

GAZELEY PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Meeting of Gazeley Parish Council held on Monday 11th September 2023 at 7.30pm in Gazeley Village Hall

Present: Cllr Paul Kinnon, Chair, Cllr Laurence Chapman, Cllr Robert Connelly, Cllr Kevin Grimwood, Cllr Stuart Jolly, Cllr Judy Moatt and Cllr Sam Raithatha.

In attendance Lynne Francis, Parish Clerk and thirteen members of the public.

23.09.01 Chairman's Welcome

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

23.09.02 To receive apologies for absence

All Councillors were present at the meeting.

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

None declared.

23.09.04 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 Council** – Cllr Roger Dicker. Cllr Dicker had sent his apologies as he was attending another meeting this evening. He had confirmed that the Council had agreed to pause the Western Way Project at a time of national financial uncertainty for public services. They would instead invest in improved facilities at the existing leisure centre.

b) **County Council** – Cllr Colin Noble. Cllr Noble had also sent apologies and had asked to be informed if any matters were raised for his attention. He is due to meet councillors to discuss Highway matters when a mutually agreeable date can be arranged.

c) Public Forum

1. Mr David Southern, from All Saints' Church, informed the Council that the roof of the church needed urgent repair. The roof of the chancel holds important carvings which have to be saved at all costs as they are extremely rare. The cost of repair could be as high as £100,000. He outlined ways in which they intended to try to raise the necessary funds, including direct appeals to the residents of the village, applications to funding organisations such as the National Lottery and various social fund-raising events. The appeal will be launched on 19th October with a cheese and wine evening. Everyone is welcome to attend.

2. The Council was asked to give an update on the Public Access Licence Agreement with the owner of the forge. The Chairman replied that the parish council had decided to rectify the existing draft agreement, which had been drawn up by our solicitor, and go back to the owner with a revised

version. He said that the decision hadn't been documented by the Clerk but nevertheless the agreement had been made.

The questioner challenged this and said that it had never been an item on the agenda of a meeting and had therefore never been formally discussed and resolved.

He noted that Cllr Connelly had told the meeting in July that the cost of the licence had been reduced from £120 per month to what he called 'a peppercorn rent' although this wasn't a landlord and tenant agreement. He also noted that the Council had been forced to consult solicitors because the owner had refused to engage with the Council.

Cllr Chapman replied that he hadn't engaged with the Council at the time because they had treated him like a child and the Council had been hostile towards him. In response, the questioner replied that as the owner had never come to a meeting since April 2022 and had ignored all approaches from the Council and its solicitor for a year, it was hard to see how he could have reached that conclusion.

A heated debate continued for some time. There was anger that £750 of tax-payers money had apparently been written off and the owner had now been presented with an alternative version of an access licence agreement at a vastly reduced cost to him so there was no way of recovering the money.

The Chairman finally suggested that the Council could approve the new licence document as it stands and ask the Council's solicitor to review it and amend it to make it airtight for the parish council so that it could be sent to Paul Wiseman for signature.

Cllr Connelly suggested that the solicitor would simply ask the Council to adopt the agreement that they'd already drafted. The agreement had already been adopted by the Council before it had been sent to Mr Wiseman.

3. The Council was asked why the subject of a War Memorial was not on the agenda as requested at the last meeting.

The Chairman replied that he didn't have enough background information to discuss the subject in detail. The Clerk had informed the Council that a parish council couldn't contribute to a new war memorial from public funds. It can however pay for repairs to an existing memorial.

If a group came forward with a proposal to create a new memorial on parish land, it would be considered on its merits and funded from private donations.

It was agreed that further discussions on the subject would be deferred to the next meeting.

23.09.05 To approve the minutes of the Meetings of Gazeley Parish Council, held on Monday 10th June 2023 and Monday 10th July 2023.

The minutes of both meetings were confirmed as a true and accurate record and were signed by the Chairman.

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

1. The Clerk had received the latest report from Gazeley Speedwatch which had been forwarded to councillors. The report had also been posted on the village Facebook page.

It was noted that the average speeds had been reduced since the previous month and this could be because of the extended speed limits on the outskirts of the village, courtesy of Anglian Water.

Gazeley Speedwatch is appealing for new members to join them to replace members that have left or are temporarily unavailable. They can be contacted at gazeleyspeedwatch@gmail.com.

2. Complaints had been received about the alarm being sounded at the old school site in Mill Road. The site is managed by Oak Park Security who can be contacted on 01206 793673 in the event of future problems.

3. The Clerk had been asked to seek estimates for the repair and replacement of streetlights owned by the parish council. She advised the Council that Milestone, the new contractors for Suffolk Highways, were due to take over in October so it could be some time before accurate estimates could be provided. She will continue to be in touch with the officers at Highways to monitor the situation.

4. Four councillors have now been enrolled for the Basic Councillor Course at SALC, which is run over two sessions.

23.09.07 Finance Matters

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

The Clerk gave the monthly finance report and the schedule of payments was signed by the Chairman. Cheques were signed by Cllr Judy Moatt and Cllr Grimwood.

b) To note the increase in the Clerk's salary in accordance with her contract of employment and the NALC pay agreement for Local Council Clerks for 2022-2023.

