

Acton Parish Council

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Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held at 7:00pm on Wednesday 17 January 2024 in Acton Village Hall

Present: Councillors (Cllrs) Nick Antill, Roberta Caradine, Eleanor Clark, Carol Dyer, John Gibbens, Christine Johnson, Steve Le Grys, Katie McSweeney, Graham Round (chairman)

In attendance: County Cllr Phillip Faircloth Mutton, Sergeant Oliver Williams, Fiona Mullins (clerk), Sadie Clark (assistant clerk) and 2 members of the public.

Minutes

Apologies and welcomes

- 1(i) There were no apologies.
- 1(ii) Cllrs resolved to co-opt the following committee members for the Acton Field Trust: Cllr John Gibbens, Jenny Antill, Julie Black and Barry Caradine. Cllr Christine Johnson and Cllr Nick Antill are already committee members. Cllr Graham Round stood down from the committee. AIF

Minutes

- 2(i) Cllrs resolved to agree the minutes of the meeting held on 22 November 2023. AIF.
The minutes were signed by the chairman.

Declaration of interest

- 3(i) There were no declarations of interest or requests for a dispensation.

District, County and Community reports

- 4(i) County Cllr Faircloth Mutton reported that Suffolk County Council's proposed 2024/25 budget (still to be decided) will increase the tax of a Band D property by £1.43 extra per year. The airfield PRoW paths are still expected to be approved. Cllr Faircloth Mutton can help to get highways to prioritise actions so please raise incidents with him. The parish council needs to request funding support for the Cuckoo Tye memorial bench before end March. Cllr McSweeney asked about potholes on Queensway. These have been reported. Cllr Faircloth Mutton will follow up. Cllr Gibbens asked about Barrow Hill leaks and drains causing icy conditions. The water company blocked the road to repair the leak. The main issue is the drains. Highways has confirmed it does not meet their intervention criteria. Cllr Faircloth Mutton has asked a Highways officer to look into this as a priority. Cllr Faircloth Mutton would contribute £2,500 towards a 50:50 split of the cost of a permanent additional digital speed sign for Melford Road.
- 4(ii) District Cllr John Nunn sent his written report which was circulated to Cllrs before the meeting.
- 4(iii) Sergeant Ollie Williams from the community policing team briefed the meeting on the new way of working with a focus on addressing long term issues that affect the community, work with schools,

following up community intelligence, better links to the parish council, more accessible to residents, working in partnership with other agencies. Acton, Waldingfield, Bures and Boxford are covered by one officer. Cllr Caradine noted that the High Street is a popular race track late at night. Sergeant Williams confirmed that with local knowledge the team can address this. Cllr Gibbens asked what contact method is best for non-urgent issues. Sergeant Williams advised reporting things online and left contact details for the beat officer Steven Coughlan.

Clerk's report

- 5(i) Cllrs noted the clerk's report on significant matters not on the agenda and not already drawn to councillors' attention and also noted residents' concerns about Barrow Hill drains and leak and Babergh Close trees.
- 5(ii) Cllrs noted the following decisions had been taken under delegated powers since the last meeting:
- Suffolk Tree Services removed dead branches from Jennens Way Lime Trees as these posed a serious risk to pedestrians £4,750+VAT

Public Forum

- 6 Members of the public commented as follows:
- (i) A resident offered to support the Acton Field Trust as she walks the field daily and can report any issues.
- (ii) A resident asked for a white line at the end of the Tamage Road estate. This has been reported to Highways and Cllr Faircloth Mutton offered to chase.
- (iii) A resident noted that the water company has repaired a mains water leak on Barrow Hill which should reduce the risk of ice. She understands that historically a ditch ran down Barrow Hill which at some point was piped. The pipe may have been breached. A drain worker has told her that the drains are old, have degrading joints so tree roots get in and block them. There is also run-off from the field that is also coming down the road.

