

SPARHAM PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of Sparham Parish Council held virtually at 7.30pm on Tuesday 12th January 2021.

Present: Cllr Adam Pryke (Chair)
Cllr Tony Bolderston (Vice Chair)
Cllr Leona McConnell
Cllr Charles Sayer
County Cllr Bill Borrett

Sheryl Irving (Clerk)

1. Welcome and apologies for absence.

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting, there were no apologies for absence received.

2. To receive any declarations of interest.

There were none received.

3. To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 8th September 2020.

Cllr Pryke proposed that the minutes be accepted as a true record of the meeting, this was seconded by Cllr Sayer and agreed by Council. The Chairman will sign the minutes in due course.

4. County & District Councillor Reports.

C/Cllr Borrett reported that the Covid vaccine rollout was working well, with bookings being made by GP surgeries, rather than call centres, achieving a much lower refusal rate and a practice which has now been adopted across the country. The Oxford vaccine is now going out to Care Homes as it does not need to be kept as cold as the first vaccine and everyone over 80 and Care Home residents should have received their first vaccination in the next week or so, subject to supplies. He stressed that everyone must be registered with a GP to receive the call-up. Public behaviour during lockdown is now improving and this will impact on the curve rate of the infection and by mid-February it is hoped to see signs of progress.

There had been a poor response from both Anglian Water and the Environment Agency to the flooding issues just prior to Christmas when many local villages suffered severe flooding. This issue is going to Committee to try to hold these bodies to account.

He gave particular mention to the staff who had allowed Social Care/County Council to remain open all through Christmas, with absence rates halved and everyone committed during this Covid/Winter crisis.

The C/Cllr was pleased to see the work on the pit had been done and noted that works to dredge the pond had also been programmed. The system is now running well and coping with lots of water. Council were grateful to a local farmer who had dug a small ditch to allow the water to flow into the pond and this is working well. It was agreed to thank the farmer and ask if this ditch could be made more permanent.

The Chairman thanked C/Cllr Borrett for his input and he then left the meeting.

5. Meeting open for public participation.

There were no members of the public present.

6. To discuss planning issues.

a) Applications for consideration.

There were no applications to consider.

b) Decisions to note.

Council noted the following two planning decisions:

- 3PL/2020/0959/HOU – Briars, Whitwell Road - Demolition of existing garage, and erection of a single storey side extension for garage, gym & office – APPROVED.
- 3PL/2020/1130/HOU – 3-4 Sparham Hill - Replacement PVCU windows and doors – APPROVED.

7. Highway issues.

a) To receive an update on blocked drain on corner near bus shelter.

This issue had been dealt with at item 4.

b) To receive an update re the broken Sparham sign on the westbound A1067.

Council noted that this had not yet been repaired but works of this type were currently on hold, due to the Covid situation.

c) To notify any new highway issues.

Council noted some potholes outside Church House Barns but they were not yet large enough to report. The sinkhole in Church Road had been recently repaired.

A request to turn Grove Lane, which ran alongside Nowhere Lane, into a quiet, pedestrian route, had been received from a member of the public, who suggested gates at either end. Council agreed that, although it was a nice idea, it would be difficult, if not impossible to close a public highway as the route is used by traffic, including local farmers for access. Council agreed to ask Highways if this request was feasible.

A complaint had been received regarding parking in the village, near to a junction; two cars are regularly parked there creating issues for large farm vehicles trying to pass. Council agreed that the roads were not designed for cars and large, modern tractors and it was a difficult issue to resolve as the cars were adhering to legal distances near to junctions. The issue will continue to be monitored although there is little the parish council can do, it is a police/highway issue.

8. To receive an update in respect of the Permissive Access Path Agreement.

The agreement is still waiting for signatures but this will be chased up. The previous issue regarding dog mess appears to have improved now signage is in place. The permissive pathway signage will be installed in the near future.

Both routes are well used by Sparham and Lyng residents and have been of particular value during lockdown periods and Council agreed this had been a superb initiative, supported by both the landowner and the parish council.

