

STANSFIELD PARISH COUNCIL

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Minutes

For the Parish Council Meeting held in Village Hall on Monday 20th March 2023
at 7pm

Present: Wendy Johnson Houghton (Chairman), Faye Gridley, Rex Barnes, and Martin Slater. In attendance: Jessica Ashbridge (Parish Clerk), District Councillor Sarah Pugh, and seven Parishioners, in part.

The meeting started at 7pm

- 1. Chairman's Welcome** - The Chairman welcomed those present, and advised that the meeting was being recorded. The recording would be deleted once the minutes were approved. One Parishioner advised that she was recording the meeting. Cllr Slater complained that the agenda had not been put on the noticeboard at the correct time. He was advised that it had been published on the website, and Cllr Gridley had placed it on the noticeboard, but had had problems with her printer, so it had gone on late.
- 2. To accept apologies and reason for absence** – Cllr Hopkins and Cllr Dennis had sent their apologies. **P: Cllr Johnson Houghton, S: Cllr Gridley, All in fav.**
- 3. Declaration of interest** – Cllr Johnson Houghton declared a pecuniary interest in 15a, as the recipient of a payment.
- 4. To approve the minutes** of the Parish Council meeting on 16th January – Cllr Barnes stated that he did not agree with the minutes of the 14th November meeting, which were approved in the January meeting, and therefore he would not accept the January minutes. It was proposed that the minutes were approved **P: Cllr Johnson Houghton, S: Cllr Gridley, Against: Cllr Barnes and Cllr Slater** (recorded vote requested) Cllr Johnson Houghton used her casting vote and approved the minutes. The minutes of the extraordinary PC meeting held on 20th February, items 6 and 7 were amended. Cllr Barnes advised that he would vote against the minutes as the amendments were incorrect. **P: Cllr Johnson Houghton, S: Cllr Gridley, Against: Cllr Barnes and Cllr Slater** (recorded vote requested) Cllr Johnson Houghton used her casting vote and approved the minutes with the amendments.
- 5. Public session** – A Parishioner asked that at the end of the meeting on 20th February, there had been no appetite for another Housing Needs Survey (HNS), but a vote did not take place, was it to be discussed in the meeting? Cllr Gridley advised that it was not allowed to take place and the Chair advised that it would be discussed under section 8a. and 10a

A Parishioner questioned whether the Locality Budget could be shared. She advised that on the back of the Parish Profile carried out in 2006 the Parish Council were able to apply for a lot of grants as needs were evidenced. A new Profile would allow the new Council to budget and organise for the next four years. She asked what the appetite in the village was to be helped. Many networks were established during

Covid, and Stansfield residents had good support networks. She felt that analysis should be carried out to ensure that the Good Neighbour Scheme (GNS) was needed. The Chairman thanked her for her comments and advised that the Council had been informed (on the day of the meeting) that as well as the £1,000 offered through the Locality Budget, that £500 was also being offered to be put towards carrying out a Parish Plan.

A Parishioner advised that there was an appetite for the GNS, and that it would act as a fail-safe scheme if other support networks were not available. She asked about Community Engagement and how much would the Parish Council be involved in a Parish Plan, as she felt there was a lack of confidence after parishioners had been informed by one councillor in the May2022 SPC meeting that the HNS was all correct, and by another councillor that it contained false information. She suggested that people were surveyed out and would not want another survey. She felt that there could be a conflict between a top down Parish Council exercise and a bubbling up of residents' views. She advised that there were at least six parishioners who wanted to be involved with the Community Engagement Working Party, and asked that posts were put on the notice board, website and Facebook. The Chairman thanked her for her comments, and advised that the Parish Council would be leading a Parish Plan, as they would be receiving the grant and paying the costs, but as per the plan carried out in 2006 it should be a community led project. A Parishioner asked how would the Parish Council collect residents' views without a survey?

6. County Councillor and District Councillor's reports – Cllr Bennett had sent her apologies. A report was received from Cllr Pugh. She advised that this was potentially her last meeting due to the elections. She hoped that Stansfield PC would get the resolutions for the monies on offer from West Suffolk District Council (WSDC). Cllr Pugh advised that she had met with the Village Hall (VH) to discuss the hearing loop. A question was raised about whether surplus products could be offered at the Coffee Caravan, a representative from the VH advised that there would be a surplus swap scheme being run as part of the sensory garden. Cllr Pugh advised that she would be in post until May 4th. Cllr Johnson Houghton thanked Cllr Pugh for all her support, and wished her luck for the elections.

7. Planning 7.1 To comment on - none

7.2 Status of planning applications at District Council

Reference	Address	Summary	Status
DC/22/2036/HH	The Old		Approved
DC/22/2037/LB	Rectory, Plough Hill		
DC/22/2013/LB	Stansfield Hall,	Application for listed building consent - a. internal and	Pending
DC/22/1974/FUL	Barn 2, Stansfield Hall Road	external alterations to convert barn into dwelling b. single storey extension to barn	Consideration
DC/23/0032/HH	Greengage Cottage 3 High Street		Approved

DC/23/0054/HH DC/23/0055/LB	Ivy House Lower Street		Approved
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8. To receive an update on the list of actions from the last meeting.

