

MINUTES OF THE VIRTUAL ONEHOUSE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING HELD ON
WEDNESDAY 5 MAY 2021 AT 7.00 P.M.

Present: Mr R Taylor – Chairman Onehouse Parish Council
County Cllr Otton
District Cllr Matthissen
10 members of the public.

1. To receive apologies for absence.

These were received from Ron Raisey.

2. To confirm the minutes of the meeting held on Monday 13 May 2019

It was proposed, seconded and carried to approve the minutes.

3. To receive the audited parish accounts for the financial year ended 31 March 2020

Copies of the accounts of the Parish Council were available. During the year a precept of £13,000.00 was raised. Donations were given to Suffolk Accident Rescue Service, Mid Suffolk Citizens Advice Bureau, East Anglian Air Ambulance, Ipswich & East Suffolk Headway.

The balance of the Income and Expenditure Account as at 31 March 2018 is £23,248.89. Funds held in earmarked reserves total £10,427.13.

4. Parish Council Report – Mrs N Willshire

This has been the most unusual of years; the National Lock down faced by the country due to the Covid.19 Pandemic has had a massive impact on all our lives.

I would like to reflect on all those who have lost loved ones due to this time and so many who have been isolated from family and friends.

I thank all those key workers who continued to keep the country going and the massive help and support local neighbourhoods have been to those when they needed it most. I was heartened by the 'Clap for Careers' each week seeing everyone on their doorsteps supporting the NHS and key workers.

It has been a difficult year or so many through a worrying time, but there have been some positives that have come out the situation. We have learnt more about technology in a short space of time, with the Parish Council and other groups meetings using video facilities enabling activities to continue. The OHS Mag went 'online' for those who could access it – Thanks to Ron Raisey. All those parents who have had to home school and workers who have set up from home to keep everyone safe.

We have faced another year of the continued encroachment of Stowmarket into our Parish as development has continued across from Chilton Fields, Hopkins Homes and possible further development on the land next to the Hopkins Homes development. It seems despite best efforts from many our village identity is sadly reducing, and we face another boundary review this year.

I thank Peggy Fuller as Parish clerk and my fellow councillors for their work during the year, the working party that keep the Paupers Graves so well and the members of the village who rallied around and supported each other.

Hopefully as we go through this year we will be able to yet again enjoy more social events and activities at the Village Hall, and public events open up and we can look forward to a village fete in the not too distant future.

5. Matters arising from the previous items on the agenda.

There were none.

6. County Councillor's Report – Mrs P Otton.

During this most challenging of years, the LDGI Group have worked hard to continue holding Suffolk County Council's administration to account. We have adapted to the new way of working and the introduction of online council meetings including Full Council, During lockdown we lobbied for key residential streets to be shut down to allow people to work and exercise. We called for official objection to Sizewell C and implemented a ground-breaking biodiversity strategy, as well as creating a new database for paid and unpaid carers.

Suffolk County Council Budget 2021-22

The Suffolk County Council Budget was voted through Full Council on February 11th. This year's budget is based on a 12-month financial settlement from government, rather than the 3- or 4-year agreement which is usually offered. Key points include: A council tax rise of 3.99% (1.99% basic council tax and 2% Social Care Precept, representing an increase of £53.55 for a Band D property, from £1,343.61 in 2020-21 to £1,397.16 in 2021-22.

LDGI Group Budget Amendment

The LDGI Group submitted a budget amendment to Full Council on February 11th the key change proposed by the LDGI Group was to authorise the use of the full 3% social care precept, unlocking the maximum available funding without impacting SCC's reserves. This would generate an extra £3.452m for social care at a cost of only £13.41 per year to a Band D household, freeing up general council tax funds to be spent on other projects and investments. This budget amendment was unfortunately voted down by the administration.

Motions from the Liberal Democrat, Green and Independent Group

My Group proposed four motions to Council in 2020-21: A call for the Council to publicly oppose EDF Energy's proposed Sizewell C development and retract any 'in principle' support for nuclear power, a 20mph scheme to reduce speed limits in all suitable residential areas from 30mph to 20mph, for a price of £4m. Communities would have been able to opt out, a biodiversity motion that would implement a new biodiversity strategy, a carer's motion that will create a database of both paid and unpaid carers and offer increased support. The first two motions were rejected, though the Council backtracked on Sizewell C just two months later and now states that they cannot support the build in its current form. The biodiversity motion passed.

