

**STANSFIELD PARISH COUNCIL****Minutes of the meeting held on Monday 15<sup>th</sup> March 2021 via Zoom**

**Councillors present:** Sarah Hopkins (Chairman), Ed Cardozo, Fran Brown, Robert Dennis, John Underdown, Julie Ghirardani and Fay Gridley

**Also present:** Joanne Kirk (Clerk), District and County Councillor Mary Evans and 4 members of the public.

**Open Forum**

No issues were raised during the Open Forum.

**1. Acceptance of apologies for absence**

No apologies were received.

**2. Declaration of Interest in items on the agenda and dispensation requests**

No councillors declared an interest in any items on the agenda and no dispensation requests were received.

**3. Approval of minutes of the meeting held on Monday 18<sup>th</sup> January 2021**

One amendment was made to include apologies from Ed Cardozo who was unable to attend the January meeting. It was resolved that the minutes were correct. The chairman then signed them.

**4. County Councillor's and District Councillor's Report**

Mary Evans sent through a written report prior to the meeting. She spoke about the following:

- She will be resigning, and Mike Chester will be covering her role as district councillor until the May elections.
- She reminded people to continue being careful to reduce the risk of COVID infections increasing.

Ed Cardozo thanked Mary Evans for all her hard work as county and district councillor. She has given the Parish Council a huge amount of help and support over the years and this has been invaluable for the Parish Council.

**5. Village Hall update by Derek Adams**

He thanked the Parish Council for their donation of £180 in January. He updated the Parish Council on the Village Hall's progress to raise £36,000 for a new roof. They have received locality funding of £2,750 from Mary Evans and £2,600 from local residents. The Village Hall has £10,000 in reserve for the project. The scaffolding will be provided for free. They are also awaiting the outcome of a grant application for £20,000 from the Mick George Trust. They have been working with a local architect who has suggested a corrugated roof, but they will need to strengthen the roof structure first. They have benefited from bespoke fund raising advice from West Suffolk Council. The Bridge Club hopes to pledge some money and provide a Bridge Club representative for the Village Hall Committee. The Parish Council suggested a parish councillor could attend meetings on a rotational basis as well.

**6. Police issues**

No issues were raised.

**7. Update on list of actions agreed at the last meeting**

There was one outstanding councillor action.

**8. Finance****a) Approval of payments and signing of the Schedule of Payments**

It was resolved that the following payments would be approved:

- Risby Parish Council –  $\frac{1}{7}$  of cost of print cartridge - LGA 1972, s111 - **£6.18**
- J P Kirk - expenses - LGA 1972, s111 – **£1.83**

Robert Dennis and Fay Gridley agreed to check and sign the invoices along with the Schedule of Payments after the meeting. The chairman agreed to countersign it.

**b) Approval of payments authorised between meetings**

One payment was authorised between meetings: CAS additional insurance premium – LGA 1972, s111 - **£14.25**. It was resolved that this payment would be approved.

**c) Statement of receipts and payments made since the last meeting.****Receipts****Payments**

Risby Parish Council - shredding of PC documents	£6.67
Stansfield Village Hall - donation	£180.00
Staff costs as per confidential cashbook	

d) **Bank balances as of 28<sup>th</sup> February 2021 and confirmation of bank reconciliation**

Barclays current account	£3,111.82
Barclays reserve account	£3,004.51
<b>Total in Banks</b>	<b>£6,116.33</b>

Robert Dennis and Fay Gridley agreed to check and sign the bank statements after the meeting.

e) **Checklist of Internal Controls**

Fay Gridley completed the checklist of internal controls.

f) **Review of all regular payments including the clerk's salary and approval of payments relating to these services for 2021-22**

It was resolved the following regular payments would continue to be paid in 2021 - 22:

Payment	2020/21 - Amount ex VAT	2021/22 - Amount ex VAT
<b>Admin costs</b>		
Village Hall rental	£180	£180
Community Action Suffolk - Insurance	£176	£176
SALC subscription	£139	£139
Internal audit fee	£65	£65
Scribe accounting software	£58	£129
Risby Parish Council - phone costs	£24	£21
Stationery (print cartridges - shared cost)	£20	£20
CAS Ltd - website hosting fee	£50	£50
ICO - data protection fee	£35	£35
<b>Other payments</b>		
Consumables for defibrillator - amount may vary	£100	£100
West Suffolk Council - emptying of dog bins	£80	£80
<b>Staff costs</b>		
Staff costs as per confidential cash book (salary costs, PAYE and pension costs)		

g) **Councillor to review the confidential cashbook (PAYE and salary information)**

Fay Gridley reviewed the clerk's Confidential Cashbook and confirmed that the PAYE details and tax code were correct.

h) **Review of the income and expenditure for 2020/21 against the budget and the level of reserves for general and earmarked expenditure**

Councillors reviewed the income and expenditure for 2020/21 against the budget. At year-end Stansfield Parish Council will have a budget surplus of approximately **£1,396**. This includes locality funding for the Housing Needs Survey as the invoice has not been received yet.

