

BRANDESTON PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of a Meeting of the Council held at the Village Hall on Wednesday 20 January 2010

Present

Councillors D Risk (Chairman) (DR), H Saxton (HR), S Thurlow (ST), J Fielder (JF), P Summers (PS), K Churchill (KC) and W Elson (WE)
Parish Clerk and RFO A M Hounsell
PCSO C Hassler
Parish Historical Recorder Mrs W Woodland
Parishioners Mr N Hayward and Mr D Evans

1-0910/9 - Open discussion with members of the public who may be present

There was no discussion under this heading.

2-0910/9 – Reports from Cty Cllr Bellfield, Dist Cllr Snell and PCSO Hassler

Cty Cllr Bellfield was not present but had forwarded his report to the Clerk who advised as follows :-

Recent bad weather.

On the whole the Council performed well with the clearing and gritting of priority 1 roads (A and B roads plus a few well used C roads), but priority 2 roads were less well covered after the first week. This was because the forecast became “a prolonged spell of snow and ice” and the salt supply position was going to become critical. If you did have any major problems in the parish please let me know and I will pass your comments on. The weather has also played havoc with the road surfaces. Please report potholes to East Area Highways at Saxmundham giving as precise a position as possible and the depth of the hole, over 5 cms. will be dealt with as quickly as possible.

Local Government Reorganisation

The District Councils, having lost their appeal, are now considering whether they should request permission to appeal to the Supreme Court (old House of Lords).

This they will do as a delaying action in the hope that the implementation of the Government's expected wish to introduce a Unitary Council can be postponed until after a general election. Meanwhile the Ministry of Communities and Local Government has put forward proposals for discussion to each of the Councils in Suffolk to hold elections for the new Unitary Councils, if that is the Minister's decision, this May and that those elected would act as a shadow council for one year and take over in April 2011. We await further news on this long running saga!

Council Performance

Last month we had the result of our first Comprehensive Area Assessment (the latest name of performance judging by the Audit Commission) and received *** and “performing well”. Although this is one star down on previously we were told that we had done better than last year but that the Government had raised the criteria for attaining four stars. We also received 3 green flags for excellence in three particular areas, more than any other council in the country. In addition, the Council has been short-listed for three awards under the headings of “the Greenest County” and “e-government” We must be doing some things right, or at least better than many other councils!

Pension Fund

There has recently been general comment in the national press and specific to Suffolk in the local press about employer pension fund contributions because of the deficit on most funds and the effect it will have on Council Tax levels. While the local press comment has been correct when it has said that the employer contribution would have to rise from 19% of salary to 31% when using the valuation criteria of three years ago, part of that criteria is now believed to be inappropriate. As Chairman of the Pension Fund Committee I do not expect more than a minimal rise at worst when we have the result of our next valuation later this year and which will have to be applied from April 2011. I think, therefore, that pension fund cost will not have a significant adverse effect on the council tax level from April 2011.

2010/11 Council Tax rise

Next year's tax increase has not been agreed yet, but I do not expect it to be above 3%.

Dist Cllr Snell was not present but had forwarded his report to the Clerk who advised as follows :-

1. Local government reorganisation

On 2 December the Court of Appeal found in favour of the BCE and set aside the High Court decision to quash the further draft proposals for Suffolk.

Following the judgement, on 7 December the BCE issued its final recommendations to the Government, giving the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government two choices – its preferred option of one giant council for all of Suffolk (the so-called One Suffolk option) or an Ipswich/Felixstowe unitary (the so-called North Haven option) along with a Rural Suffolk unitary council covering the rest of the county.

Now it is up to the Secretary of State to decide whether to:

- implement the original (Ipswich Borough Council) proposal, with or without modification.
- implement the Committee's alternative proposal (as published on 7 December), with or without modification.
- take no action.

The Government also announced the timetable for people to give their comments to the Secretary of State on the BCE's final recommendations – the deadline for comments is Tuesday 19 January, giving everyone just six weeks to make their comments. The Government had previously intended to allow nine weeks for consultation because 'there has been a range of diverse views about possible unitary structures and sometimes contentious debate'. However, the shorter deadline was justified by the Department of Communities and Local Government on the basis it would still give enough time for Parliament to vote on the Secretary of State's final decision, and for it to be implemented from 1 April 2011.

