

Stisted Parish Council
Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting
held on Wednesday 6th December 2023 at 7.30pm

Present: Councillor Mark Hughes - Chair
Councillor Alan Routledge – Vice Chair
Councillor Richard White
Councillor Howard Hollands
Councillor Bob Powers
Councillor Eleanor McMillan
Councillor Cheryl Hill-Cottingham

In attendance: Ruth Jubb - Clerk
3 members of the public

93 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE
None received

94 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

- Mark Hughes – One under planning for Tumblers Green and another for the Grant discussion for the Village Hall as he is a trustee
- Richard White – member of golf club to discuss their planning application
- Alan Routledge – social member of golf club to discuss their planning application

95 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION SESSION

The following items were raised by members of the public:

- Garden Chippings will be delivered from the golf club for use by villagers in the next few days
- Wall, Fence and access at Old Post Office mentioned, but no comment was made as a retrospective application is being put into BDC but no information received yet

95.1 County & District Councillors

Cllr Thorogood

- Review of Essex Mineral plan underway looking for sites. Draft plan to be made public in December. Residents near any new sites will be able to make representation. No sites are yet agreed
- There are some proposed Braintree District boundary changes. If confirmed, Stisted will stay in the Braintree division and be joined by Pattiswick and Silver End from the current Witham North. Cressing will join Hatfield Peverel. There may also be MP changes for some parishes as a result. **ACTION:** Cllr Thorogood will provide maps for Clerk to circulate to Councillors
- There is a Braintree Council Meeting on 12 December where council funding will be discussed following the latest Autumn Budget
- Highways were discussed in relation to signage and 20 mph speed limits. Cllr Thorogood is trying to reduce speed limits in several areas and will update on progress as there are very strict criteria

Cllr Walsh

- There was discussion on the Autumn budget and the fact that Health is a protected department. This means that unprotected departments such as justice and councils, may see significant cuts over the next few years. This in turn will impact budgets for parish councils
- Garden Waste and the subscription service was mentioned and the fact that the price for garden waste disposal will increase in future years
- A120 dualling now seems not to have any funding allocation in the next few years and this has been a concern for some of his areas



- Cllr Walsh advised that an update from R Pearson regarding the Norfolk Suffolk & Essex Scheme against urban sprawl is still awaited
- All Councillors are given a small amount for grants – Tom Walsh has a small amount available for the parishes he represents. The village shop may be interested in applying

Cllr Abrams

- Cllr Abrams has provided the grant form with his signature for the Village Hall grant for one of their trustees to resubmit – his signature is needed to release money from council
- Residents seem to have a lack of information on what is happening through the council in their areas – this includes planning and environmental. Noted that much of the landscaping that is carried out as part of large developments is not successful and requires monitoring. The intention is to produce an online map showing future developments. It may include aerial photography and will allow all people to provide comments.

95.2 Parish Paths

Cllr Powers noted that some of the paths in the parish are flooded and very muddy so care should be taken. The new owners of 25 Sarcel will be pruning overhanging vegetation from the adjacent footpath

95.3 Village Hall Report inc. Stisted Archives

- The quiz night was very successful and may have raised as much as £1600 (TBC). Also, the CANS meeting provided funds for the Village Hall. The Village Hall does need money to be spent on it so welcomes the income
- The archives meeting at Stisted Hall went well and further events are planned to be held in the Village Hall in spring. Cllr Hollands will meet with Montefiore Trustees to offer help in digitizing old material
- Most of the produce from the orchard was used locally this year as there was a poor crop and there is now an approved management plan for the future

95.4 Community Shop

- The old partners are still keeping the shop open pending handover to new people. A survey has been sent out with the last parish magazine concerning the shop, with responses due back by 11 December. The Montefiore are aware of the plans for the shop and currently have no objections

96 PREVIOUS MEETING MINUTES

It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on 1st November 2023 were a correct record and these were signed by the Chairman. Proposed, seconded and passed by majority

96 STISTED GARDEN TROPHY

Winners have been notified and the trophy presented

1st 43, The Street, 2nd 39 Sarcel, 3rd Sandycroft, The Street

The future of the garden Trophy was discussed as it is currently front gardens only. It was suggested that this could become a photographic exhibition where images are displayed in the Village Hall for judging. This may be in autumn and photographic quality would be important as well as the gardens. This would allow all types of gardens throughout the parish to be included. Note that the trophy must be returned in 2024 so it can be part of the archives. We also need to write formally to the judges and organisers to thank them for their efforts. The receipts for £52 expenses are to be paid by the clerk. Add the event to the next agenda. **ACTION** Clerk to pay expenses and write thankyou letters

