

GAZELEY PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Meeting of Gazeley Parish Council held on Tuesday 8th March 2022 in Gazeley Village Hall at 7.30pm

Present: Cllr Paul Beard (PB) (Chair), Cllr Ray Francis (RF), Cllr Wesley Heaton (WH), Cllr Pat Spillane (PS), Cllr Robert Connelly (RC), and Cllr Judy Moatt (JM).

In attendance Lynne Francis, Parish Clerk, District Councillor Roger Dicker and 5 members of the public.

The meeting was opened by the Chairman, Cllr Paul Beard. who welcomed everyone to the meeting and indicated the exit routes from the building in case of an emergency.

22.3.1	<p>Public Forum</p> <p>Churchwarden Simon Gash rose to protest at the clerk's failure to provide him with copies of the parish council's draft budget and balance of accounts before the meeting.</p> <p>The clerk replied that the balance of accounts figure would be misleading at this stage of the year as the account had yet to be reconciled with several payments still uncleared. The AGAR is published on the parish council's website after the conclusion of the annual audit.</p> <p>Another resident referred to a request for a donation towards maintenance of All Saints' Churchyard and asked the parish council not to reduce the award for this year.</p> <p>It was brought to the council's notice that the village speedwatch group is now up and running with four volunteers fully trained to operate the equipment. They became operational from 7 March and will be training other members of the group of 15 volunteers and it has been recommended that they operate twice a month. The organiser was thanked for her hard work in setting up the group and the parish council will liaise with her on the installation of speedwatch signs to be placed on posts in the village.</p>
22.3.2	<p>Reports from External Bodies</p> <p>i) West Suffolk District Council – Cllr Roger Dicker noted that Council Tax demands had now been issued. Residents in the former Forest Heath district have seen an increase of 6% and residents of the former St Edmunds district have had their bills increased by 1%, the difference is explained by a levelling-up of council tax contributions over the whole West Suffolk district.</p> <p>The cabinet has executed a U-turn on its decision to require all taxis to be wheelchair friendly. Discussions are on-going on the question of Newmarket and Bury St Edmunds taxis working together across the district. There are also discussions on the possibility of extending the life of a working taxi from 10 years to 15 years.</p> <p>There is to be a march from Mildenhall to Worlington at 1100 on Sunday 20th March, fronted by MP Matthew Hancock, in protest against the proposed Sunnica Solar Farm which would cover 2,800 acres of arable farm land on the borders of Suffolk and Cambridgeshire.</p> <p>ii) Suffolk County Council – Cllr Colin Noble had sent apologies. He had to attend an alternative meeting but had sent a monthly report which was forwarded to councillors.</p>
22.3.3	<p>To receive apologies for absence.</p> <p>Apologies were received from Cllr Kevin Grimwood.</p>

22.3.4	<p>To receive declarations of interest, pecuniary and non-pecuniary, in matters on the agenda.</p> <p>WH declared an interest in item 7ii on the agenda with respect to a request for a grant from Moulton Pre-School and PS declared an interest in the Queen's Platinum Jubilee donation request as he is a member of the committee.</p>
22.3.5	<p>To approve the minutes of the meeting of GPC held on Tuesday 8th February 2022</p> <p>The minutes were approved unanimously and signed by the chairman.</p>
22.3.6	<p>Clerk's Report on outstanding issues and any correspondence to be brought to the attention of the parish council.</p> <p>The clerk had received a report on the hearing into the appeal against the demolition order on the Blacksmith's Forge. The case has been adjourned until 2nd April to allow for the current owner to submit required documents.</p> <p>The clerk reported that she had received an alert from the Land Registry of the pending purchase of the Blacksmith's Forge.</p> <p>21 Moulton Road – the clerk is in correspondence with planning officers with regard to the installation of a domestic oil tank on the front garden of the property.</p> <p>A new bench, dedicated to the memory of Mary Briggs, a former long-time resident of Gazeley and a former parish councillor, has been installed on land in front of Highwood Court by Mr Wybrow. Funding for the bench was supplied by the coffee morning team.</p> <p>The clerk had received reports of rats running all over the green. She had alerted Environmental Health and they had been disposed of.</p>
22.3.7	<p>Finance</p> <p>1 Authorisation of outstanding payments. The clerk presented the monthly finance report which is attached to the minutes.</p> <p>2 To consider requests for donations under Section 137 LGA 1972. The chairman regretted that this years process had been a very emotive subject. To help alleviate similar problems from now on WH suggested budgeting for a fixed portion of the budget for all community funding and to set a limit for individual applications. All councillors agreed that this was a sensible suggestion and this will be discussed further at the Annual Meeting of the Parish Council in May.</p> <p>The parish council has received four requests from village organisations for donations this year. During deliberations of the budget for the forthcoming year, councillors had recognised the impact on local households of increasing inflation and higher fuel costs and the consequent need to keep the precept as low as possible this year whilst still doing their best to support local organisations.</p> <p>It was therefore agreed to award the following donations for the year 2022-2023: All Saints' Churchyard Maintenance, £600; Moulton Pre-School, £250; Suffolk Accident Rescue Service, £100; Gazeley Events Committee, £250 for the Queen's Platinum Jubilee celebrations. RC registered his objection to the lowering of the amount awarded to All Saints' Church from £800 to £600 this year.</p> <p>There was a discussion on the budget process this year with some members of the public suggesting that the parish council had broken the law in deciding the amount of the precept before fixing the budget.</p>