Biodiversity strategy adopted

At Full Council on the 3rd December, Suffolk County Council unanimously passed a motion that will see Suffolk County Council developing a biodiversity strategy and embracing biodiverse land management practices. The motion was proposed by the LDGI Group and supported by all other groups.

LDGI Group motion on carer's database receives unanimous support

At Full Council on March 18th the LDGI Group presented a motion designed to improve the county's support offer for carers. The motion will see the Council working with Suffolk Family Carers to form an opt-in register for paid and unpaid carers, who will be offered increased support including advice, signposting to key services, and the option to be consulted on key policies affecting carers.

Suffolk County Council decides to oppose Sizewell C

The Cabinet at Suffolk County Council agreed on 22 September that they can no longer support EDF Energy's proposals for Sizewell C in their current form. However, the Cabinet maintained their support for the principle of a new nuclear power station in Suffolk.

Calls for road closures during lockdown to enable walking & cycling

The LDGI Group called on Suffolk County Council to close roads that are used by residents to get their daily exercise, to ensure that walkers/cyclists can exercise safely and maintain social distancing. These closures were implemented, beginning with a closure of

Ipswich Waterfront to through-traffic for 3 weeks. Following a Government programme of road closures, this scheme was rolled out further.

Cabinet approves 5-year cycling plan for Suffolk

In June 2020 the Cabinet approved a 5-year cycling plan for Suffolk, which identified 148 potential routes to be prioritised. This is as a result of a motion proposed by the LDGI group in July 2018, which called on the council to produce a strategic costed 5-year cycling plan.

Climate emergency recommendations published

In July 2020, the Cabinet approved the recommendations of a cross-party policy development panel outlining how the council should respond to the climate emergency and reduce emissions. This followed a motion from the LDGI group in March 2019, which declared a climate emergency and committed the council to be carbon neutral by 2030.

Changes to Children's Centres challenged

In August 2020, the Cabinet agreed to reduce the number of Children's Centres in Suffolk from 38 to 17 full-time and 11 part-time Family Hubs. 8 centres will be repurposed for nurseries or SEND provision, whilst 2 will close permanently (Chatterbox in Ipswich and Caterpillar in Woodbridge).

The council has said that this is not a cost-saving exercise and that any savings will be used to fund additional staff for outreach work.

Automatic number plate recognition camera project (ANPR)

Suffolk County Council is working with the police to run a 2-year ANPR camera trial in speeding hot spots across the county. The cameras will be used to help detect and deter speeding offences that have been highlighted in towns and villages and educate drivers on the importance of road safety.

An ANPR camera will be installed at a site where it has been identified by a local council, with support from their county councillor,

LOCALITY FUND: I am pleased to again be able to help with improvement work at Trinity Hall, to help with the licence for a commemorative bench for Mr Read and I have helped with an access for a resident in Ash Road,

PLANNING I have objected to the application on Union road and am appalled at the loss of trees and hedgerows, which go against both councils' declaration to protect biodiversity.

HIGHWAYS: With the parish council we have at last got some flooding resolved at the junction of Starhouse Lane, but we will continue to resolve the problems on Combs Ford and at the bridge.

7. District Councillor's Report – Mr J Matthissen.

Governance Due to the Covid 19 emergency, there were no Council meetings from 23 March 2020 until the new Government legislation to allow virtual meetings was approved in May. Council staff have been working from home where possible and all Council and committee meetings are currently being conducted virtually using the Teams platform. The Annual Council meeting was deferred until September. The Green Party councillors formed a council group with the Liberal Democrat councillors, so we now form 50% of the total number of councillors. The cabinet, leader and committee chairs (all Conservative) were elected on the casting vote of the outgoing chair of council in 2019.