The estimated reserve as of 31/03/22 is: **£5,847** which includes allocated funds of **£4,458**. The general reserve is within the guidelines of no more than one year's annual precept.

i) **Review the register of fixed assets and insurance values**

Councillors reviewed the assets register and confirmed that it was correct. No new assets were purchased in 2020/21:

The Parish Council's assets current value is **£10,380**. The insurance has been moved up into the next band of £10,001 – £20,000.

j) **Review of the Council's Risk Assessment**

It was resolved that no amendments were necessary. The Chairman then signed it.

**k) Review of insurance liability cover**

The levels of liability cover under the new Parish Protect Policy are as follows:

All Risks/	Public Liability	Officers Indemnity	Fidelity Guarantee (Dishonesty)	Business Interruption	Personal Accident	Employers' Liability
£5k	£10m	£1m	£25k	£5k	£25k	£10m

It was resolved that the levels of liability cover were adequate.

**l) Appointment of an internal auditor to complete the Internal Audit Report in the Annual Governance and Accountability Return 2020/21 and review of the effectiveness of the internal audit**

It was resolved that Cathy Whitaker, clerk to Exning Parish Council, would be appointed as internal auditor this year and that a fee of £65 would be paid. The Council reviewed the effectiveness of the internal audit.

It was resolved that the internal audit was effective and that audit regulations would be met for the following reasons:

- Does the internal audit sufficiently cover all aspects of the financial controls relevant to the council (for example risk management, detection of fraud, internal controls) and are terms of reference in place and approved? Yes. New Financial Regulations were adopted on 1st May 2014 to introduce procedures to detect fraud when using electronic banking. A checklist of internal controls is completed by a councillor at every meeting to verify payments on bank statements against actual payments as listed in the accounts to ensure that there are no discrepancies.
- Is the internal auditor independent (i.e. does not have any role within the Council)? Yes. The internal auditor does not have a role within the Council.
- Is the internal auditor competent to carry out their work ethically, with integrity and objectivity? Is there any evidence to suggest that this may not be the case? Yes, she is a parish council clerk and RFO for Newmarket Town Council. There is no evidence to suggest that she will not carry out the work ethically, with integrity and objectivity.
- Is the Responsible Officer consulted in the internal audit plan? Yes.
- Are the responsibilities of members of the Council understood and has the necessary training been undertaken? Yes
- Is there a plan in place for when the internal audit will be undertaken and does the plan properly take account of corporate risk? The internal audit will take place in April 2021 prior to the accounts being approved at the Annual Meeting on 24<sup>th</sup> May 2021. The internal auditor's report will be presented to the Parish Council at this meeting and any issues raised by the internal auditor will be discussed at the meeting and an action plan produced.

**m) To review the effectiveness of the Council's internal controls**

The following internal controls are in place:

- At each meeting a councillor checks bank statements against the Parish Council's accounts to ensure that transactions correspond and that the bank reconciliation agrees with the bank statement
- Where possible payments are approved at meetings and a Schedule of Payments is prepared which is checked by two councillors. Corresponding invoices are checked and signed by two councillors at the same time.
- Regular payments are approved at the March meeting and the invoices paid when they are received. These invoices are checked and signed by two councillors at the next meeting after they have been paid.
- The chairman rules off and signs the Schedule of Payments so that no amendments can be made after the meeting.
- Cheques must be signed by two signatories along with the corresponding invoice.
- A record of payments is kept and checked at each meeting.
- If a supplier changes their bank details, the supplier must supply a written hard copy notifying the change.

It was resolved that these controls are adequate and are working well.

**n) Appointment of a councillor to inspect the Council's property for damage or defects by 30th April 2021 and complete the inspection checklist.**

It was resolved that Sarah Hopkins would inspect the Council's property.

