

Minutes of the Meeting held on Tuesday 12th September 2023
Venue: Barnham Village Hall, Mill Road, Barnham IP24 2NG, commencing at 7PM

In attendance

Parish Councillors: John Bauer (Chair), Ed Wyer (Vice Chair), Helen Beck, Martin Belsham, Matthew Hawthorne.

West Suffolk District Councillor, Andrew Smith; Suffolk County Councillor, Joanna Spicer MBE

Members of the Public: 2

Clerk/Responsible Financial Officer: Pauline Smith

1. **Apologies for absence** were received from and approved for:
Councillors Susan Watson and Adrian Webb
2. **Declarations of Interests**
Councillor Belsham declared a pecuniary interest in item 11.1.
3. **The Minutes of the Meeting held Tuesday 11th July 2023** were taken as read.
Proposed: Cllr Hawthorne Seconded: Cllr Beck Unanimously approved.
The Chair signed the Minutes as an accurate record.
4. **Public Forum**
 - 4.1 **Re: Planning Application SCC/0095/20SE at North Farm, Elveden Road, Barnham IP24 2PH**
As a consequence of the applicant losing their appeal, how proactive will Suffolk County Council be in enforcing the return of the land to its original state? Will they insist that it is returned to heathland (as per the original intent or will they be satisfied if it is levelled and permit it to be utilised as arable land without further intervention? See Councillor Spicer's report at item 5.1
 - 4.2 **Blacksmith Lane:** A resident raised concerns about construction works taking place on land adjacent to Forge Cottage causing disturbance and disruption to nearby occupiers. It was explained that work is taking place outside of the hours permitted by the original planning consent: 08:00 to 18:00 Mondays to Fridays 08:00 - 13.00 Saturdays and at no times during Sundays or Bank / Public Holidays.
(For reference: SE/03/1667/P; DC/18/1010/FUL granted; DC/22/1307/FUL not yet determined – see attached details re hours included within conditions)
Historical issues were detailed.
It is understood that this site has been the subject of enforcement investigation for a number of years. The resident was asked to provide details of current concerns to the District Councillor (via the Clerk) which he will discuss with the West Suffolk Planning Enforcement Team.
5. **Reports**
 - 5.1 **Suffolk County Councillor, Joanna Spicer**
Planning Application SCC/0095/20SE at North Farm, Elveden Road, Barnham IP24 2PH:
Extraction of sand and gravel and subsequent importation of inert waste material to achieve a beneficial restoration of the site back to heathland on land at North Farm Barnham which was refused on 7th February 2023 by Suffolk County Council.

The deadline for appeal has now passed and Suffolk County Council has written to Elveden Farms (landowner) and Mick George (operator for the site) to inform them of their obligations which required that:

- Mineral extraction was to cease by 31st March 2023 and the site and haul route shall be restored by 31st March 2024.
- No mounds or waste heaps are to be left above the ground level.
- Re-spreading of material (top and subsoils) from the area they originated to be completed by 31st March 2024.

Suffolk County Council will be monitoring the site during the detailed time frame.

The question of whether Suffolk County Council will enforce this condition to the extent that the land will be returned to heathland or whether it will be permitted to be used for arable purposes could not be ascertained at the meeting.

Resolution: The Parish Council's preference is for the entire site to be returned to heathland and that this be subject to enforcement if necessary. The clerk will liaise with Cllr Spicer and if required will submit an appropriate letter to Suffolk County Council (for the attention of Andy Rutter, and Graham Gunby). **Action Cllr Spicer/Clerk**

It was noted that the site remains in the current Suffolk Minerals and Waste Local Plan which was adopted in July 2020. The next review is expected to commence in 2028.

Countryside Recycling (formerly Indigo): Station Road, Barnham: Previous planning applications have been withdrawn.

Member of the public said that Countryside Recycling are generally fulfilling their obligations. He highlighted that the byway through the site and beyond to Triangle House is in a poor condition, creating difficulties for residents. Cllr Spicer advised that the residents will need to pursue this issue with the landowner, Elveden Estate.