Planning

- 7(i) Cllrs considered the following planning applications:
- a
- DC/24/00046 The Old Vicarage, Vicarage Lane. Application for Listed Building Consent. Refurbishment of domestic outbuilding to enable conversion to home office and store. Cllrs agreed to follow the guidance of the heritage officer. AIF
- 7(ii) Cllrs noted planning application validations, parish council recommendations and local planning authority decisions made since the last meeting.
- 7(iii) Cllrs noted that the Acton Neighbourhood Development Plan has been approved for independent examination but there is a 2 week delay for focussed consultation on changes in the recently published National Planning Policy Framework. The Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group (NPSG) will meet on 18 January to review the changes and any impact on the Acton Neighbourhood Development Plan. The NPSG will respond to the consultation before the closing date of the 26 January 2023.

Environment

- 8(i) Cllrs reviewed the Christmas event held on 1 December, thanked Bradley Smith the STC community wardens manager for his contribution to the event and asked Cllrs McSweeney and Clark to bring a proposal for Christmas 2024 to a future meeting. AIF
- 8(ii) Cllr Le Grys spoke to his written report on the wildlife reserve. Cllrs agreed to ask local volunteers to do a survey of wildlife and plants and agreed additional budget of £580 for identified maintenance work on the paths, trees and hedges by W. Hickford. AIF
- 8(iii) Cllrs agreed W. Hickford's grass cutting quotation for 2024/25 including nettles on Marsh Walk if needed. AIF
- 8(iv) Cllrs asked the clerk to write to the Diocese to clarify that the parish council has not surveyed or maintained the Church Drive trees as part of its ongoing tree maintenance this year but is prepared to contribute to the cost and would like to discuss options for future maintenance.

Finance

- 9(i) Cllrs reviewed actual compared to budgeted expenditure for 2023/24. AIF

Acton Parish Council				
Expected to 31				
Payments	Budget 2023/24	March	Budget 2024/25	Notes
Administration				
Community event	500.00	600.00	600.00	Christmas event
Newsletter	500.00	500.00	600.00	more pages/higher quality
Elections	175.75	175.75	100.00	possible but unlikely
Subscriptions	950.00	850.00	950.00	unchanged
Training and Publications	2,000.00	500.00	2,000.00	unchanged
Neighbourhood Plan (grant funded)	-	0.00	-	no longer needed
Audit	800.00	746.40	850.00	unchanged
Administration	4,900.00	3,500.00	3,500.00	extra costs in 2023
Room hire	900.00	702.00	900.00	unchanged
Insurance	1,000.00	1,000.00	1,000.00	unchanged
Chairmans expenses	60.00	60.00	60.00	unchanged
Bank charges	-	-	-	unchanged
Total Administration	11,785.75	8,634.15	10,560.00	
Staff costs				
Staff costs	23,200.00	23,200.00	25,000.00	see salary calcs
Total Staff costs	23,200.00	23,200.00	25,000.00	
Environment				
Paths maintenance	500.00	500.00	600.00	active vol group
Hedge and Tree maintenance	3,100.00	2,000.00	3,000.00	includes 3 yr inspection
Community wardens	3,500.00	3,500.00	3,500.00	unchanged
Other environmental costs	2,500.00	3,500.00	2,500.00	unchanged
Play Area Maintenance	1,200.00	1,200.00	1,200.00	unchanged
Refuse collection	1,700.00	2,250.00	2,300.00	as quoted
Health and Safety inspections	110.00	119.40	150.00	ageing equip
Wildlife Reserve	1,000.00	1,000.00	1,500.00	new management contract
Total Environment	13,610.00	14,069.40	14,750.00	
Street lighting				
Street lighting - electricity	7,400.00	2,000.00	2,000.00	contract (to be confirmed)
Streetlight Maintenance	400.00	400.00	450.00	contract (to be confirmed)
Total Street lighting	7,800.00	2,400.00	2,450.00	