Budget and investments The COVID pandemic is continuing to have a financial impact on the Council's budget. There are already losses of approximately £1M with projected losses of a further £1M during 2021/22. The Government has provided support but not sufficient to cover all the extra costs and reduced income. Despite having about £10M in reserves the Council increased Council Tax by 1.66%. It has been agreed that £4M of the reserves are to be allocated to the following departments Communities, Housing,

Economy and Well-being. The new rules about Public Works Loan Board (PWLB) borrowing did not immediately halt the second round of property acquisitions, but the threat from Government of no further loans for council housing projects seems to have ruled out further speculation.

Climate Change and Biodiversity The Climate Change working group made a number of proposals to Council, including projects such as Solar Carport at the Mid Suffolk Leisure centre site, and waste fleet conversion to biodiesel fuel. Work is also underway at the leisure centres to reduce the carbon footprint. There is to be a biodiversity mapping project across the district and the public realm team are hoping to work with parish councils to promote more tree and hedgerow planting, and meadow management.

Housing Council housing rents are set to increase by CPI+1%, which is on average £1.25 increase per week. Garage rents are to remain the same. Sheltered housing service charges are to increase by £1 per week, and sheltered housing rents are to remain the same as last year. In principle 'right-to-buy' receipts are to be retained for use to develop and acquire new council dwellings. There is a programme of decarbonising Council dwellings. This year (20/21) 62 Air Source Heat pumps and 169 boilers have been installed in Council properties and there are a further 200 planned boiler installations over next year at a cost of £1.8m. A pilot project in Harleston is underway to test various schemes to find out the most suitable approach to refurbish our housing stock.

Planning The Regulation 19 Babergh and Mid Suffolk Joint Local Plan was agreed by both Councils and is now awaiting examination by the Planning Inspectorate. It is hoped that this will be able to proceed to adoption by the end of this year. A number of unsatisfactory planning decisions affected the ward this year, although a few were rejected, followed in some cases by appeals. Worst by far was the outline approval of 146 houses south of Union Road, Onehouse, forced through on the casting vote of the Conservative chair despite only being a reserve allocation in the Stowmarket Area Action Plan, despite the District already having over 6000 planning approvals awaiting builders, and despite opposition from the parish council on behalf of many local people. Public concern has grown to alarm as trees and hedges have disappeared in many places, in stark contradiction of the council declaring a biodiversity emergency in 2019. This highlights the need for more detailed study of the implications of planning applications, but also the many loopholes in legislation which purports to protect trees, hedges and wildlife. I will ask again that the council appoints more tree officers.

Supporting the community Many community groups have struggled during the pandemic, but I was pleased to support the following organisations with my locality budget this year: Harleston -Tree and Green maintenance, Great Finborough-Wildflower meadow information board, Ward-wide-Mobile Public Address system, Onehouse-Trinity Hall floor, Onehouse -New Mower, Combs & Lt Finboro'-Oaks Meadow project, Harleston -Dog waste bin. Community grants of over £150k have been awarded to community projects throughout the district as well as £100k specifically targeted at COVID related support groups.

I would like to thank the Parish Councils for all their work done throughout the year, and in particular thank many people for the formal and informal support that has helped our communities through the pandemic.

Mr Taylor advised that the audio system was being used very successfully.

Discussion pursued regarding the losses from the property acquisitions and that MSDC should be held to account.

9. To receive reports from Local Organisations

OHS Good Neighbour Scheme

Over the past year, whilst coping with the difficulties of the Coronavirus pandemic, here are some of the ways our volunteers have provided help and support in the local community: Collecting and delivering prescriptions, shopping for those shielding, self-isolating or unable to go shopping, telephone befriending and support for anyone feeling lonely, posting mail, giving out information on suppliers who deliver or do a contactless pick-up service, garden coffee mornings or afternoon tea groups of 6 people (weather and regulations permitting), MacMillan Coffee morning in September 2020 when we raised over £560, encouraging decorating the villages to provide some Christmas cheer, setting up two Food Bank donation points (on average 28kgs of food is collected each week), annual litter pick.

Unfortunately, due to Government guidelines and for safety reasons, we have been unable to offer lifts for medical appointments or shopping trips during the pandemic. We have provided information on alternative transport providers and hope to be able to resume our service as soon as restrictions are lifted.

