

**SAHAM TONEY PARISH COUNCIL
MINUTES OF A MEETING HELD ON 4TH DECEMBER 2023**

A meeting of the Parish Council was held on the 4th December 2023 at 7.30 p.m. at the Wells-Cole Community Centre, Saham Toney.

Present – Mr. J. Baldwin in the Chair supported by Messrs N. Creek, R. Harrold, L. Rees-Murphy, S. Rees-Murphy, G. Morton and A. Wilson, Ms. K Avery and Ms. M. Baldwin. Ms H. Crane and Mr. P. Bate (District Councillors) were also present.

Fifteen parishioners were present.

1. Apologies for Absence: Apologies received and accepted from Councillor D. Freeman and Mr. E. Connolly (County Councillor).

2. To Receive declarations of Interest from Members on Items on the Agenda: There were no declarations of interest in the Agenda items.

3. To Confirm the Minutes of the Meeting held on the 6th November 2023 and the Budget Meeting on the 22nd November 2023: The Minutes of both meetings were proposed by Mr. N. Creek and seconded by Mr. R. Harrold and unanimously agreed.

4. To report matters arising from the minutes:

- Repairs to the Council's shed at the Community Centre – Mr. Morton hopes to do this before the next meeting.
- Dog Signs for the Playing Field and Community Centre land – invoice has been paid but the signs have not yet been received – Clerk has queried. Ms. H. Crane will enquire as to why the signs have not been received.
- Traffic Calming Measures for Saham – Clerk has contacted Highways re the difference in speed limits between Hale Road, Ashill and Ovington Road, Saham Toney but they said the make-up of the road is not the same.
- Defibrillator for Hills Road – The Council has been awarded a match funding grant of £750 and the cheque has been sent so we are just waiting for confirmation of delivery. An electrician will be needed and the defib has to be installed within 4 weeks from receipt.
- Road sign missing on Richmond Road – Clerk has reported again.
- Quote for work for central reservation at the Community Centre – on Agenda.
- Pot holes in Ploughboy Lane – some have been repaired.
- Capping Stones – This work is scheduled for the 4th/5th December.
- Walk around took place on the 19th November and several houses were sent letters asking pointing out their responsibilities as riparian owners. Replies have been received from three parishioners. Highways have also said they will not clear the ditches on Cley Lane as it is responsibility of the landowners. The Clerk suggested that councillors meet with the owners of these properties to ascertain who is responsible for the various ditches. A meeting will be arranged in January.

- Highways have inspected the culverts at the junction of Ploughboy Lane with Hills Road and say they are clear. They will jet the pipes if the ditches either side of the ford are cleared. The ditch behind the properties in Hills Road have been cleared presumably by the landowner after the Clerk contacted his representative.
- Bird Sanctuary new entrance – update under Reports. □ Financial update from the Wells-Cole – under Reports
- Village Gateways – on the Agenda.

5. Reports from District/County Councillors: Ms H. Crane reported as follows: -

At Cabinet on Monday 27th November, it was resolved to approve the Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme for those on a low income, whilst maintaining the principal that everyone contributes at least a small amount to council tax. I would like to make residents aware of this fund that is available for those residents that are in financial hardship. The scheme will be maintained for year 24/25. Local plan update - Approval was given to undertake further public consultation over an 8 week period, normally this would be 6 as set out in legislation but because it is going to take place over the Christmas and New Year period an extension of 2 weeks has been given. There will be Commonplace portal content and surveys, Community placed events, and community virtual events. There will also be 3 youth events in January and February in Watton Swaffham and Thetford. An important element of the full update of the local plan will be the settlement hierarchy and allocation of sites for development along with addressing whether or not the plan should continue to have settlement boundaries or be led by particular local need. The document will also include an assessment of the sites promoted under the call for sites process. This document does not imply the suitability or otherwise of sites and does not allocate sites. The following consultation documents are:

- Breckland Local development plan
- Settlement and countryside paper
- Breckland Local Service Centre topic paper
- A call for sites summary.

The Breckland design guide is also out for consultation.

I was very pleased to be able to plant the first tree, an Oak at Oxburgh Hall. 2400 trees will be planted by volunteers. This is a joint project, with the National Trust providing the land and Breckland Council the trees.

The Police and Crime commissioner for Norfolk has secured over £900,000 of safer street funding from the home office. The allocation of funding towards employing new Breckland Street Wardens will help to ensure a secure and vibrant local community for residents and businesses.

Mr. P. Bate reported as follows: -

At the BDC meeting on 2 November the labour group were raising questions on housing. In particular they were concerned with disabled grants and the waits for assessment. The answer was given that things were improving. There were also questions on mould in houses and the issuing of enforcement notices. There was no response to these questions because time was needed to find out the required information.