98 MEETING ACTIONS REPORT

The report was discussed and updated. Key points

- It was AGREED that the clerk can transfer relevant funds from the transparency and street cleaning earmarked reserves to the general fund as they had been incorrectly allocated in the past
- Street lighting. It was noted that the clerk has updated the street light inventory with UKPN and applied to OPUS, our electricity supplier, to reduce consumption on the unmetered supply since installation of LEDs. The contract has also been fixed from December 2023 for 2 years – the fix alone will reduce the bills by over 50% with the reduced consumption giving further savings. There may also be a rebate due w.e.f from the date the new LED lights were installed but this may be some weeks before it is realized. However, the benefit of the fix will be seen in the January 2024 bill

99 PLANNING MATTERS

99.1 Planning Applications

- Old Post Office Yew Tree. Mr. Waine has provided comments (that must be submitted by 13 December) saying that it is preferable to keep the tree and to trim it rather than remove it. Also noted that it should be pruned to no less than 2m high
- Screening for Solar Farm at Kentishes Farm. Most of this is outside the parish and it is just for information
- Appeal – Land Opposite 1 to 4 Jenkins Cottages. The appeal of 31 October has issued the decision of “Appeal Dismissed”. It was noted that the existing temporary structure needs to be taken down and the parish council should check whether there will be an automatic enforcement order. **ACTION** Cllr Routledge
- 59 Sarcel – single storey extension for information only
- Other Planning Notifications
 - Tumblers Green – request to convert a barn to a residential property – for information only but was noted
 - Golf Club – single storey extension requested and some landscaping and changes of use. All those without a declared interest agreed that the application was acceptable

99.2 Planning Results

- 23/02396/TPOCON - Hall Farm, The Street, Stisted APPLICATION GRANTED
- 23/02422/TPOCON - Seven Winds, 12 The Street, Stisted APPLICATION PERMITTED
- 23/02415/FUL - Boultswoods Farm, Rayne Hatch Lane, Stisted None PENDING CONSIDERATION
- 23/02202/FUL Jenkins Farm, erect 5 dwellings Pending Decision.

100 FINANCE

100.1 Bank Reconciliation

- Bank reconciliation to 24 November completed and signed off

100.2 Payments

- Payment schedule for DDs in November and payments due for EALC (training), Clerk (salary and expenses) and late addition of grass cutting invoice approved.
- It was queried whether CANS money should be in the parish council accounts. It was noted that as it is a sub group of the parish council, that income and expenses will be monitored as a separate category in the parish accounts

100.3 Draft Terms of Reference for Finance Working Group

- The Terms of Reference were reviewed and two amendments made to show that there would be assistance with audits if required and that annual risk assessments would include an annual tree risk assessment as required. The approval was proposed, seconded and passed by majority vote.

100.4 Budget & Precept

- The budget and precept were discussed. It was noted that the council started 2023 / 2024 with a small general reserve of £3,852. The aim should be to hold at least 3 months operating expenses, hence there is a need for at least £6,000 as

a reserve. Last financial year the precept was £16,814. From estimates of all the line items as per the support papers, we need to request a budget of £19,006. This includes a contingency of £2,000 which will allow the council to replenish some reserves, particularly as last year about 1/3rd of the precept was used on streetlights. It had been hoped to cover this through S106 money but general funds had to be used instead. It was essential work to reduce electricity consumption and will pay for itself in a few years. The clerk has updated the street light inventory and fixed the supply rate for 2 years. This should reduce the bills by approximately 2/3rds and generate a rebate for an overcharge since LEDs were installed in July. Unless further income is received from other sources in Q1 the Council will need to control spending very carefully as the precept is not due until end of April.

- It was agreed that fees for the football pitch should be increased to £25.00 per match
- The suggested transfer of funds from transparency fund and the street cleaning funds was discussed and agreed. In the previous year, funds had been coded to general when they should have been from the earmarked funds. This amounts to at least £900 from transparency and £375 from street cleaning into the general. This will improve the position of the general fund for this financial year
- Questions were raised for the street cleaning budget to ensure there were sufficient funds remaining for a dust cart. There is currently £2,600 before any transfer. It was noted that the council does not pay for channel sweeping at present but it has not happened due to the number of parked cars in the village. If any gully pots are blocked, these should be notified to Highways through their website. There were some noted at Tumblers Green and Kings Lane.
- The Precept request of £19006 and the transfer of funds from the earmarked funds to the General fund was proposed by Cllr Hughes and the Finance working Group and approved by unanimous show of hands. **ACTION** Clerk to complete the precept request to BDC and transfer funds in the council accounts.
- The Band D equivalent charge was discussed but the final figure of Band D properties has not yet been received from BDC

