

## Semer Parish Council

Minutes of Parish Council Meeting held at Semer Village Hall on Wednesday 14<sup>th</sup> October 2020 at 7.00pm.

### In attendance:

Richard Keens (Chairman), Robert Thorogood, James Pitcher, Jackie Barraclough, Trevor Mitchell (Clerk).

Apologies received from Leigh Jamieson and Robert Lindsay.

1. Chairman Welcome.
2. Minutes of the meeting of 2<sup>nd</sup> September 2020 were read and approved.
3. Planning – The Old Hall, Bridge Farm – replacement of and existing fence with a brick wall. (Babergh DC advised that Semer PC have no objections to this application – approved by Babergh - 30.10.20)
4. Update on request to Suffolk Highways for a Speed Limit of 40mph on Union Hill – an e-mail response has been received from WSP Global Inc who were approached to produce a report. The report is printed below. The Clerk will forward this to Highways Department with a further request for the speed limit to be implemented.
5. Maintenance of Village Signs – The 'Heavy Goods Vehicles' Sign at the bottom of Watsons Hill is in poor condition and needs replacing. Richard will see if the sign can be repaired if not a replacement sign will be purchased.
6. The Church Meadow Gate has dropped making it difficult to open. This has now been repaired.
7. Repair of the Village Sign – Richard has taken the sign down (Assisted by Dairy Farms Teleporter) and he will make a new oak frame. Thorogood Timber Ltd have agreed to supply the oak. Sally Keens has agreed to repaint the 'Semer Scene'.
8. A bench seat has been purchased and delivered for the Church Meadow. As agreed with the PCC it will be sited near the Church Gate. Richard has agreed to install it on a concrete base.
9. The Church Meadow Account can we transfer the balance on the account to the main Parish Council Account leaving the Bank Account open with a balance of £1.
10. Cutting of Hedges and the Grass at the Church Meadow – Dairy Farms have now mowed the meadow. The Clerk agreed that as the field and hedges will be cut at no cost to the Parish Council the PC would as we did last year purchase an item for the church. Having talked to the PCC the Clerk has purchased and installed a PA system in the church at a cost of £663.
11. Our Budget for this year and annual precept for 21/22. A similar budget to last year was proposed but it was agreed would wait to see if Highways approve the 40mph limit on Union Hill and what expenditure that potentially entails.

12. Deadline of 30 November for registering interest in Community Funding for Quiet Lanes. These have to be single carriage lanes with passing places. (Following the meeting the Clerk has registered Overgang Road / Ash Street and Rectory Lane leading up to Whatfield from the Overgang. Lynn King Clerk to Whatfield PC advised. These lanes are popular with walkers and in the summer children paddle and fish in at the Overgang,)
13. No progress has been made on the appointment of a new Parish Councillor. Councillors will continue to ask Villagers if they would like to participate.
14. My Resignation as Clerk – I will be moving from Semer to Debenham in the next two weeks. A new Clerk needs to be appointed.

The next meeting will be held on Wednesday 13th January 2021 at 7pm at the Village Hall.

The meeting closed at 7.45pm.

Signed.....

Dated

### Report from WSP re Union Hill

Thanks for forwarding the information through and apologies for the delay in sending back my thoughts on the information. If you need to discuss anything further, then please do not hesitate to give me a call.

I have had a look at the traffic data and have also had a further review of the road on google mapping too.

Further to our conversation, to get a change in the posted speed limit on any road is always difficult to achieve with any Highway Authority, especially in rural locations where features adjacent to the road do not match driver's perception of the speed limit.

The important considerations when Highway Authorities are setting speed limits include:

- Is the environment suitable for the speed limit being considered;
- Existing mean and 85th percentile speeds;
- The level of use by both motor vehicles and vulnerable users;
- Speed related collision history.

Essentially speed limits should be evidence-led, self-explaining and seek to reinforce people's assessment of what is a safe speed to travel. They should encourage self-compliance and should not be seen by drivers as being a target speed at which to drive in all circumstances.