A question was raised as to whether the byway is in Barnham or Elveden parish.

(Clerk's note: This is in Barnham parish.)

Who is the contact at Elveden Estate?

Resolution: The priority for the parish council is returning the land to heathland in preference to seeking to resolve the issues over the byway surface at this time, which should be addressed by the residents directly with the landowner, Elveden Estate.

5.2 West Suffolk Councillor, Andrew Smith

NRG: Cllr Smith has discussed ongoing issues with the WSC Planning Officer, including failure to comply with conditions which stipulate hours of operation and lighting.

The acoustic fence appears to be substantially complete at the front of the site.

However: the residential property opposite is at a higher level than the site and as a result the acoustic fence fails to prevent the sound carrying, likewise the lighting issue remains a problem because there is a direct line of sight into the compound.

Trees previously at the front of the site have been cut down.

The requisite arboriculture report has not been provided.

Cllr Smith assured councillors that West Suffolk Council is proactively pursuing the case.

Councillor Smith will request a progress report. **Action: Cllr Smith**

Grass cutting: WSC grass cutting operatives have been unable to keep to programme with the growth of the grass across the district resulting from weather conditions.

Grass cutting is part of a wider review which is being undertaken by a cross party working group of four District Councillors, including Cllr Smith, who are due to report back to full council by the end of November.

Grass cutting of open church yards by West Suffolk Council: Cllr Smith has established that whilst West Suffolk Council could provide this service if it was minded, the likelihood of it doing so is remote due to resource constraints (financial and personnel). However, this will be included within the review referred to above.

Bury St Edmunds Leisure Centre: The West Suffolk administration is going to postpone the replacement of the leisure centre. Instead, their plan is to refurbish the existing building.

5.3 Play Park: No report

Clerk advised that she has received the monthly report but had not had the opportunity to look at it prior to the meeting. To be circulated. **Actioned (circulated): Clerk**

5.4 Suffolk Association of Local Councils: Cllr Beck attended the area forum meeting held on line on 5th September. Included in the meeting was a presentation detailing the Local Plan process, together with discussion about planning and material considerations. Also, during the information exchange, councils talked about D Day commemoration plans and clerk recruitment and retention. The notes of the meeting and recording are [available here](https://www.salc.org.uk/blog/west-suffolk-area-forum-news-18/notes-of-meeting-5th-september-2023-138)

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5.5 Village Hall Report. Cllr Hawthorne reported that plans to repair the wall and install the handrails are progressing.

WIFI is not considered a priority: To-date no hirers have asked for, or required, the facility. It was suggested that the parish council would be likely to contribute to the costs as it had previously agreed: Cllr Hawthorne will ask the Village Hall Committee to provide costings if they wish to reconsider.

6. Progress of actions from July meeting – see agenda notes attached

a. Speed Watch Coordinator – see item 7

b. Barnham Heath Noticeboard: Clerk has spoken to Steve Telfer (*for* Barnham Heath Residents) There is agreement on the exact specification required. Clerk will provide details to councillors and will submit grant applications in order to raise the additional funds to meet the additional cost over the £500 being provided by the parish council. **Action: Clerk**

c. Overhanging hedge: Clerk has contacted Suffolk County Council to request that they clear the overgrown verge at Water Lane and also whether they will consider cutting back the hedge. The overgrown bank with high nettles and brambles impedes access to the hedge, and the narrow road prevents a ladder being used on health and safety grounds due to traffic concerns. It is therefore hoped that SCC will be willing to carry out this work.