## 9. Planning

### a) DC/21/0325/FUL – The Retreat, Plough Hill – one dwelling with outbuilding

It was resolved that no objections would be made to this application

### b) Email from Anglian Water about plans for a new water pipeline - <http://www.anglianwater.co.uk/spa>

The clerk requested a detailed map from Anglian Water but received the following response:

*'We are still in the early stages of planning for the Bury St Edmunds to Haverhill pipeline. Once we have a map of an indicative route I will share this with you.'*

It was resolved that no further action would be taken at present.

### c) Email from NALC about a new Government consultation on changes to the National Planning Policy Framework and the creation of a National Model Design code

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/national-planning-policy-framework-and-national-model-design-code-consultation-proposals/national-planning-policy-framework-and-national-model-design-code-consultation-proposals>

The Government is planning to update the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) to incorporate some of the Government's housing white paper from 2020 aimed at creating beautiful places. It was resolved that no comments would be submitted.

## 10. Highways/Rights of Way issues/tree/transport issue

### a) VAS assessment

Locations have been found in Plough Hill and Upper Street. These will be submitted to Suffolk County Council, who will assess whether the locations are suitable.

### b) Update on the Quiet Lanes Project

Three routes have been accepted by Quiet Lanes Suffolk:

- The road from Stansfield down through Assington Green to the main Stansfield - Denston - Wickhambrook road.
- Assington Green via Gosland Green to Poslingford
- Thurston Lane starting just past the houses in Stansfield to the junction at Thurston Hall.

Poslingford and Denston Parish Councils have offered their support. Hawkedon Parish Council has also been consulted but do not wish to join the project at this stage. Consultation notices have been displayed. With the exception of one, all responses were in support of the project.

Money has been allocated to Quiet Lanes Suffolk (QLS) by Suffolk County Council. QLS have said that they will cover all signage costs and Stansfield Parish Council is waiting to hear back from QLS that they will fund any additional costs.

## 11. Update on the Housing Needs Survey

Due to staff absences at CAS this project was delayed a couple of months. The working group has requested that more information be included in the executive summary. The executive summary will be distributed after 29<sup>th</sup> March when the current lockdown restrictions have been eased.

## 12. Draft Scheme of Delegation

The National Association of Local Councils (NALC) has advised parish councils to have a Scheme of Delegation in place to mitigate the impact on meetings having to be cancelled in future due to COVID or any other reason to ensure that parish councils can continue to function effectively.

It was resolved that the Scheme of Delegation would be approved and uploaded onto the Parish Council website.

## 13. Dates of meetings in 2021/22

- Monday 24<sup>th</sup> May 2021 - Annual Meeting of the Parish Council followed by the Annual Parish Meeting – one week later because of the Bank Holiday
- Monday 19<sup>th</sup> July 2021
- Monday 13<sup>th</sup> September 2021
- Monday 15<sup>th</sup> November 2021
- Monday 17<sup>th</sup> January 2022
- Monday 21<sup>st</sup> March 2022

Remote meetings are only allowed until 7<sup>th</sup> May. After that face-to-face meetings will have to take place which follow COVID guidelines. Councillors will need to sit 2m apart as will any members of the public and everyone will have to wear masks. The Government is being lobbied to allow parish councils to continue to hold remote meetings.

**14. Village issues**

**a) Possible purchase of litter picking sets for volunteers**

Mike Chester agreed to contact West Suffolk Council to find out if they would provide litter picking equipment.

Volunteers could be covered by the Parish Council's insurance policy provided they are working under the auspices of the Parish Council. This could include the Wildlife Group. A risk assessment would need to be carried out and a list of volunteers kept. The clerk was authorised to prepare a risk assessment for discussion at the next meeting and an interim risk assessment should one be required before the next meeting.

**b) Stansfield Lockdown Project**

The project has been advertised in the newsletter and on the Stansfield Facebook page with a deadline 10<sup>th</sup> April 2021.

**15. Correspondence:**

**a) Email from CAB requesting a donation**

It was resolved that no donation would be made.

**b) Email from Arthritis Action giving information about support which is available for people with arthritis**

It was resolved that the information would be put on the Parish Council website.

**c) Letter from SARS requesting a donation**

It was resolved that a donation of £75 would be made which is the same amount as the previous year.

**16. Any other business for noting or including on the next agenda of the Annual Meeting of the Parish Council on Monday 24<sup>th</sup> May 2021 at 7pm or the Annual Parish Meeting at 8pm**

The following items are for including the next agenda:

- The next village project

**There being no further business the meeting closed at 8.04pm.**

Signed ..... (Chairman) Dated .....