The independent and green group asked why BDC does not have an ethical investment policy as much of council money is invested in Qatar and Abu Dhabi. The answer to this question was that

investment policy was agreed by the Council. A follow up question was, should the Council decide upon an ethical investment policy. This will be looked at.

There was also interest in development on the Dereham hospital, no information at present.

Mr. E. Connolly had provided a Parish Update which will be on the Council's website.

6. Time allocated for members of the public to speak (maximum 20 minutes): The Chair of the Allotment Association presented a paper and provided photographs and videos of the recent flooding. In 2008 there was sufficient demand in the village for allotments and the Parish Council leased a plot land in Cley Lane from the Fuel Trust. The Council pays the Fuel Trust £250 with the Allotment Association paying back £150 of this to the Council. The allotments are enjoyed by people across the age range and 50% are ladies. As a result of flooding on several occasions, members have given up their plots as many months of hard work is destroyed and they do not want to continue. It is estimated that in 2024, £260 will be lost from an estimated 12 plots out of a total of 29 that will be unusable due to flooding. The affected members who stay deserve a nil rent for 2024 and given the circumstances, the Association is asking the Parish Council to suspend their rental costs until the land is flood free for at least 3 continuous years. The Chair of the Allotments would like the site to be one to be proud of. This will be discussed on the Agenda under Allotments.

A parishioner said she is struggling to keep up to date with parish matters and didn't know the names of councillors and would like them to introduce themselves at the start of meetings. She wants to be part of what is happening and was sad to hear about the allotments and knows how devastating flooding is as her house has been flooded. The Parish Council website now contains photos of most of the councillors and the Council will consider ways to improve communication between parishioners and the Council. A parishioner said that it would help if everyone wore their name badges even if it is not a legal requirement.

7. Correspondence:

- Email from a parishioner with various questions about commitment of councillors, names of councillors and layout of meeting. The Clerk has replied to this.
- Email from parishioner about free trees from NCC – the Council do not want any more free trees at present.

8. To Approve Accounts for Payment: The following cheque has been paid between meetings:

- Groundscape - £3630 – grounds maintenance for the Community Centra land and St. George's church for the past season.
- London Hearts - £900 – match funding payment for defibrillator grant (£750 + £150 VAT)

The following accounts are due for payment:

- Information Commissioner - £40 – Date Protection Fee
- Mrs. J.S. Glenn - £752.17 made up of Salary 544.93
 - Use of Home as Office 78.00
 - Postage stationery etc 23.05
 - Broadband 60.00
 - Materials to repair Play Park 16.23

Ink cartridges 29.98

- HMRC - £151.20 – Tax
- Mr. J. Baldwin - £170 – maintenance work in the parish

The payment of these accounts was proposed by Ms. K. Avery, seconded by Mr. L. Rees-Murphy and unanimously agreed.

9. To Consider Planning Matters: - Planning Refusal to Plan 3PL/2023/0966/HOU – single storey garage with carport at Laurel House, Ploughboy Lane. Planning Permission to Plan/2023/0953/F – proposed flat roof rear extension to existing dwelling and proposed annex ancillary to the main dwelling for a family member at 1 Hunts Farm; Plan 3PL/2023/0967/VAR Validation of conditions No.2 and No.13 at Meadow Farm, Chequers Lane.

Notification of a Certificate of Lawfulness for the proposed use for a new front porch at 90 Richmond Road which was not asking views as the application merely seeks a legal determination based on the scheme submitted and considered against the Town and Country Planning (Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015. Permission for this was received on the same day.

10. To agree a Budget and Set the Precept for 2024/25: - The draft Budget that was discussed at the Budget Meeting was agreed. The Chair proposed a Precept of £28,000 be set for 2024/25 – no increase on the current year – and this was unanimously agreed.

11. To discuss the Council's Biodiversity duty: - A model Policy had been received from NALC and the Clerk read out the main points. Under the 2021 Environment Act, Parish Councils must consider what they can do to conserve and enhance biodiversity. Parish Councils are not obliged to publish a report on their actions, but must complete their first consideration of what action to take for biodiversity by 1st January 2024. The NALC has provided a model Biodiversity Plan and the Chair proposed that the Council adopts this and this was unanimously agreed. Mr. A. Wilson suggested a sub-committee be formed to look into the Council's biodiversity and it was agreed to do this but to wait until Ms. K. Avery attends the NALC Biodiversity: Practical measures to help enhance local habitats and wildlife online course on the 9th February 2024. Mr. L. Rees-Murphy suggested Biodiversity could also be reported at the Parish Meeting in 2024.