The Council had approved the increase at the annual Clerk's Review Meeting in August.

23.09.8 Gazeley Playing Field and Gazeley Allotment Site

To consider a response from Savills regarding the repair of the cricket hut and a proposal for the future management of the allotment site.

Savills, land agents for the Dalham Estate, had contacted the Clerk to reiterate their previous advice that under the terms of the lease on the playing field, the parish council was obliged to keep the cricket hut in good repair. During the conversation, she had been asked whether the parish council might be amenable to taking over the management of the allotment site, which had been managed for many years in an informal way by a former parish councillor. The Clerk had informed Savills that she would put the informal proposal to the parish council and had requested that Savills put their proposal in writing to be formally considered.

23.09.09 Recreation Ground

To consider a report from Cllr Raithatha, brought forward from last month, regarding a quotation from Redlynch for the repair of the rubber matting in the playground and to agree a course of action.

The subject was deferred until the next meeting of the Council.

23.09.10 Gazeley Village Green.

a) **Proposal:** To formally dispense with the services of Greene & Greene Solicitors, who were instructed to negotiate a Public Access Licence Agreement with the owner of the forge on behalf of Gazeley Parish Council, thus revoking **Resolution 23.3.8** on the matter.

The Resolution was not revoked.

b) To review an alternative Public Access Licence Agreement, produced by Cllr Connelly, which had been signed by the Chairman and Mr Wiseman on 26th July 2023.

Cllr Chapman noted that the Licence Agreement had already been approved by Gazeley Parish Council. In reply, Cllr Judy Moatt replied that she had never agreed to it, or even seen it, until the Clerk gave her a copy of it after it had already been signed. Cllr Chapman insisted that the matter had been discussed but the Clerk confirmed that the proposal to cast aside the agreement that had been drafted by Greene & Greene and to proceed with Cllr Connelly's version of a licence agreement had never been on the agenda of a parish council meeting. Councillors may have discussed it outside the meeting but it had merely been announced at the July meeting, in reply to a question from a member of the public, that Cllr Connelly and the Chairman had met Mr Wiseman and had given him a copy of the agreement to sign. Neither the Clerk nor Cllr Judy Moatt had been included in any discussions on the matter. However, **it was resolved** that the new licence agreement should be ratified by a majority vote of the Council.

The Clerk noted that as she was the Council's Proper Officer, she should have been instructed to correspond with Mr Wiseman on behalf of the parish council rather than Cllr Connelly. She was told that Mr Wiseman had refused to deal with her because she was part of the 'old Council.'

It was resolved that Mr Wiseman should be asked to communicate via the Clerk in future.

23.09.11 Planning Matters

To consider planning application DC/23/1374/HH – Single storey side extension following part demolition of shared garage and alterations to existing driveway. 27 Mill View, Gazeley.

No objections were raised to the proposal.

23.09.12 Community Emergency Plans

To consider formulating an emergency plan for Gazeley.

Mrs Janet Mason-Kinnon was invited to speak to the meeting as she had some experience in formulating community response teams from work she had done in the United States. She outlined the type of emergencies that could occur in a community such as Gazeley. Apart from a catastrophic accident like a plane crash, there could be flash flooding because of a severe weather event, loss of power and water and loss of a communications network. She noted that we are not legally obliged to create a plan and that there was no funding available for the purpose. It would be useful to liaise with other local villages.

It was resolved that Cllrs Raithatha, Jolly and Connelly would help to set up a chain of communication in the village.

23.09.13 Councillors' Reports

Cllr Chapman confirmed that all the Council's grit bins had been inspected by him and they were in a fit condition to receive new deliveries of grit.

Cllrs Raithatha and Grimwood gave apologies in advance for the next meeting of the Council.

23.09.14 To note items for inclusion on the next agenda or for publication on social media.

The matter of dog mess on the playing field had again been raised on the Community Facebook page. The Clerk will draft a notice for the Gazeley Gazette.

23.09.15 To confirm that the next meeting of Gazeley Parish Council is scheduled to take place on Monday 9th October 2023 at 7.30pm in Gazeley Village Hall. Refreshments will be provided from 7.00pm.

The meeting closed at 9.35pm.

Signed.....
Chairman

Date.....

Statement of Accounts – September 2023

Payments

| | |
|------------------------------------|-----------|
| S.P. Landscapes, July | £ 132.00 |
| West Suffolk Council, Election fee | £1,123.00 |
| SALC Councillor Training | £ 72.00 |
| Mr P. Jaye, Grass Cutting | £ 645.00 |
| S.P. Landscapes August | £ 132.00 |
| SALC Councillor Training | £ 216.00 |

Total **£2,320.90**

Receipts

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|----------------------|-----------|
| Bank interest July | £ 19.01 |
| Bank interest August | £ 20.86 |
| HMRC VAT refund | £1,008.95 |

Total **£1,048.82**

Balance of Accounts at 10.8.23

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|------------------------|-------------|
| Treasurer's Account | £ 7,413.27 |
| Instant Access Deposit | £ 29,027.92 |

Total Balance of Accounts **£ 36,441.92**

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