The councils involved have expressed their disappointment and frustration that local democracy has taken a step backwards. The leaders of the councils (Forest Heath, St Edmundsbury and Suffolk Coastal) said: "We find it deeply frustrating, and extremely disappointing that there will now be no opportunity to make the Boundary Committee take the views of local people into account. Its advice to Ministers on the future shape of local government in the county will ignore the polling evidence which shows strong support for a proper consultation on three unitaries. The Boundary Committee is accountable to no-one. We, however, are accountable to our residents, and will continue working to ensure their voices are heard. We will now take some time to look at our next steps, whether that's appealing to the Supreme Court or taking our case directly to officials and Ministers in Whitehall."

2. Local Development Framework

It has been decided to submit the draft Core Strategy to one of the Council's Community, Customer and Partners Scrutiny Committee on 21 January 2010 to examine the proposals as part of the Council's wider policy framework.

The special meetings of Cabinet and Full Council that had been publicised for 14 December and 21 January have been rescheduled for 10 February and 8 March 2010 respectively.

All the meetings will be held at the Trinity Park Showground and will begin at 7pm and members of the public are welcome to attend.

3. Three bin roll out

The final phase of Suffolk Coastal's greener waste collection services is set to be rolled out to remaining homes in Suffolk Coastal this March, seeing every household in the district benefiting from improved recycling and waste collection services.

4. Refuse collections

SCDC contractors spent the first part of last week catching up with all the blue-lidded and grey-lidded bin collections that were missed on Thursday and Friday of the previous week because of the severe weather conditions as well as doing last week's scheduled collections.

Brown bin collections were suspended, as their contents were frozen into the bins and they will now be emptied (or have been emptied) on their next scheduled collection date, weather permitting.

All scheduled collections, including brown bins, should be back to normal this week.

PCSO Hassler reported to the Council as follows :-

He was pleased to advise that since his report of 13 October 2009, there had been no reported crime in Brandeston. He pointed out that he had carried out a number of speed checks in the area and one FPN and 2 verbal warnings had been given.

PCSO Hassler offered some crime prevention advice, stating that care should be taken to check and verify the identification of callers. There has been an incident in a neighbouring village of a male posing as a police officer wanting to check for counterfeit banknotes and making-off with a large sum of money. Any legitimate person presenting an ID card should be happy for verification of who they are. If not, close the door and call the police on 999 but do not tell them you are doing so.

PCSO Hassler advised that his contact details are telephone 01473 613500, caller no 3034, email: Christian.hassler@suffolk.pnn.police.uk

3-0910/9 – Formal Meeting Opening, Chairman's Welcome and Apologies for Absence

The Chairman then formally opened the meeting and welcomed Councillors and Parishioners. He confirmed receipt of apologies for absence from Dist Cllr Snell and Cty Cllr Bellfield.

4-0910/9 - To Receive Councillors' Declaration of Interest in Agenda Items

ST declared interest in agenda item 10 (i) and PS declared interest in item 6 (iii)

5-0910/9 - Minutes of Previous Meeting

The minutes of the meetings of 14 and 29 October 2009 were signed as a true record.