12. To discuss the Flooding at the Entrance to the Community Centre: - Mr. N. Creek handed out a diagram of the drainage at the entrance to the Community Centre and explained the problem. When Trell had resurfaced the car park the drain had not been replaced. Mr. A. Wilson said he can do a drain survey and it was agreed to do this before contacting Trell. Mr. Wilson and Mr. Creek will meet to discuss this.

13. To Consider Moving the Public Participation Agenda item to the end of the Agenda: A request had been made by a parishioner at the last meeting to move the Public Participation Agenda item to the end of the Agenda. The Chair proposed that this would remain in its present position on the Agenda. Any items raised by parishioners would be included on the next Agenda.

14. To discuss work to the ditch and trees at the back of the Community Centre: The Chair said he had looked at this and it would not be possible to dig the ditch out by hand so a digger will be needed. It was agreed that whilst the digger is onsite it would make sense to tidy the whole area at the back of the Community Centre. A quote will be provided for the work to be done early next year.

15. To discuss quote for work to the central reservation at the back of the Community Centre land: The cost of this would not be more than £200 and it was agreed to accept this. The Chair said that cars (particularly from Slimming world) are parking on some of the grassed areas at the Community Centre. It was agreed that posts could be erected to prevent this with a view to planting a permanent hedge in due course. Mr. N. Creek said there is a place in Necton which supplies railway sleepers and these could be cut to make posts. Mr. L. Rees-Murphy will ask Slimming World members not to park on the grass.

16. To discuss Village Gateways with a possible grant from the Parish Partnership grant for 2024/25: It was agreed that the cost of providing even just two gateways on Richmond Road was unaffordable and that this would be looked at again next year. It was proposed by Mr. R. Harrold, seconded by Mr. A. Wilson and all in agreement that Mr. N. Creek gets a quote for another SAM2 camera and the Clerk will apply for a grant for this.

17. To discuss a Report from the Allotment Association regarding the effect of the recent flooding on the Allotment Site: Mr. A. Wilson said that the Council needs to look at water management to prevent the flooding. Mr. N. Creek said that the LLFA are working in the parish and next year the Cley Pit will be dug out to be used as a holding area to contain water and control the rate of flow. There may be another holding area on the Saham/Ashill Road but this needs the agreement of the landowner. Mr. R. Harrold said landowners adjacent to the Watton Brook need to clear their ditches. Mr. N. Creek will ask Steve Halls if he will come and look at the area and give advice.

The Chair proposed that the Council does not charge the Allotment Association rent for the next year and this was unanimously agreed.

The Chair of the Allotment Association asked that they be involved in any discussions about the allotments.

18. To receive Reports from: -

18.1 Wayland Partnership – Minutes of the meeting held on the 13th December 2023 have been circulated.

18.2 Wells-Cole Community Centre - Committee met on 23rd November - key items include update from the Chair on receiving letter from Barclays with reference to Dereham branch closing. This has given the push to transfer funds asap and the Chair and Mr. L. Rees-Murphy are looking into options. Otherwise, user groups continue and will finish mid-December for Christmas. Bar will close on Friday 22nd December and open again on Wednesday 3rd January, apart from the New Year's Eve party. Invoices are being paid into the new account and the Committee agreed to use a different accountant. The Treasurer has made contact to plan ahead in preparation for end of year (29 Feb 24) and AGM. The Council Chair read a financial update – there is a balance of

£11,220.48 in the General Account and £8,510.74 in the Maintenance Account. The accounts will be transferred to the new account once all the formalities have been completed.

18.3 Playing Field – No Playing Field meeting until January but with the closing of Barclays Dereham Mr. L. Rees-Murphy has suggested it might be an idea to try a different bank but this won't be discussed until the next meeting.

18.4 Wells-Cole Trust Fund – The balance on the account is £33108.68.

18.5 Play Park Inspector – All in good order.

18.6 Bird Sanctuary - Due to the wet weather we haven't been able to get on site to do anymore tidying. After receiving our letter regarding moving the entrance, the Fuel Trustees met on site. There were no objections and it was agreed in principle this could be done. The committee will arrange a meeting in the near future to discuss the plans, it will then be put to the full council and finally a meeting with the trustees for approval.

18.7 Any Other Reports – there were no other reports.

19. Items for the next agenda (not for discussion): The following items are to be on the January Agenda – Adoption of the emergency Plan; Work to the area at the back of the Community Centre and Wearing of Name Badges and Introductions at meetings.

20. To confirm the date and time of the next Parish Council Meeting –Monday the 8th January 2024 at 7.30 at Wells-Cole Community Centre, Bell Lane.

The Meeting closed at 9.00 p.m.

Parish Matters

Ms. K. Avery said a final call for volunteers will be put out on Facebook before the Emergency Plan is agreed at the next meeting. A small handout will be provided to all households and the format will be agreed at the next meeting.