

## Semer Parish Council

Minutes of Parish Council Meeting held at Semer Village Hall on Wednesday 9<sup>th</sup> October 2019 at 7.00pm.

### In attendance:

Richard Keens (Chairman), Robert Thorogood, James Pitcher, Trevor Mitchell, Leigh Jamieson (District Councillor), Robert Lindsay (County Councillor)

Apologies - Jackie Barraclough

The minutes of the meeting of 10<sup>th</sup> July 2019 were read and approved.

1. Resignation of Parish Clerk - The Parish Council accepted Hannah Clark-Keens resignation as Clerk – Trevor will take over the role for the time being.
2. Planning Application Approvals – Planning permission had been granted for the following:
  - Ovamere - extensions and alterations – approved 2.9.19.
  - Hollow Trees Farm - extension to Bungalow – approved 23.9.19.
  - BT – Bildeston Road, Semer 2 x Wooden Poles and fitting broadband equipment – approved 25.9.19.
3. Other Planning Applications –
  - Barn on land to the west of Ash Street – appeal still awaiting decision. (*Appeal Dismissed 15.10.19*)
  - Foxglove Cottage, Ash Street – replacement of tiles on rear lean-to and around chimney – the Parish Council have no objections. (*Approved 22.10.19*)
  - Dairy Farm – a proposed planning application for workshops and a machinery store were discussed. The Parish Council have no objections to the proposals.
4. Highways Issues –
  - The Semer Road Sign at the bottom of Union Hill has still not been replaced. Although reported to Highways on 19<sup>th</sup> June it is now been taken off the Highways Website – Robert Lindsay will take this up with the Highways Department. (*Clerk has sent an e-mail to Robert with the original Highways acknowledgement and case number*)
  - Speeding on Union Hill – Robert Lindsay has received a letter from a Semer resident regarding the excessive speed of vehicles on Union Hill. The PC confirmed that they have written on several occasions over the past 20 years to Suffolk CC requesting a 40mph limit on the A1141 / B1115 through Semer. It has always been refused. (*Following the meeting the Clerk had provided Robert*

*with the official data for accidents on the road and has written highlighting how dangerous the road has become. Union Hill residents cannot turn into their drive when coming from the direction of Bildeston because of the speed of the traffic over the brow of the hill and it is extremely dangerous for children having to walk to and from the school bus stop at Semer Lodge particularly on dark winter nights. Robert will take this up with Highways Department)*

5. Publication of Babergh District Councils 5 year land supply document – please see District Councillors Report below.
6. Community Infrastructure Levy Grants – this was raised with Leigh as to how Parishes could apply for grants under the CIL scheme. It was known that Chelsworth PCC were applying for a grant for a new kitchen in the church. Leigh explained how the scheme worked. *(Following the meeting Leigh e-mailed details of the website and contact names. Trevor has passed these to the Parochial Church Council pointing out what the criteria is for a successful application. He confirmed the PC would be happy to support and help them should they wish to apply for funding)*
7. Register of Members Interests - the Clerk will register James as a Councillor and will submit the appropriate forms to Babergh District Council to register Members Interests for all five Councillors. The forms were completed at the meeting.
8. Cutting of Hedges at the Church Meadow – Nigel Jennings has said that he cannot continue to cut the hedges as his tractor is not powerful enough. It was agreed that Trevor would ask Dairy Farms if they would help the PC and cut the hedges for this year. *(James has agreed to do this for the Parish Council. He will not accept payment but the Council will donate an amount to the PCC)*
9. Bank Accounts – new mandates have now been delivered to Barclays Bank. The Church Meadow Account which has a small dormant balance will be closed at the end of the financial year.
10. Charity Commission – the Clerk will register James as a Trustee of the Church Meadow and remove Granville Bendall.
11. Whatfield Oil Buying Club – Stowmarket Citizens Advice advise that savings of 10%+ can be made on heating oil by joining an oil buying group. Trevor has joined Whatfield Oil Buying Group and internet based The Oil-Club.co.uk. He will report prices to the Parish Council to see what savings can be made.
12. Sudbury Cycle Club – a reminder the Annual Hill Climb Event takes place on Watsons Hill on Sunday 13<sup>th</sup> October.

Any Other Business:

- James advised the meeting that he was employing a tree surgeon to take down a large oak tree on his property which was in danger of falling and damaging the telephone lines in Church Lane.
- District and County Councillors Reports are below.

The next meeting will be held on Wednesday 15<sup>th</sup> January 2020 at 7pm at the Village Hall.

The meeting closed at 8.20pm.

Signed.....

Dated.....

## **County Councillors Report for Semer PC 9.10.19**

Robert Lindsay, Suffolk County Councillor.

### **County council**

After being elected in May 2017 I and the two other Green councillors formed a group with the Lib Dems and the independents to give us access to officer briefings and committees. There are 13 of us in the group which makes us the second largest party after the Conservatives who control the administration.

### **Climate emergency**

One of our achievements earlier this year was to get the council to agree to declare a climate emergency with a goal to cutting carbon to zero by 2030. The task force set up to come up with ideas for this has just had its first meeting.

### **School bus travel**

Perhaps the most controversial policy introduced by the Conservative administration was the change to funding school buses with a move to funding nearest school rather than catchment school. This policy was implemented at the start of school term last month and left hundreds of families unsure of whether they had a seat on a bus to school days before the start of term. There are still thought to be a backlog of hundreds of appeals.

