

GAZELEY PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Meeting of Gazeley Parish Council held on Monday 10th July 2023 at 7.30pm in Gazeley Village Hall

Present: Cllr Paul Kinnon, Chair, (PK), Cllr Robert Connelly (RC), Cllr Kevin Grimwood (KG), Cllr Stuart Jolly (SJ) and Cllr Judy Moatt (JM)

In attendance Lynne Francis, Parish Clerk, District Councillor Roger Dicker, County Councillor Colin Noble and more than twenty members of the public.

23.07.01 Chairman's Welcome

The meeting was opened by the Chairman, Cllr Paul Kinnon, who welcomed everyone to the meeting.

23.07.02 To receive apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Cllr Chapman and Cllr Raithatha.

23.07.03 To receive Declarations of Interest, pecuniary and non-pecuniary, on matters on the agenda.

None declared.

23.07.04 To receive reports from external bodies as appropriate and to take questions from Councillors or members of the public on those reports and on any other matter on the agenda.

a) District Councillor Roger Dicker reported that there was nothing new of significance to report. Committee members were undergoing training, settling into their new roles and reviewing policies. Particular attention is being given to the discrepancies in lighting and energy costs that have emerged between the old Forest Heath and St Edmundsbury villages since the merger.

b) County Councillor Colin Noble had been invited to the meeting to discuss Highway matters. The Chairman outlined the problems that are being experienced in Gazeley from diverted traffic that is being directed through the village from the A14 due to roadworks in the area or because of accidents.

The Chairman felt that the diversions were wrongly signposted with all traffic being diverted through Gazeley and down Moulton Road which was unsuitable for heavy traffic.

Cllr Noble replied that the liaison officer from Suffolk Highways knows the district very well and is aware of all the alternative routes. He also pointed out that all routes are public roads, even though some are narrower than others in parts. Drivers will use the quickest route if they are familiar with the area despite any signs that are put up. The Chairman asked how much advanced notice of road closures Highways are required to give and Cllr Noble replied that it depended whether the closure was due to an emergency or not. They are supposed to give advanced notice for scheduled road works but he acknowledged that unfortunately this was not always the case.

Attention was drawn to the fact that Higham Road has become very narrow in places because spoil from the fields is often washed on to the road during periods of heavy rain, where it remains.

A question was asked about the safety of the bridge and how often it is inspected. The view was expressed that if it isn't suitable for articulated traffic there should be a sign to that effect. It was acknowledged that diverted traffic was sometimes directed to roads that are not always suitable.

The Chairman asked if a meeting could be arranged with a Highways officer and Cllr Noble to discuss all the issues of concern to the parish council. Cllr Noble said that he would be happy to attend a meeting and he asked the Clerk to coordinate a time and date.

The Chairman thanked Cllr Noble for attending before he had to leave to attend further meetings.

c) Public Forum

A resident asked whether the owner of the Blacksmith's Forge had signed the Public Access Licence Agreement yet and if he had given the Parish Council a date when the work will commence.

The Chairman replied that he and Cllr Connelly had met the owner and had given him a copy of the original public access licence, which had been drafted by Cllr Connelly and sent to him in February 2022, in the hope that he would now sign it. He felt that it was better to start from a simpler approach now that there is a new Council in place. The owner had informed them that he hopes to be topping out on the roof by Christmas Day but he hadn't given them a starting date because he had been informed that he is required to use traditional materials for the build, rather than the pre-cast panels that he had envisaged using, so there was a need to engage a professional flint-knapper to do the work, which may take some time.

There was a further question about why the original license agreement was sent out after the owner had been sent a professional version prepared by the Council's solicitor. It was noted that the owner must follow the guidelines and conditions laid down in the terms of the planning consent for the development.

Mention had been made of residents helping him at the last meeting but we had been led to believe that it would be a professional build. It was noted that there had been a suggested charge of £120 per month for the licence and the Council was asked if that was still included.

Cllr Connelly replied that he felt the feeling in the village was that the owner should only be charged a peppercorn rent. They hadn't yet had a conversation about whether he is willing to sign the agreement as it stands, or whether he wanted to negotiate costs.

A view was expressed that the owner had created the problem by not engaging with the PC for over a year and the Council had therefore been forced to take legal action in an attempt to secure an Access Licence Agreement, so the costs should therefore be recovered from the owner.

The Chairman reiterated that the newly constituted parish council wanted to proceed with a clean slate and if its actions fail, they will take responsibility for that. He felt that the legal costs were a small price to pay if it meant that the development could get underway.

It was noted that the owner has three years to start the project but the Clerk pointed out that the demolition order is still in place and if the renovation doesn't start in what WSC called 'a timely fashion' they can still enact it.

The owner has informed the Chairman that he intends to move into the property himself when the renovation is completed.

Other views were expressed from the floor that it is important to have the access licence signed to absolve the PC from any risks and liabilities because of the development, and before anyone sets foot on the property, there must be a binding access agreement in place.

In view of the owner's lack of response to the parish council for over a year, he should really offer a fee to off-set the Council's liabilities and the Council should be asking him to make recompense for that.

RC pointed out that although the owner had spoken to the Building Control Dept. several times, he hasn't yet put in an application for building control and paid a fee but he acknowledged that he doesn't have to do that until he starts work.

23.07.05 To approve the minutes of the Meeting of Gazeley Parish Council, held on Monday 10th June 2023.

RC observed that the minutes had not been amended according to an email sent from the Chairman to the Clerk on 18th June

The Clerk asked whether he thought the minutes were factually incorrect and he replied that in his opinion they were because the Clerk had been asked to release the grant that had been awarded to the church. The Clerk replied that she had not been asked to release any funds before the June meeting but she had confirmed that £600 had been reserved in the budget for churchyard maintenance.

The Chairman had subsequently written to her on 13th June, asking her to prepare a cheque for £300 as the first tranche of the grant. The Clerk had replied that she would certainly do so but the bank mandate hadn't yet been updated with the new signatories and in the meantime the Council had only one signatory to the account when two were required. Confirmation had finally come through on 5th July that the new signatories were confirmed but, in the meantime, she had asked former Chairman Paul Beard to sign the cheque as he was still a signatory to the account. When the update of the mandate was confirmed, she prepared an additional cheque for £300 for signature at the July meeting.

RC insisted that the clerk had led everyone to believe that the rewinding of the churchyard negated the need for the £600 but the Clerk replied that she had merely wondered whether the grant would be claimed, as the church had made arrangements for the churchyard to be rewilded and were using volunteers to cut the remaining areas of grass. However, Rev.Childs had since confirmed that the grant was still required and the cheques would be given to representatives of the PCC that evening.

23.07.06 To receive the Clerk's report on outstanding issues and any other matters that may have arisen since the publication of the agenda.

The Clerk gave a report on Cllr Raithatha's behalf following his meeting with a representative of Savills, agents for the Dalham Estate. He had informed Savills that the installation of the cricket hut had been funded and built by Gazeley Cricket Club many years ago. The options were either to demolish the hut or relocate it to another area of the field, pending approval from the clients.

Cllr Raithatha concluded that the most financially and visually viable option was the demolition of the hut, returning the area to its natural state. All costs would be borne by the parish council and would involve the use of 2 – 4 skips with an estimated cost of £250-£280 per skip.

It was agreed that the best option would be to demolish the hut. A final decision will be made at the September meeting when we have a definite quote for the skip hire. The Clerk will contact Savills for feedback from their client on the matter.

Cllr Raithatha had also consulted Redlynch about the rubber tiles at the playground.

They did not feel that the existing rubber tiles were unsafe but they could lift the tiles and move them closer together and re-glue them or infill with a caulk-type adhesive which would cost £1,500 + VAT.

It was agreed that the Council would postpone any decision to the September meeting when Cllr Raithatha could attend.

Other matters:

The pads in the defibrillator had been replaced. The battery will also have to be replaced next year. It was agreed that it would be a good idea to set up a training session on the use of the defibrillator in the village hall. Two residents, who are trained nurses, had offered to assist in this and the Clerk will contact them.

23.07.07 Highway Matters

The Chairman asked whether there were any other issues other than those that had already been discussed. KG reported that according to the most recent readings from the SID, which was placed near the church, it appeared that 97% of vehicles had been travelling through the village within the speed limit.

