Suffolk. The Dragon Patcher was a machine that released compressed air to clean the surface of the road, before heating the surface to a temperature that enables repair material to bond effectively with the road surface, allowing the pothole to be repaired with an aggregate and hot bitumen material. In comparison with the traditional approach of repairing potholes, the Dragon Patcher can work five times faster. The trial was in addition to the potholes being repaired as part of the routine repair programme.
- In February 2022, the County Council had agreed to stop using glyphosate in its routine weed treatment programmes and to find more natural alternatives to help protect the local environment. However, the alternative products proved unable to meet requirements, which was further exacerbated by exceptional growing conditions. Multiple applications were sometimes needed which could introduce other negative environmental impacts. Regular weed treatment on the highway network will continue using a variety of methods, with plans for glyphosate being

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used considered only when appropriate – the ambition remained to reduce the use of glyphosate as far as possible. Teams will continue to monitor and research different approaches being used to remove weeds on roads and pavements. Where needed, glyphosate would be used responsibly as it was one of the most cost-effective and long-lasting solutions.

Councillor Noble summarised her written report.

- Councillor Noble said that East Suffolk Council were experiencing similar issues with the use of glyphosates. It might invest in its own machinery to remove weeds and a mapping report facility.
- A meeting would be held at Bentwaters to discuss traffic management issues in the district which had been heightened by increased development and Sizewell C.

The Chairman thanked the County and District Councillors for their reports.

## **6. Implementation of EDF Energy’s proposals for landscaping the two-villages by-pass**

Councillor Ayres tabled copies of some of the draft enhanced proposals, dated August 2021, which were marked “for discussion”. He suggested that the Council, in conjunction with the District and County Councils, as statutory consultees, needed to maintain a keen oversight to ensure that what had been agreed was developed and changes were not made as the project progressed. It was, he said, important to mitigate the implementation of the landscaping. It was noted that in a later version of the plans dated May 2022, also “for discussion” the original 2m bund had been replaced in one location by an acoustic fence. This was not what had been agreed and also raised maintenance issues.

It was proposed, seconded, and unanimously agreed that Mr Steve Merry be invited to attend a meeting of the Parish Council to discuss the current or final plans and ensure they contained mitigating elements that had been promised to residents in the proposals previously shared. It was noted that there had, as yet been no discussion of the proposals and that enabling works commenced in the summer.

## **7. Questions from members of the public**

No questions had been received from the public.

## **8. To receive updates from external meetings**

### **(a) Sizewell C Southern Transport Forum**

Councillor Norman had attended this meeting in February. He provided a precise of the draft minutes from the meeting. The Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP) set out how Sizewell C was required to manage traffic throughout the construction period under the DCO. The CTMP was part of the Deed of Obligation that had been signed by the District

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and County Councils and the Transport Review Group would be monitoring compliance. Any vehicle over 3.5 tonnes was classified as a Heavy Goods Vehicle (HGV) and would be required to operate on the designated route to the main construction site and would also be tracked. This would include all buses and HGVs. LGVs of less than 3.5 tonnes would still be required to book a delivery window through the Delivery Management System and would be advised to use designated routes but would not be tracked. Concerns had been expressed that still sizable vehicles would no longer be tracked.

The next meeting of the Forum would be on 15 May, and it agreed that Councillor Norman would represent the parish council to provide continuity.

(b) Pre-consultation event on Devolution proposals

Councillor Sayer had attended this event in early March. It was noted that the consultation would commence on 18 March and as stated in Councillor Reid's earlier report at the meeting.

**9. Clerk's report including the correspondence log**

The correspondence log was noted.

The Sizewell Annual Forum would take place on 9 April at Trinity Park. Councillor Ayres was no longer able to attend and so an alternative representative was required. Councillor Norman said he would be able to attend.

The annual internal audit would take place the week on 13 May. The audit would be arranged via SALC, and its fees had been advised to Councillors.

The Clerk would be attending the first meeting of the reconvened Air Quality Management Steering Group on 30 April.

The Clerk asked for suggestions for attendees at the Annual Meeting in May. It was agreed to invite the following and to request a written report: Parochial Church Committee, the Alde Valley Luncheon Club, the Riverside Executive Committee and the Safer Neighbourhood Team, Suffolk Constabulary.

**10. Responsible Finance Officer's report, including balances and invoices**

The current balance was £4091.17. Councillor Ayres said the balance needed to be monitored and stated that he considered the trajectory of the budget to be a concern. There followed a discussion about the workload of the Clerk, the issues inherited by the Clerk that needed to be resolved, and the general rise in prices across the board that had impacted the budget. The Clerk suggested that she provide a list of the matters that needed to be resolved so that the Council could indicate its preferred priority for this work to be undertaken, or not. The Clerk also referred to other parish councils allocating some tasks to Councillors. It was agreed that a list of such tasks would be compiled by the Clerk for consideration by the Council. Councillor Norman said the Council had not adopted this

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approach in the past but, as it was clear the Clerk's workload would not reduce with Sizewell etc., this might need to be adopted.

The Clerk undertook to provide this information to the next meeting if time allowed.

The Clerk reminded the Council that quarterly reports on income and expenditure were provided. The last report had been provided in December 2023 and the next, end of financial year report, would be provided to the April meeting.

The following invoices were submitted for consideration.

Item	Payee	Amount	Legal power
Clerk's salary	K Abbott	£347.40	Local Government Act (LGA) 1972 s.112
PAYE	HMRC	£87	LGA 1972 s.112

The invoices were approved for payment. The balance after the invoices were paid would be £3656.77.

#### **11 To review Risk Assessments 2024/5**

The Clerk provided an updated version of the Risk Assessment document and suggested one addition regarding the loss of experienced Councillors and staff.

It was proposed, seconded and by unanimous vote resolved that the updated Risk Assessment document, including the addition suggested by the Clerk, be approved and adopted as fit for purpose.

#### **12 To review Financial Risk Assessments 2024/25**

The Clerk provided an updated version of the Financial Risk Assessment document and suggested one addition regarding scams.

It was proposed, seconded and by unanimous vote resolved that the updated Financial Risk Assessment document, including the addition suggested by the Clerk, be approved and adopted as fit for purpose.

#### **13 Urgent business for discussion**

There were no items of urgent business.

#### **14 Items for the next meeting**

The items indicated by the Clerk on the agenda were noted.

The meeting concluded at 21.40hrs

Signed .....(Chair)

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