	<p>The clerk explained that the parish council had agreed that a 5% increase in the amount of the precept should be the maximum this year because many families will experience extreme hardship with the rise in energy, fuel and other local taxes. It was felt that there were sufficient funds in reserve to cope with any increases in bills for the coming year and we had subsequently been warned of a 70% increase in our bill for streetlight maintenance and energy costs. This had been a particularly difficult year in which to assess a likely increase in the budget and the parish council would therefore be obliged to cut its coat according to its cloth.</p> <p>Until this year, the parish council has always fixed the budget before applying for the precept but it has been recognised that this year has been something of an anomaly so hopefully the process will be much easier next year when the usual process will be followed.</p>
22.3.8	<p>Highway Matters</p> <p>It was noted that the new posts for the solar-powered SID have not yet been installed. Suffolk Highways have a 14 week period in which to install them once the sites have been approved.</p>
22.3.9	<p>Blacksmiths Forge</p> <p>To review the current situation.</p> <p>As the clerk had given an update on the current situation in her report, there was nothing further to add. The solicitor for WSC is keeping her fully informed of events.</p>
22.3.10	<p>Councillors' Reports</p> <p>JM noted that there was to be a meeting of the Village Hall Committee next week, the first for some time.</p> <p>PS reported that the pub was very busy with last July being the best month ever. He is still working on the refurbishment of the footpath sign for the Three Churches Walk.</p> <p>RF reported that he had attended the recent virtual meeting of the Parish and Town Forum. Among other things, the Queen's Jubilee Celebrations had been discussed with representatives from other villages reporting on preparation in their area. He had learned that Gazeley will be unaffected by changes in councillor numbers despite the increase in new developments in the district.</p> <p>WH regretted that discussions on Section 137 payments had descended into acrimony this year and that he had been very disappointed with the behaviour of some people. Councillors give their time freely to discuss parish matters, in spite of other commitments, and he felt that this wasn't always appreciated.</p>
22.3.11	<p>To confirm the date of the next meeting of the parish council.</p> <p>The date of the next meeting was confirmed as Tuesday 12th April 2022 in the village hall.</p> <p>The meeting closed at 8.30pm.</p>

Signed.....
Chairman

Date.....

PAYMENTS & RECEIPTS**MARCH****2022**

Payments	Amount	Cheque No.	Receipts	Balance
S.P. Landscapes	£1111.00	1236		
	£			
Elan City, SID	2,725.92	1237		
I. Francis Rent of Office Sept-March	£104.00	1238		
	£			
SALC Payroll Service	54.00	1239		
	£			
SCC Lighting and Energy	2,080.49	1240		
	£			
Mrs S.Prigg Replacement cheque	40.00	1241		
	£			
Mrs L. Francis, Microsoft Licence	59.00	1242		
Receipts				
Interest			£ 0.15	
	£5,174.41		£ 0.15	
Balance of Accounts				
			£	
Treasurer's Account 1			3,856.79	
			£	
Treasurer's Account 2			80.43	
Instant Access Account			£19,032.26	
Total Balance of Accounts at 9.2.22				£22,969.48

8.3.22