A question was raised about the position of the post on Higham Road, which is half-way along the green at Tithe Close. Since the Anglian Water site works had commenced, the 30mph limit had been moved further outside the village and it was considered that the post should now be positioned near to the village sign. The Clerk confirmed that permission had to be obtained from Highways if the post was to be moved.

23.07.08 Finance Matters

a) Authorisation of outstanding payments and signing of the schedule of payments.

Payment of the outstanding accounts was approved and signed by the Chairman and the corresponding cheques were signed by JM and KG.

b) The Clerk gave the monthly finance report and quarterly finance report, copies of which are attached to the minutes.

c) Budget Review – No points were raised. SJ asked who cut the village green and the Clerk confirmed that SP. Landscapes had the current contract but all contracts would be reviewed when next year's budget is discussed.

23.07.09 Community Emergency Plans

Suffolk County Council is asking local councils to formulate a plan to cope with any unforeseen emergencies that may occur in their village, such as floods or failure of communication etc.

It was agreed that consideration would be given to this and would be further discussed at the next meeting when a committee might be convened to formulate a plan.

23.07.10 Gazeley War Memorial

At the last meeting, a member of the public asked if the issue of a new memorial could be revisited. It was agreed that the subject would be deferred to the September meeting when all councillors could be present.

A member of the public noted that it had been a very long time since the Parish Plan had been produced and he felt that the time might be right to repeat the exercise, not only to garner opinion on the memorial but for residents to offer new ideas for improvements to the village.

The Chairman requested that a review of the plan be added to the next agenda.

23.06.11 Councillor's Reports and any items for inclusion on a future agenda.

JM praised the organisation of the recent village fete that had been held in the garden of Bovill's Hall and had been a great success. Her comments were endorsed by the Chairman, who also thanked everyone who had been involved, or attended the event, and he hoped that this success could be built on in future years.

JM also appreciated the visit of the coffee caravan to the village at which a Covid clinic had also been held.

SJ asked if Highways had come back on the issue of a streetlight upgrade. The Clerk had not yet received an update but would pursue it.

He also asked whether there had been any further conversations about the condition of the graves in the churchyard and the general rewilding project. Margaret Gash, for All Saints' Church, confirmed that the subject would be discussed at the next PCC meeting which is being held next week and as they had asked for all comments to be sent to Rev. Childs, they would all be considered. Simon Gash explained that the rewilding was a long-term project and the important thing was getting the balance right between the mown areas and the areas designated for rewilding.

KG noted that he had witnessed eight people playing golf on the playing field.

It was confirmed that the playing of golf was prohibited in the terms of our lease.

He also raised the question of some dogs that the owners had allowed to become out of control.

It was confirmed that all issues such as this should be reported to the police. In the case of tenanted houses in the Highwood area, residents should contact the housing association if there is any cause for complaint.

23.07.12 To note that the next meeting of the Parish Council will be held on Monday 11th September 2023, beginning at 7.30 in the Village Hall.

Refreshments will be provided from 7pm.

**The Annual Clerk's Committee meeting will be held on Monday 14th August.
Press and public will be excluded on that occasion.**

The meeting closed at 9.00 pm.

Statement of Accounts – July 2023

Payments

All Saints' PCC	£ 300.00
Mr P Jaye	£ 645.00
Greene & Greene Solicitors	£ 900.00
L. Francis, Defib. Pads	£ 116.00
S.P. Landscapes, June	£ 132.00
All Saints' PCC	£ 300.00

Total **£2,393.80**

Receipts

Bank interest	£ 18.02
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Balance of Accounts at 10.7.23

Treasurer's Account	£ 11,659.59
Instant Access Deposit	£ 27,978.20

Total Balance of Accounts **£39,637.79**

Reconciliation of Accounts April – June 2023

Balance b/f	£ 21,011.14	Cash in Hand	
Receipts	£ 20,544.38	Treasurer's Account	£ 11,659.59
Payments	£ 3,566.23	Deposit Account	£ 27,978.20
		Less Unpresented Cheques	£ 1,648.50
Balance	£ 37,989.29	Balance	£ 37,989.29

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