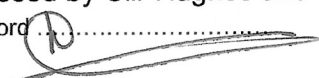
100.5 S106 Report and Funding

- The Council has 2 items in current 106 report and has the opportunity to update the detail for the next budget. Changes need to be submitted online in January
- We will now include new items for
 - Replace and upgrade current play equipment (repair not allowed)
 - Provide adult gym equipment
 - Provision of power supply to pavilion
- Ideally the Council needs to remaining finalise surveys of villagers to ensure these are the correct items. **ACTION** – Cllrs to obtain updated surveys showing the need for these items. Some quotes are already being requested for costs for provision of utilities if these are to be claimed on S106
- It was proposed by Cllr Hughes, then seconded and agreed by show of hands that these items should be added to the new S106 inventory. **ACTION** Clerk to update S106 details online

101 COMMUNITY, RECREATION & MAINTENANCE

101.1 S137 Grants

- 4 Grant Applications were received. The council has little funding available so awards must be restricted. The applications were discussed as follows:
 - The Church applied for £325. Legally a parish council cannot give funds to the Church so the council must advise them that it cannot award a grant to them. Advice was taken from EALC to clarify this position. Proposed by Cllr Hughes and agreed unanimously that no award will be made to the Church.
 - The Montefiore applied for £200. Cllr Hollands requested that the Montefiore complete further detail on the application form. Proposed by Cllr Hughes and



agreed unanimously that £200 will be awarded in principle subject to more information on the form

- The Village Shop applied for £200. It was proposed by Cllr Hughes and agreed unanimously that £200 will be awarded, but the grant to the shop will be held back until it is clear that the shop is going ahead.
- The Village Hall applied for £300. Stisted Village Hall is relatively well funded at present even though there is a need for a lot of repairs. Therefore, taking account of the financial position of the council, it was proposed by Cllr Hughes and agreed unanimously that no grant would be given this year as it was felt that the Montefiore and the Shop were in greater need of funds.
- **ACTION** Clerk to advise applicants of the outcome of the grant process and arrange payment in January. Clerk also to request evidence of the use of the funds in due course. The grant forms were signed by Cllr Hughes

101.2 Working Group – Climate & Nature for Stisted (CANS)

- The written report / policy statement was noted and agreed by all Councillors (as circulated in the support papers). This is the policy statement for the Parish Council Website – The council should include a small soundbite to describe the policy. **ACTION** clerk to add to the website
- The £750 biodiversity grant from ECC has been received and some signs have been paid for. These signs describe the grass areas
- A request for payment of £18 to the Village Hall for an allotment for CANS was approved. **ACTION** Clerk to pay the Village Hall
- CANS are doing some work with the river and Essex Wildlife Trust. **ACTION:** Clerk to send information regarding the CANS update and details of Kathryn's email to Cllr Thorogood as he is interested in progress
- Cllr Thorogood left at 9.07

101.3 Playing Field and Fencing by Swing

- Cllr Powers updated on progress for a contractor to repair the play equipment and surface. The council believes it was supplied and installed by a company called Caloo. Caloo do not believe it was theirs, and suggest it may have been a company called Adventure Playground as mentioned in the ROSPA report who supplied it. A new safety surface is needed, even if another contractor/supplier is used. It was agreed by all that we should approach alternative contractors for quotes. Several Councillors have offered to find possible contact names. **ACTION:** Cllr Powers to continue to source quotes for repair of the play equipment and surface

101.4 Football Foundation

- Cllr Routledge has received a report on the condition of the pitch and has photographs so will continue with the football foundation work.

101.5 Parish Council Website

- Cllr Hollands confirmed that some work has been completed on the website already to update menus and pages etc. In addition, the Council now have some limited stats about the number of visitors to the site. It was agreed in the last meeting that the Council should continue to update the current site rather than consider a new one. There is a meeting for 8 December with Cllr Hollands, Mr. Pryke and the Clerk to look at content. They will then approach a web company to carry out a software update and any updates that need expert input. It was noted that funds for this will be covered by the Transparency Fund

101.6 Dog Bins

- Discussion continued regarding a possible location for a relocated dog poo bin. It was proposed by Cllr Hughes that it could be located near Tumblers Green at the site of the old post box. The Council voted unanimously to accept the

proposed location. **ACTION** Cllr Hughes to manage – remove from agenda and manage through action list in future

101.7 Affordable Housing

- There is a report on affordable housing and Cllr Hughes will circulate to all Councillors later in the week. (or clerk to do) Cllr Hughes has also noted that he had advised Hastoe of the damp situation in some of the properties.