Cllr Beck highlighted another area in the village where a resident has made an excellent job of clearing overgrown vegetation from a significant length of footpath.

d. Bank signatories: Cllrs Bauer, Belsham and Wyer all have online access to the bank account.

e. Grounds maintenance contract: Deadline for responses from 3 contractors: 20th September 2023. Current contractor has advised that, if the parish council is unable to find another contractor, he may be prepared to continue.

f. Barnham Traffic Lights: As anticipated, SWARCO advised that work to rectify the issues with the traffic lights is likely to be dependent on the outcome of the review of works when Milestone takes over from Kier on 1st October. Therefore, he was unable to provide an indication of time scale.

Cllr Spicer advised that the traffic lights have been in situ c.25 years.

g. Village/Church Clock: Awaiting update from John McGuigan (Barnham Church) regarding the faculty. In the meanwhile, clerk is researching available grants.

The parish council is likely to be required to show to funders that it is willing to provide a contribution towards the costs (est. £14,000 + vat details previously circulated), whether through fundraising, precept, or combination of both.

Action Clerk: To calculate and circulate the impact on the budget/council tax bills assuming various levels of contribution.

h. Purchase of new computer: Subject to outcome of appraisal by 121 computers, clerk anticipates (hopes) that it will be possible to repair the existing laptop in preference to purchasing a new one.

7. Speed Watch

7.1 Coordinator: Unfortunately, Jez Blackburn is unable to take over as temporary coordinator due to his other commitments.

This could be a solely admin role if there is somebody willing to take it on.

Village Hall to be asked if they have any spare storage capacity for the Speedwatch equipment.

Actioned: Clerk. Response from VH: No storage available

Social media, The Link. Notice board to be used asking for volunteers.

Action Clerk

Any opportunities that councillors have to speak directly with residents who may be willing would be appreciated.

Action: Cllrs

7.2 Potential for VAS to be moved to alternative position and/or 2nd VAS to be purchased

Cllr Bauer has made enquiries and it has been confirmed that the VAS must not be any closer than 70 metres from the 30mph sign. Therefore, the existing VAS cannot be moved beyond its current location.

There is the potential to consider a 2nd VAS unit.

Agenda item November: Clerk

8. Highways Matters

Extending 30mph limit: Cllr Spicer has discussed the suggestion of extending the 30mph limit to East Farm with the SCC engineer. This stretch does not meet the criteria for 30mph and so she is unable to support it. If the parish council wishes to pursue this change then it will be at its own expense.

Potential of change to speed limit on C633? Joanna is willing to put speed counter here to monitor the situation.

Damaged sign on A134 is on the list to be replaced.

The Chair thanked Cllr Spicer for the progress made to-date as a result of her involvement in planning and highways matters.

9. Emergency Plan: To review final version

Councillors were pleased with the final version and thanked Cllr Wyer for his work on this. Cllr Belsham suggested the addition of School Lane Surgery to the list of services.

ActionEP to be updated accordingly: Cllr Wyer/Clerk

Resolution: Barnham Parish Council has reviewed and accepted the final version.

Cllr Wyer explained that the plan will continue to develop and that more volunteers will be required. A note is to be included in The Link requesting volunteers.

Cllr Wyer to suggest wording/volunteers to contact Clerk

Action Clerk

10. Defibrillator Training

There is a publicly accessible defibrillator at the village hall.

Cllr Belsham explained the reasoning behind his proposal to hold a training session for residents.

Councillors agreed that this would be appropriate.

There will be a small cost to cover trainer's expenses to be covered by the Parish Council.

**Action: Cllr Belsham to provide details of costs/trainer and arrangements
Details of arrangements to go into The Link**

11. Planning

11.1 Planning Applications for response

DC/23/1455/TCA Jubilee Cottage, Euston Road, Barnham, Suffolk IP24 2N

Trees in a conservation area notification – one sycamore (marked on plan) fell.

Cllr Belsham had declared a pecuniary interest in this application and therefore was excluded from discussion and vote.

Councillors had all viewed the application prior to the meeting: No questions or objections were raised and no additional discussion was requested.

Resolution: No objections.