### **Public Buses**

The council announced this summer £340,000 cuts to rural bus subsidies. Several in the Cosford division under threat have received a stay of grace until March after a wave of protest from passengers. This includes the 112 from Hadleigh to Sudbury via Bildeston and the 461 and 462 from Hadleigh to Stowmarket. Parish councils along the route are clubbing together to part fund the 112. Although the Government has announced there will be extra funding for rural buses, there is as yet no detail for councils to plan budgets on.

### **Pension fund**

I sit on the county council pension fund and I'm pleased to say that the committee agreed at its last meeting to move a small proportion of its passive part of its fund into a low carbon tracker fund. We will look at moving more at the November meeting.

### **Boundary Commission to shake up county ward boundaries (divisions)**

The Local Government Boundary Commission has said it is minded to cut the number of county councillors from 75 to 70. It is now moving to determining new

boundaries, known as divisions. The review is expected to be completed by July 2020.

### **Forecast budget overspend for year**

At the end of the first quarter of the financial year, the county is forecasting an overspend for the full year of £1.2m on the base budget (due to rising costs of adult care) and £6.7m on the schools budget. The latter is mainly due to the soaring costs of providing special needs transport to specialist schools, often outside Suffolk. Although the council has already agreed to spend on building new places within Suffolk which ought to cut some of the costs in the future, it is too late for this financial year.

### **Union Hill speeds**

In response to a resident's request I have asked about the feasibility a 40mph limit on Union Hill. There is no guarantee that they will allow this, it has to meet a whole set of criteria and they will not pay for it even if they deem that it meets the criteria.

## **District Council Report**

### **Leigh Jamieson Babergh District Councillor**

#### **Babergh Name Change**

The recent announcement by leader of the Cabinet, John Ward, that Babergh Council should change its name to South Suffolk has been greeted with scepticism by most councillors. Apparently, the proposal to Change the name will allow people from outside the area to know where we are and also prevent difficulties with pronunciation.

On the 22<sup>nd</sup> the full council will be having an extraordinary meeting to fully debate the suggestion.

#### **5 Year Housing Land Supply**

Babergh District Council has now published a new annual five-year housing land supply position statement which demonstrates a 5.67-year supply, alongside the Joint Annual Monitoring Report with Mid Suffolk District Council.

#### **Housing Land Supply Components**

##### **Housing Land Supply 2019-2024**

- Under Construction 723
- Full Planning Consent 432
- Reserved Matters Consent 72
- Outline Planning Consent 446
- Small Sites (<10 dwellings)
- 726 Windfall Allowance 100
- Total 2,499

##### **Requirement Scenario**

- Base LHN requirement (dpa) 420
- Requirement over 5 years 2,100
- With Buffer @ 5% 2,205
- Dwellings Per Annum 441

## Biodiversity Emergency

At the September Council meeting a motion was put forward to declare a biodiversity emergency. This follows on from the Climate Change emergency motion that was fully approved in July. The Biodiversity motion, which was amended by the Green Party, includes proposals to –

- Create and develop a Wildlife Network Map from which Wildlife Corridors will be identified and created.
- Introduce of the 'Trees for Life' scheme in Babergh District. This offers every family with a new-born baby a tree to plant.

This motion will bring us in line with Mid Suffolk Council which approved the motion in July.

## Climate Emergency declaration

As mentioned above the Council has voted on motions to support Suffolk's county-wide aim of becoming carbon neutral by 2030.

This Council pledged to:

1. Acknowledge a climate emergency.
2. Set up a Task Force to examine ways in which Babergh & Mid Suffolk Councils will respond to the climate change challenge on a spend to save basis.
3. To work with partners across the county and region, including the LEP and the Public Sector Leaders, towards this aspiration.
4. To work with Government to a) deliver its 25-year Environment Plan and b) increase the powers and resources available to local authorities in order to make the 2030 target.

## CIFCO Business Plan

Also approved in July was the CIFCO's draft business plan for 2019/20. The property investment company is looking to increase the £1.4m annual income it already generates for services in Babergh and Mid Suffolk – the equivalent of increasing council tax by more than 12%.

CIFCO Capital Ltd, which is wholly owned by Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils, was established in 2017 to generate income through property investment which is then ploughed back into council services within the districts to offset reductions in funding from central government.

Over the next 12 months the company plan on investing another £50m as agreed by both councils back in February. The plan was approved at the July council meeting.

Each property acquisition is carefully considered by an expert team of advisors and where target acquisitions are deemed too risky or not cost effective, they are not pursued. While 12 properties were acquired, dozens more were ruled out.

The current portfolio of 12 properties is spread throughout the east of England and balanced across commercial sectors to minimise exposure to any one sector or location. The changing market is now expected to be reflected by a shift away from retail property and towards office and industrial sectors instead.

## Accounts

The 2018/19 year-end financial position for each council for both the General Fund and Housing Revenue Account (HRA) were presented to Cabinet in June.

For the General Fund, the outturn position compared to the budget was a favourable variance of £2.281m for Babergh. This was mainly due to additional income being received from business rates, planning fees, housing benefit subsidy and the administrative element of the Community Infrastructure Levy, rather than planned budgets not being spent. As a result of this a large proportion of the additional income has been placed into the Business Rates Equalisation Reserve to allow for known future reductions with some also being placed into the Transformation Fund for Babergh and other earmarked reserves.

For the HRA, the outturn position compared to budget was smaller favourable variances of £247k for Babergh, which have been placed in the Strategic Priorities Reserve.