101.8 Grass Cutting Contract

- The Council has received one quote of £2,250 from Mr. Burge. One other contractor has declined to quote and the existing contractor has not replied to the request to quote. The Council needs a further quote before it can make a decision even though this is a similar price to the existing contract (the key difference is that the current contract includes VAT which can be reclaimed and the one from Mr. Burge has no VAT making it 20% more expensive). **ACTION:** Clerk to chase JPB for a quote.
- Cllr Hughes has a possible name to provide to the Clerk to request a quote

101.9 Rural England Prosperity Funding

- BDC have a fund for Rural Grants. The parish council is eligible to apply for a grant for a minimum of £10,000. It needs to be a capital project with the cost being paid upfront and then claimed back afterwards. It was suggested by the Finance working group that the Council could install water, sewerage and utilities to the pavilion. This was discussed and felt to be of benefit. The Councillors voted unanimously to proceed with the grant application for this purpose
- In order to apply, the Council need to show support for the project and the benefit it could bring to the village as well as having quotes for the work. **ACTION** Cllr Hughes to follow up on the quote for services so that the clerk can start to prepare an application

101.10 Glebe Barns

- Carry Forward

101.11 To Discuss and Agree position of remaining Coronation Bench

- Cllr Powers has made tentative enquiries to position the remaining bench on Priors Green near the footpath. It was queried who owns the piece of land. **ACTION** Cllr Hughes to carry out a land search to establish ownership of the piece of land before action can be taken. The other bench will remain to the left of the pavilion.

101.12 To Consider Proposals and Action for Village Gate Signage

- The council already has the signs has for "Stisted Please Drive Carefully". Cllr Hughes applied for a licence for the signs but has been advised that a licence is required for the gates first. This is in hand with Cllr Hughes. **Monitor.**

101.13 To Note & Approve Updated Emergency Plan to Issue to BDC

- The Emergency Plan was updated for names and emails and issued in the support papers. There are further sections where updates are required. **ACTION:** Cllrs Hughes and Powers to meet with the Clerk to complete the updates

101.14 Street Clean and Dust Cart

- There was a good response for the litter pick so for the future it should extend to the rest of the parish, not just the village. There are additional litter pick signs in the storage shed near the pavilion that can be used
- The red "Village of the Year" sign should be mounted on a bracket on the Village Green sign. Other village signs are on the wall in the archive. Cllr Holland will confirm which other signs exist

- Dust Cart – it was agreed unanimously that a Dust Cart should be arranged despite the limitations of what can be put in the vehicle and the fact that it goes to landfill. It will need to be February as BDC are fully booked until the end of the year. The council will need to monitor what is put in the vehicle on the day. Note that garden waste should not go to the dust cart. **ACTION:** Clerk to check prices and availability and advise Councillors

101.15 Training Update

- Details of training undertaken and training booked but yet to be attended were provided. Cllrs McMillan and White are still to be booked onto Councillor training. Cllr McMillan would like a Saturday date. **ACTION:** Clerk to send details of available courses to these two Councillors to select appropriate dates

101.16 Sheldon Bridge, Water Lane

- Two of the Coping Stones are missing on the right wall of the bridge as you leave the village down Water Lane. This may allow frost damage to the exposed brickwork. Cllr Powers will check the bridge to establish if the stones are missing or have fallen into the river. **ACTION:** Clerk to request Highways to repair the bridge.

102 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION SESSION 2

Standing Orders temporarily suspended at the 2-hour time limit to allow the meeting to continue

The following items were raised:

- A member of the public was interested in the Affordable Housing but no update is yet available. A report is being produced to consider possible sites. These need to be agreed with Braintree District Council and will require agreement from the landowner to sell the necessary land.
- It was confirmed that the work has been done to assess the energy consumption of the LED street lights so that in the near future there should be a reduction in the electricity charges

103 INFORMATION EXCHANGE AND ITEMS FOR THE NEXT AGENDA

- Updates on the grants and payment of funds
- Cllr White to carry out the next Defibrillator check
- Cllr White confirmed that R Hughes has accepted the role of internal auditor for the end of this Financial Year

104 MOTION TO EXCLUDE PUBLIC FROM THE MEETING (to discuss employment)

At 9.15 All members of public were asked to leave the room to discuss other matters

105 ANY CLOSED ITEMS REQUIRED

The Clerk's employment contract was presented for signature and was signed. It is based on the new model contract from NALC and includes the April 2023 Salary. Noted that clerk has advised home insurers of the "Work from Home" Role as required in the contract.

Standing Orders reinstated to close the meeting

106 NEXT PARISH COUNCIL MEETING

The next meeting of the Parish Council will be held on Wednesday 3rd January 2024 at 7:30p.m. at the **Montefiore Institute**.

CLOSE OF MEETING

The meeting closed at 21:45 pm.