1. Locality Budget – Reports were received on the GNS. It was advised that a private donor had come forwards to pay £600 for running costs of the second year, this was based on estimated costs of £500/600 per annum. A question was raised about the offer from Jon Eaton of £750 rather than £1,000 from the Locality budget, the Chairman advised that she would go back to him, it was perhaps a mix up over VAT. It was proposed to request the £1,000 Locality Budget from WSDC to set up a GNS. **P: Cllr Johnson Houghton, S: Cllr Gridley, In favour Cllr Barnes and Cllr Slater**

(recorded vote requested). Cllr Johnson Houghton advised that Jon Eaton had (on the day of the meeting) offered £500 to be put towards a Parish Plan. Cambridge Acre had quoted £1,487.50 + VAT to facilitate creating questions for a survey. A steering group could consist of some Cllrs and residents. The Parish Plan that was carried out in 2006, had the Chairman and Clerk from the PC, the rest of the group were residents. Cllr Gridley reported that there had been three surveys in 20 years, and therefore the Parish was not surveyed out, as was reported in the public session. It was questioned why an external group was required. It was advised that it was critically important that an independent body oversaw a plan. The HNS had returned a 69% response rate, and a new plan would help with grant requests for all village organisations (VH etc). A Parish Plan would cover all aspects of village life including a small section on housing. There were disagreements about what the title of the scheme should be, it was suggested that Community Led Plan might be seen more favourably. The Parishioners present were asked their views. Two were strongly in favour, due to the potential for grants and finding out residents views, one was against, and the other four did not comment either way. It was proposed to accept the £500 grant towards a Parish Plan/Community Led Plan **P: Cllr Gridley, S: Cllr Johnson Houghton, Against: Cllr Barnes, and Cllr Slater** (recorded vote requested) Due to the vote the grant for £500 from WSDC was not accepted.

9. To discuss any highways/Rights of Way issues/tree/transport issues

1. Land where village sign/bench is located – there had been no update on the ownership of the land.

2. Flooding, blocked drains and potholes – Highways had advised they would not be looking at flooding, as there was no evidence of flooding during the dry period. Cllr Gridley would send photos as soon as the area had flooded. She advised that problems could also be reported through the Highways portal. The problem with the ditch had been solved on one side, due to the addition of the pipe. The other side was still causing problems, but the work had not been completed at the time as it had not

been on their worksheet. Thurston Lane had been repaired, and would be chipped in the summer.

10. To discuss any village issues:

1. **Lessons learnt from the Housing Needs Survey** – Proposal to carry out another HNS **Against: All Cllrs**. Proposal to carry out a Neighbourhood Plan **Against: All Cllrs**. A report was received from Cllr Barnes. Cllrs Johnson Houghton and Gridley pointed out that some of the language used was very negative and critical of the PC. They advised that the Council that had taken on the HNS under a lot of pressure and they were surprised that a full refund had been offered, however that was testament to the efforts of the volunteers on the HNS working party considering how many problems they encountered with CAS. (It was noted by a parishioner that CAS had ceased to use this particular questionnaire). Cllr Barnes advised that no criticism was intended, and that he would like the document added to the HNS file on the website. The Clerk advised that the document was already part of the meeting pack for the meeting. It was suggested that meanings should be clarified, as the report made them unclear regarding rebuilding trust and incompetency, the issues were due to CAS's actions and not those of the PC. It was also suggested that Cllrs Barnes and Slater add their names to the bottom of the document rather than it being a statement from the whole PC. It was repeated that the fiasco over the HNS was due to CAS and not to the PC, which had been agreed by WSDC. WSDC had advised the PC to use CAS, it was noted that other councils had subsequently not used CAS because of the issues this council encountered. Cllr Johnson Houghton requested that the language be amended, Cllr Barnes said he did not think this necessary. It was proposed to add the Lessons Learnt Report to the HNS page on the website **P: Cllr Barnes, S: Cllr Slater, Against: Cllr Johnson Houghton and Cllr Gridley** Cllr Johnson Houghton used her casting vote. (recorded vote requested).
2. **Community Engagement** – There had been no movement on the Community Engagement Working Party. A former Cllr was going to lead the working party, establish Terms of Reference, and a publish a notice. This had been discussed at the meeting on 21st November 2022. The Cllr resigned in February 2023, no action had been taken. Cllr Barnes volunteered, and it was proposed and agreed unanimously that he should lead this initiative. **All Cllrs present voted in favour:** (Recorded vote requested).
3. **Parishioners' views** – It was determined that establishing how to collect Parishioners' views would be part of the Community Engagement Working Party's remit.
4. **Misrepresentation of what parishioners say at meetings** – The Clerk apologised for mis-quoting a Parishioner at the 20th February Meeting, however she reminded Cllrs that she had attended the meeting via Teams (and not in person), and had been listening to the Cllrs and could not hear the Parishioners clearly. The minutes of the meeting had been amended.