6-0910/9 - Matters arising from previous minutes

- (i) Possible purchase of generator (previous minute 6-0910/7 (iii))
After discussion, the Council agreed not to pursue this subject further.
- (ii) Parish Plan (previous minute 6-0910/7 (iv))
 - (a) Possible youth organisation - the Clerk advised that there had been no response to the Council's suggestion for the establishment of youth facilities in the village. The Council agreed not to progress the matter any further.
 - (c) Lights at Brandeston Hall – the Clerk advised that he had contacted Mr Payn at Brandeston Hall who had advised that two lighting specialists had been invited to advise on proposed lights for the car park area to achieve sufficient lux to ensure the children and parents can move safely in this area whilst preventing any excess light from escaping. Quotes for these replacement lights were awaited. Mr Payn has undertaken to will advise when this work will be carried out.
Mr Payn also advised that work for replacement lights on the tennis courts has not been pursued as this is addressed in the project for the tennis airhall.
The Clerk was instructed to respond to Mr Payn, thanking him for his advice of progress on the first item. The Council await developments on the airhall.
- (iii) Pending planning application at The Manse (previous minute 7-0910/7)
The Chairman advised that, after confirmation of no objection from neighbours, he had written to Mr and Mrs Summers stating that the Council supported the anticipated application. The Clerk stated that the formal application had now been made and the Council reaffirmed its support as expressed at the Council meeting of 14 October 2009. The Clerk was instructed to so advise SCDC.
- (iv) Local Development Framework (previous minute 8-0910/7)
The Clerk confirmed that he had advised SCDC that the Council's position in respect of the revised consultation proposals remained unchanged from those previously advised.
- (v) Risk Assessment and Guide to Information (previous minute 9-0910/7 (a) & (b))
The Clerk presented his proposals for these items for the Council's consideration. The Council accepted these and agreed that the Guide to Information be published on the website and that the Risk Assessment be considered at each future Council meeting.
- (vi) Planning applications C09/1509 (Old Wheelwrights) and C09/1290 (Brandeston Hall) (previous minute 3-0910/8)
The Clerk confirmed that he had advised SCDC, Planning that the Council supported application C09/1509 and he advised that the application had now been approved.
The Clerk also advised that he had requested from SCDC an explanation of how application C09/1290 had been approved despite the Council's objection and without consideration by the North Development Control Sub-committee. No explanation had been received. The Clerk agreed to continue to follow-up this matter.
- (vii) Planning applications C09/1291 and 1292 (Brandeston Hall) (previous minute 4-0910/8)
The Clerk confirmed that application C09/1291 had been approved without the conditions proposed by the Council. Again, this is an application considered against the Council's objections and without the consideration of the North Development Control Sub-committee.
The Chairman reported that he and the Clerk had attended the Development Control Sub-committee meeting at which application C09/1292 (Inflatable Airhall) had been considered. The Clerk had spoken very strongly against the proposal on behalf of the Council and the village. Despite these objections and those of English Heritage - and despite the fact that the development is in the grounds of a listed building and in a conservation area and in a special landscape area - the proposal for this 35 feet high white dome (clearly visible from outside the Hall grounds) had been approved. There was very little discussion within the Sub-committee and all the objections were brushed aside. The Council's suggestion of a site visit was not accepted. This current Council meeting reiterated its objections to this proposal and noted that once again the views of the Council had been rejected.

7-0910/9 – Planning

The Clerk advised that there were no further planning matters requiring consideration.

8-0910/9 - Report from Responsible Financial Officer (The Clerk)

The RFO advised of receipt of recycling credits of £15.42 (being the amount paid late – as advised by the RFO at the meeting of 14 October 2009)

The RFO then presented the current cashbook position showing the community account with a current balance of £4,558.11 and the 100+ account an unchanged balance of £1,416.14 both after accruals and allowance for future approved expenditures.

The Council agreed that the accounts remain satisfactory with income and expenditure within budget projections.

9-0910/9 - Budget Proposal from the RFO and Precept for 2010-2011

The RFO presented a budget proposal for 2010-11 showing a precept requirement reduced to £1,800. The budget and proposed precept (as attached) were accepted.

10-0910/9 - Financial Matters

The Council agreed payments as follows :-

- (i) £9.00 to Brandeston VH&RG for room hire for the next Council meeting at date to be agreed (see minute 13 – below)
- (ii) £247.00 for Clerk's office expenses for the year 2009-10.
The Council expressed its appreciation of the work done by the Clerk at no cost apart from the aforementioned office expenses.

11-0910/9 - Correspondence

There was no discussion under this heading

12-0910/9 - Any other business as may be raised and accepted as appropriate by the Chairman under Standing Order 16

(i) The Council noted the requirement under Schedule 12, para. 10(2)(b) of the Local Government Act of 1972, that summons to attend a meeting of the Council must be left at or sent by post to the usual place of residence of every member of the Council. The modern interpretation of the meaning of "left at" is that it includes an email to that address if the Council has so resolved. Accordingly, the Council resolved that emails will be satisfactory for the purpose of the Act.

(ii) HS advised that she had attended a meeting at Dennington with SCC regarding public transport. SCC had explained their concerns on how to sustain the current levels of transport within budget constraints and reducing levels of carbon emissions. Also discussed were ways to increase usage. SCC had introduced a survey and HS agreed to take this to the coffee morning at the village hall and other places.

(iii) ST advised that three of the village lunch team would be attending a food hygiene course at a cost of £225. She asked if the council would consider making a contribution towards the cost. After discussion, the council suggested a contribution of £100. Similarly, the council considered the annual village website hosting cost of approximately £58. The Clerk was instructed to add these items to the agenda for the next council meeting.

13-0910/9- Date of Next Meeting

Dates of the next meetings were confirmed as Wednesday, 24 March 2010 at 8.00 pm and Wednesday, 19 May for the Annual Council Meeting at 7.00 pm followed by the Annual Parish Meeting at 8.00 pm.

The meeting closed at 9.45 pm