Onehouse Church

The past year has been a huge challenge for us all as we have faced the impact of the Covid 19 Pandemic. We all know that all our communities have people who have become isolated; cut off from family visits; sometimes suffering covid themselves and having to come to terms with changes in lifestyle and, of course, those who have been bereaved. The response of our benefice [group of parishes] to the onset of the pandemic was very strong. In the early stages of the lockdown, the Ministry Team quickly set up firstly YouTube recorded sermons with suggested music, which soon became a live Zoom service of spiritual communion each week with a pew sheet and live hymn music, which allowed the congregations from across the Benefice to come together in worship. Many people who are not usually in our congregations have also joined us to make a congregation of about 70 each week. Pastoral care switched from personal visits to conversations over the phone, emails, cards and letters including the pew sheet and printed sermon posted to over 20 parishioners who are not on email. Throughout our rural communities, neighbours have looked out for neighbours—collecting shopping and prescriptions. Some churches remained open for private prayer, others set up prayer porches. Some activities have had to be put on hold, but we are planning for the future and are eager to look at how we take forward a new way of worship and incorporate it into existing traditions to benefit existing and new congregations.

As always we have worked alongside community run groups to help provide cover for shopping and prescription collection as well as other needs.

During the pandemic, the leaders of our two Messy Church teams [children's work] from Combs and Great Finborough have worked together providing amongst other things two Treasure Hunts based on 'God's Love' in two churchyards. We plan on Zoom and send out about 55 activity packs for festivals. We are considering how to work more closely when planning activities in both Combs and Great Finborough churches for the benefit of the benefice. We are working out how best to facilitate the move back into our churches whilst maintaining our contact with our 'activity pack families'.

Weekly bible study sessions are held at Finborough Court Residential Home open to all the benefice. It takes place on Zoom at present. This has become an Advent and then Lent group when appropriate.

Contributions are made in most parishes to Stowmarket Food Bank which has been well supported during lockdown.

During the Covid pandemic lockdowns, Evening Prayer services were held in some churchyards in the summer months, followed by an outdoor Harvest Festival and Carol

Services, with music provided by the Battisford Free Church Band and the Buxhall handbell ringers.

During the last year, there have been many funerals both in churches, churchyards and at various crematoria with restricted numbers able to attend. As we move back towards a more "normal" life, we need to remember those who have been bereaved and the grief they have had to bear perhaps alone.

Baptisms/Christenings were mostly cancelled and we were able to hold some weddings between lockdowns.

Schools work and visits to Chilton Meadows Care Home have yet to restart.

At the end of January 2021, the Revd. Chris Childs and Wendy moved to Grazeley where Chris is now Team Vicar in the Forest Heath Team in Mildenhall Deanery where he is Rural Dean. [He also has another "temporary" post!] He and Wendy are much missed, but they are nearer to their families who need more support at times.

The "pathway" to choosing a new Rector is now underway and we look forward to the next stages.

At present, zoom services and meetings take place every week as well as a timetable for holding services in our churches once again.

It's a great encouragement to work alongside Parish Council Members in serving such lively and vibrant communities.

2 other encouragements:-Sound system, for use outside or indoor use has been provided for our community use with a grant provided by Councillor John Mathissen. Please contact Ray Taylor to book this and Trinity Hall Onehouse now has some very splendid new toilet facilities and other refurbishments are planned. Thanks to the hardworking Trinity Hall Committee.

Tree and Footpath Warden

The lockdown of 2020 somewhat curtailed our footpath and tree inspections.

We managed one check in October which unfortunately was cut short by heavy rain.

This year we have been out several times and have walked all the Parish footpaths. On the whole there have been few issues to report. All footpaths are accessible, ditches are clear, no visible dog mess, which was a relief to see, paths across field land have been maintained by landowners. It would, however, be clearer for those using the footpaths, if more signage was on display, it can be difficult to judge where a footpath ends and private land begins. On a positive note we were pleased to see the leaflets posted around several of the footpaths adjacent to fields stating "These fields produce your food, please keep your dog in sight and under control; follow the path."