Actioned: Clerk 13/9

11.2 Decisions since July meeting: Approved/No objections:

Details previously circulated with agenda

DC/23/0829/TCA White Gables Mill Lane Barnham IP24 2NH

DC/23/1212/TCA The Bellows, Blacksmith lane, Barnham IP24 2NE

DC/23/1148/TCA Hobbiton 8 Water Lane, Barnham IP24 2NA

11.3 Any other matters

For information: Not yet determined:

DC/23/0445/FUL Honeysuckle Far, Thetford Road, Barnham IP24 2PA

12. Finance

12.1 Financial Report: See attached.

The Clerk provided reports with details of payments/receipts to-date against the budget figures. The Chairman signed the Bank/Scribe reconciliation

Councillors expressed concern at the minimal interest rate being provided by Barclays on the savings account (1.4%). However, the options for alternative accounts are limited for parish councils with a requirement for dual authorisation (and limited funds to deposit).

Cambridge Building Society was put forward as an option (parish account 2.9%), but councillors declined this suggestion as it is still a relatively low return for the available sum, plus it will be a return to cheque-based banking.

Whilst higher returns are apparently available, these would require removing the dual control which councillors would not wish to do. Clerk will continue to monitor opportunities for a viable option.

Action: Clerk

12.2 Invoices for approval

Approval of one payment for £520.00 as detailed on the financial report was requested and unanimously approved.

13. Insurance: Following notification of the insurance renewal from CAS, the Clerk has received an alternative quote from Zurich and is awaiting another from BHIB.

The clerk raised a query about insurance of the village clock which she will follow through.

Action: Clerk

14. Website: See attached agenda notes

It is likely that whilst currently councils are being encouraged to take up gov.uk domain names

this will result in higher overall ongoing costs. There are suggestions that this request may

become a requirement in the not-too-distant future: If this does occur then it is hoped that there would be some transitional funding available for smaller councils to offset the costs.

There was a suggestion that SALC could negotiate on behalf of parish councils to obtain a group discount.

Action: Clerk to enquire re involvement of SALC

Resolution: The parish council will remain with OneSuffolk for the time being due to the cost differential between suggested provider and current provider, OneSuffolk. (£240 +vat V £50+vat).

OneSuffolk: SSL certificate: Not having an SSL certificate regularly causes a warning message to be shown to visitors to the site, thereby putting them off from proceeding to the website. An SSL certificate costs £39.00.

Resolution: Councillors unanimously agreed to fund the cost of the SSL certificate.

Actioned Clerk 15/9/23 – Request sent to OneSuffolk - SSL Certificate operative from 18/9/23

15. Future events planning: 6th June 2024: D-Day Anniversary

Cllr Beck suggested contacting local groups inviting them to participate with the parish council in this commemorative occasion.

It was suggested that there could be displays, a procession, lighting the Beacon followed by a Fish and Chip supper.

Action: Cllr Hawthorne will make appropriate arrangements for lighting the Beacon.

Action: Cllr Beck to draft a letter to be sent to local organisations

16. Correspondence

Parking: A letter has been received asking about parking provision for residents' visitors, tradespeople etc when they don't have room on their own driveways. On this occasion the resident is seeking parking provision for a period lasting up until Christmas.

Response: Unfortunately, the parish council is unable to assist as it does not own any land designated for public parking.

Overgrown Hedge: Query raised by residents regarding ownership and responsibility for the verge/bank and hedge. Verge is believed to be responsibility of SCC, and hedge that of residents. (see 6c). Residents are extremely cooperative but require confirmation re areas of responsibility. Response will be provided to residents once an answer from SCC has been received. **Action Clerk**

17. Diary Dates to be circulated to councillors.

Action: Clerk

18. Request for items for the next agenda: None received.

19. Date of next meeting:

Tuesday 14th November 2023, 7.00pm Barnham Village Hall

Minutes approved at the meeting of Barnham Parish Council 14th November 2022
Signed as an accurate record by

Cllr John Bauer, Chairman