The Clerk explained that she had not felt supported by some of the Cllrs, and that the language and tone used in Cllr Barnes and Cllr Slater's emails was not acceptable to her. The Clerk felt undermined, and resented having her professionalism questioned especially as she was so new in the role. She expanded that she had a lot of experience of dealing with disgruntled Parishioners, and could do so very well with the support of the Council. In the case of Stansfield PC she felt that support was lacking from Cllrs Barnes and Slater. As the Clerk of a small Council she is the sole employee, and her perception of mistrust and lack of respect made a big impact on her role. Cllr Slater advised that his email had been blunt, and not rude. Cllr Barnes advised that he would fully and completely back professional, accurate work.

5. **King's Coronation Saturday 6th May 2023** – Representatives from the VH Committee advised that they would have equipment to show the Coronation on a big screen on Saturday 6th May, followed by a Vinyl Night on Saturday evening, and a Big Lunch Buffet on Sunday 7th May. They would need volunteers for the Sunday. It was determined to support Village Hall's proposal for the weekend and give them a donation of £230 (held over from platinum jubilee) **P: Cllr Slater, S: Cllr Gridley, All in fav.**
 6. **Defibrillator training and Voluntary Emergency Telephone system (VET)** – Training had been booked for 15th April. The session would be two hours and would cover using the defibrillator, CPR, VET, refreshments would be available. Cllr Gridley was asked to add a notice to the Parish Pump to encourage as many people as possible to attend.
 7. **Cost of Living Crisis** – Cllr Gridley had been writing articles for the Parish Pump, and the Parish Pump had received a grant for £200 to encourage discussions on the topic. The Coffee Caravan had been very supportive. It was felt that leaflets advertising the Coffee Caravan's visits were required to be delivered to each household.
 8. **Parish Council articles/publications** -The Clerk was asked how publications are determined in other parishes, she advised that it varied. In most, Cllrs were asked to write notices which were submitted to the publication editor. Occasionally these were shared with the full Council for comment beforehand, but not always. It was advised that publication deadlines were usually at least 10 days prior to delivery, which meant that some information could change in that time. It was requested that all information was seen by the full Council prior to it being sent for publication, with a deadline for comments.
- 11. Policies**
- 11.1 **Standing Orders** – Move to May, and move to NALC Model Standing Orders.
 - 11.2 **Emergency Planning** – The emergency planning document was received. It was determined that all Cllrs would make updates and amendments for approval in May. It was suggested that mobile signal had to be available, as landline numbers may not work during a power cut.
- 12. Website and emails** – New email accounts had been established prior to the meeting. The Clerk advised Cllrs to contact Force36 with any problems they might have

logging on. At the time of the meeting the Clerk was waiting to receive her new email account. The quote had been received for the new website, including £350 + VAT for all the content from the old website to be migrated to the new website. The Clerk advised that she would not have the time to do this. **P: Cllr Johnson Houghton, S: Cllr Barnes, All in fav.**

13. PC Logo – The amended PC logo was received and approved. **P: Cllr Gridley, S: Cllr Johnson Houghton, All in fav.**

14. Elections – It was noted that the notice of election would be published on 22nd March, and nomination papers could be received between 23rd March and the deadline of 4pm on Tuesday 4th April 2023. Nomination papers had to be hand delivered to West Suffolk House in Bury St Edmunds between the hours of 9am and 5pm on any working day during the nomination period. There would be an appointment system to ensure that a Deputy Returning Officer was available to receive the nomination paper.

15 Finance

a) Approval of payments

i) Approval of payments authorised between meetings – Hearing Loop **P: Cllr Slater, S: Cllr Barnes, All in fav** – for payment later in the summer. Chairman’s Expenses due to signatories being away at the time of the payments – **P: Cllr Gridley, S: Cllr Barnes, Abstain: 1, 3 in fav. SLCC P: Cllr Gridley, S: Cllr Barnes, All in fav.**

ii) Approval of the record of receipts and payments made since the last meeting

iii) Receipts -

iv) Payments

Date	Description	Payee	Amount	VAT
To be approved	Hearing Loop	Stansfield Village Hall	£600	
To be approved	Chairman’s Expenses: EE Mobile - A4 paper Ink Plastic envelopes Salc training USB stick Clerk’s wages (Jan, Feb, overtime Feb meeting, March) CAS website charge	Cllr Johnson Houghton	£145.08 + £41.96 £5 £29 £15.99 £30 £26.99 £751.97	
			£60	
			£1,105.99	
To be approved	Clerk’s Membership	SLCC	£44.25	

v) Bank balances – To be updated at the meeting (January figures shown) –
Community Account: £5,215.11
Savings Account: £3,007.70

b) Bank mandate – Would be deferred until May.

c) Internal Audit – It was determined to request that Suffolk Association of Local Councils (SALC) carry out the Internal Audit for 2022-23. **P: Cllr Johnson Houghton, S: Cllr Gridley, All in fav.**

16. **Items for the next agenda** – Standing orders, noticeboard – quote to repair.

The Chairman closed the meeting at 10.13pm.