Despite a large amount of tree felling through Northfield Wood all pathways have been kept clear. Unfortunately, one of the swing gates leading into Northfield Wood has been broken. This does not hinder use of the pathway but has left some broken fencing which we'd like to see replaced when the gate is reinstated.

We found no evidence on any footpaths of trees presenting a danger to the public or overhanging any of the footpaths hindering access

OHS Village Hall and Playing Field Trust

Due to the pandemic the Community Centre has been closed to general use for the past 12 months, only being used by Little Foresters when they were allowed to go back to inside use as decreed by the government. We have been fortunate to have some money coming in, in the way of grants from the government by way of MSDC for loss of earnings as we have been unable to process any bookings or hold any functions. With the help of local trades people and a number of volunteers from Onehouse, work has progressed with the new outbuildings at the back of the Community Centre.

These will provide secure storage for Jubilee Players, Little Foresters and the management committee. Once this is complete we will knock down the old

outbuildings, clean up the bricks and tiles for resale, and then create more parking space for the Community Centre.

Our next project is to relay the floor in the Community Centre as this has been down for many many years and is now starting to lift, making it hazardous for the children attending Little Foresters. There is also a problem with the sub frame on which the floor is laid, and that will need completely replacing. Quotes for this project are in, as you would expect they are high, but from a safety aspect it has to be done so we are doing all we can to raise the money to do it. We also need to replace a couple of windows, as the frames are rotten, and replace the notice board outside.

All in all, despite the pandemic, it's been a busy time for us with these projects. Hopefully we can soon get back to "normal" with the bar opening and bringing in some much needed revenue.

Local History Group

As you would expect, no meetings due to the pandemic and none booked for the remainder of 2021.

Most of our members are elderly, some have been shielding, others only going out for essentials so the committee decided we would not meet again until everything is back to normal and all our members felt comfortable about meeting.

OHS Women's Guild

What a difficult year this has been for everyone but looking ahead we must try to plan and be positive. Obviously we have not been able to meet at Trinity Hall since March 2020 but some of our members have been able to stay in touch by Zoom meetings. Others have kept in touch by telephone. We managed a Christmas party on Zoom in December but obviously not all members were able to take part. Those who could really enjoyed a bit of dressing up, Christmas themed humorous poetry and stories, finishing with a few Christmas Carols. We have 26 members and hope to arrange some small garden groups keeping in line with covid rules and hopefully an afternoon tea in the garden in July.

Jill Nibloe very kindly arranged craft sessions making material tulips over 3 mornings in her garden, again keeping within the covid rules, great fun. Hopefully we will be able to meet again in the Trinity Hall in September if the rules allow, fingers crossed.

Paupers Graves Team

We have had a very positive and quite progressive year with a lot of small achievements. We are a team of seven 'Old Boys' who met regularly twice a month throughout the winter and keep the grass area cut during the Summer Months.

This year due to Covid regulations we have not been able to meet regularly as in previous years but, we continued the grass cutting in the main graves area and kept the whole area tidy. Since my last report two years ago we have had quite a number of trees gifted to us; two holly trees from the Dog Walkers Group, and two Rowen trees, one from a widow in memory of her husband who died a few years ago and we planted it near the Oak Bench she donated two years ago. The other Rowen was donated by a lady who lost her daughter and husband to Cancer two years ago and she has purchased another Rowen to be planted in the same area this autumn. During Covid Lockdown the increase of people walking into the Graves area has increased by about 300%, most of them amazed at the beauty and tranquility of the Area and very complementary to the hard work put into making it such a serene little spot. A lot of them confessed that they have lived in Stowmarket all their lives and didn't realise it was there!! Before Lockdown kicked in we cleared the centre area and scattered a lot of wild flower seeds in the area to create a wild flower section. We must wait and see which flowers appear. During the year we lost one worker and gained another so we still stand at seven.

We are quite a friendly team who not only do an excellent job in the area but we put the world to right over a coffee and cake (as we have a cake rota) and have held two Woodman's Dinners along with our wives but not last year.

10. Any other business

There was none

The meeting closed at 7.59 p.m.

Signed.....

Dated.....