Other				
Grants	500.00	600.00	600.00	requests from valued service
Closed churchyard maintenance	1,100.00	1,050.00	1,100.00	unchanged
Allotments	100.00	100.00	100.00	unchanged
Donations	3,300.00	2,836.00	3,300.00	requests from valued service
Fixed Assets	1,000.00	2,064.09	0.00	from CIL reserve
CIL Payments	-	0.00	0.00	from CIL reserve
VAT on payments (reserve items)	3,000.00	0.00	7,000.00	similar to prev year
Total Other	9,000.00	6,650.09	12,100.00	
Net expenditure from reserve funds		38,637.74		unknown
Total Payments		93,591.38	64,860.00	
Expected to 31				
Receipts	Budget 2023/24	March	Budget 2024/25	
Other Receipts				
VAT Repayments	3000	4,607.18	7,000.00	same as payments
Community Infrastructure Levy		18,116.19	0.00	none expected
Other grants or donations		350.00	350.00	unchanged
Allotment rents	200	305.00	300.00	unchanged
Bank interest	700	627.17	700.00	unchanged
Other income	20	20.00	20.00	unchanged
Total Other Receipts	3,920.00	24,025.54	8,370.00	
Precept				
Precept	53,000.00	53,000.00	56,000.00	
Total Precept	53,000.00	53,000.00	56,000.00	
Total Receipts	56,920.00	77,025.54	64,370.00	
Surplus / (deficit)		-16,565.84	-490.00	

- 9(ii) Cllrs resolved to agree the 2024/25 budget (Appendix 5) with expected payments of £64,860 and expected income of £8,370 (aside from the precept). AIF
- 9(iii) Cllrs resolved to agree the 2024/25 parish precept of £56,000 which is a 3.41% increase compared to last year for a "Band D" council tax payer and ask the clerk to complete the precept form and return it to Babergh District Council before 31 January 2024. AIF
- 9(iv) Cllrs reviewed the reserve funds and approved transfers. AIF

Governance

- 10(i) Cllrs resolved to adopt a revised governance document for the Acton Field Trust (Appendix 7). AIF
Cllrs asked the clerk to sign the Trustee Eligibility Declaration on behalf of Acton Parish Council as sole trustee of the charity. AIF
- 10(ii) Cllrs agreed to make a grant to the Acton Field Trust of £600 in order to reach the required revenue threshold of £5,000 for the Trust to be registered as a charity. AIF
- 10(iii) Cllrs resolved to consider a report on the Acton Playing Fields and Village Hall management committee in closed session due to the confidential nature of the business to be conducted. AIF
- 10(iv) Cllrs agreed the dates for parish council meetings in 2024/25. AIF

Councillors' reports and items for future agendas

- 11(i) Cllr Dyer requested an additional noticeboard for the new estate should be a future agenda item.

- 11(ii) Cllr McSweeney questioned whether the hedge trimmings from the allotment work might be affecting the Barrow Hill drainage issue.
- 11(iii) Cllr LeGrys suggested photos and promotion of the new play equipment on the website.
- 11(iv) Cllr Gibbens reported that the new path to Lime Tree Green is very muddy and asked for this to be brought up at a future meeting.
- 11(v) Cllr McSweeney asked whether a set of table tennis bats and balls could be at the shop for a small deposit and advertise this on the website.

In accordance with section 1(2) of the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act Cllr Round closed the meeting to the public to go into private session to consider item 10(iii)

Closed session

- 10(iii) Cllr Round briefed Cllrs on the Acton Playing Fields and Village Hall management committee. Cllrs asked Cllr Round to take forward with the committee the governance issues discussed by the parish council. The parish council is a corporate member of the committee and needs an effective management structure to be in place in order for the council to give future support.

The chairman closed the meeting at 8:40pm

Acronyms used:

AIF All in favour
BDC Babergh District Council
Cllr Councillor

Next meeting Wednesday 21 February 7pm