On review of the speed data you sent through the 85<sup>th</sup> percentile speed in each direction is 42mph and 43mph south and northbound respectively (however, I note the survey does not confirm the speeds surveyed were in mph or kph but clearly they must be mph), which is actually a positive outcome

from the survey. The location of the survey is good as it is anticipated a survey on the hill or at the bottom of the hill should be similar or provide lower speeds (as when collecting data, existing speed data should be recorded on the fastest section of road in free flowing conditions).

When setting new speed limits, the highway authority has to ensure that the new posted speed limit will be adhered to (with whatever additional measures are proposed). Therefore as the 85<sup>th</sup> percentile speed is close to 40mph this would provide a strong argument in your favour for having a reduced posted speed limit. Although, I know the response this will likely receive from the highway authority, is that as the 85<sup>th</sup> percentile speed is far lower than the current posted speed limit then they would argue there is not a perceived problem. In addition, in relation to the speed data if there is not a consistent relationship between the 85<sup>th</sup> percentile and mean speeds, this would be a good argument for the appropriateness of the existing limit to be reconsidered (although this does not seem to be the case with the data collected). However, it is the other key considerations that also need to be considered.

At present there are other locations on A1141 and on B1115, Bury Road where the speed limit has been reduced outside villages not dissimilar in some respect to the environment in the vicinity of Union Hill (Semer). Although the environment will be the more difficult element to prove in seeking a reduction to the posted speed limit, as there is not a huge amount of frontage activity with the road to create the environment for motorists that they have entered a lower speed limit zone.

In relation to the Personal Injury Collision data it is normally only the last 5 years that the highway authority consider. I have attached below the 5 year data from Crashmap, it would be worth requesting the additional data from Crashmap for the 5 slight accidents in the vicinity of the hill to see what the nature of these collisions were and if any pedestrians were involved (also does this tally with your knowledge of collisions on the hill). In addition, it might also be worth confirming what Personal Injury Collision data the highway authority hold to see if this is any different from that below (although they might point you to Crashmap). From the data within Crashmap this doesn't provide the history that proves there are issues on the hill, however, assessment of the environment in the vicinity does indicate concerns as we discussed on the phone.

On review of the environment, there are issues that raise safety concern as detailed below;

- No pedestrian facilities and limited verge on the hill, for pedestrians to use, especially given the presence of a number of residential properties and the road width. It would be good to get the number of cyclists from the survey data (although this detailed data might not be available if you ask for a breakdown). In addition, it would be good to get a realistic idea of any pedestrians walking along the road edge in this area.

- Lack of signage in the area for motorists of the hill/bend for the motorists travelling above the 85<sup>th</sup> percentile speed.

- Lack of visibility for a couple of properties on the Hill when entering the highway (although the response from the highway authority on this is to trim back vegetation at the entrance, but this depends on land ownership), however, even with vegetation still trimmed back it would be difficult to achieve the desired visibility splay from these properties given the current posted speed limit (clearly a reduction in speed limit would be beneficial from this perspective).

On balance, given the data and information, I think it would be difficult to get the highway authority to reduce the posted speed limit, although there are some points that do support the case. However, there is currently limited signage and information for motorists, therefore, it may be more fruitful to push for the following with the highway authority which could assist to reduce issues;

- Markings to be provided on the carriageway to warn motorists of the bend in the road leading from/to the hill (i.e 'SLOW' - Traffic Signs Manual Diag no 1024)

- Bend ahead signage - Diag no 512.1

-Pedestrians in carriageway signage (although it will need to be demonstrated that pedestrians are frequently walking along this section of road)- Diag no 544.1

I hope this helps, in 2013 Department for Transport produced a circular (Circular 01/13 'Setting Local Speed Limits') and a toolkit on setting local speed limits which is really useful. However, if you want to discuss anything or have any queries, please do not hesitate to contact me.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/setting-local-speed-limits/setting-local-speed-limits>

Kind Regards

Tim

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