9. The Village Green

a) To receive an update regarding the Land Registry application.

The Chairman understood this matter had been finalised but the documentation had not yet been received and will be chased up.

b) To receive a report regarding the wildflower project.

Cllr McConnell reported that she had received advice and ideas from Cllr Charles Sayer but it was difficult to move forward without a design plan for the Green. Council agreed to hold a site visit, once permitted, to consider options. It was noted that several local residents had expressed an interest in the project and were keen to be involved. Council agreed it was a good environmental project and will also provide interest/walks around the Green for residents who do not reside near to the Green.

c) To receive a report re the grass cutting contract for 2021.

Cllr Bolderston reported that the current contractor will continue but at an increased rate of £75 per cut, which was approved by Council. The contractor continued to have issues regarding the church cutting and Council members had also received complaints from residents regarding the unkempt look of the churchyard. Council agreed to send a letter to the PCC outlining the issues, with suggestions to resolve the situation.

d) To consider any new issues relating to the Village Green.

The wall repairs continue to be on hold until such time as adequate reserve funds are available. Council considered if any shaping works were required to the Oak Tree but it was considered to be safe and the advice of a tree surgeon will be sought at some point in the future.

10. To consider any works to the Sparham Phone Box, including the installation of a defibrillator.

The acquisition of a defibrillator continues to be on hold during the Covid situation, this and any maintenance will be considered once lockdown has ended.

11. Finance & Governance Matters

a) To receive a financial report for the year 31st March 2021.

Council noted the financial report.

b) To consider an in-house option for the Sparham Website.

Cllr Bolderston proposed that the website be brought in-house, at an initial cost of £302, with an annual cost thereafter of approximately £100, slightly less than the current fee. This was seconded by Cllr McConnell and agreed by Council. The new site will be more user-friendly and easier for the Clerk to update.

c) To review the parish council contribution to the PCC towards grass cutting.

Council agreed to continue at present (see item 9.c above).

d) To appoint an internal auditor for the year ending 31st March 2021.

Cllr Pryke proposed that Mr Bergin be appointed as internal auditor for a fee of £25, this was seconded by Cllr McConnell and agreed by Council.

e) To consider the budget and set the precept for year ending 31st March 2022.

Council considered the increasing costs, grass-cutting, the permissive pathway, the BT Box etc. Cllr Pryke proposed an increase in the precept to £5,500 to cover these costs, this was seconded by Cllr Bolderston and agreed by Council. This equates to an annual increase of £4.36 for a Band D property in respect of the parish precept.

f) To authorise financial payments as set out below.

Cllr Pryke proposed approval of the following payments, this was seconded by Cllr Bolderston and agreed by Council.

- Clerk (Salary & Allowance: Oct – Dec/HMRC Refund) £276.62
- SLCC Membership (Brisley PC) £11.85
- Grass Contractor (Sept) £70.00 (paid on 5.10.2020)
- Grass Contractor (Oct) £70.00 (paid on 3.11.2020)
- Path Signage £120.00 (paid on 19.11.2020)
- Dog Signs £21.57 (paid on 19.11.2020)

12. Correspondence for circulation

The following correspondence was noted and no actions were required.

- Breckland Response to Planning White Paper
- NCC Budget Consultation
- Boundary Commission Review
- Transport East survey to help shape the future of transport in the East of England

13. To note the meeting dates for 2021.

Council noted the meeting dates for 2021, as follows:

- Tuesday 9th March
- Tuesday 11th May (Annual Meetings)
- Tuesday 14th September

14. To receive any new items for the next agenda.

There were no new items for the next agenda but Cllr Bolderston took this opportunity to advise Council that he is moving away from the village and will be resigning from the Council at some point in the near future. The Chairman said that Council will be sorry to lose him and were grateful for his valuable contributions which had been balanced, pragmatic and sensible. It was hoped that a candidate for co-option to fill the vacancy can be identified.

15. To note the next meeting will be held on Tuesday 9th March 2021 at 7.30pm.

Council noted the date of the next meeting and the meeting closed at 8.49pm.

Signed:

Date:
