

Widdington Parish Council

Draft Minutes of a Parish Council Meeting held on Thursday 5th March, 2020 at 8.00pm

Present Vice-Chair Margaret Hudson, Cllr Jill Brookman, Cllr Chris Firmin and Cllr Ian Southcott.

In Attendance 24 members of the public, and Amanda Lindsell, Clerk to the Council.

03.20.01 CHAIR`S WELCOME

Vice-Chair Margaret Hudson welcomed those present to the meeting.

03.20.02 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received and noted from Chair Maria Orr, Cllr Maggs Webb and District Councillors Anthony Gerard and Neil Hargreaves.

03.20.03 CO-OPTION OF NEW COUNCILLOR

None.

03.20.04 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST.

Cllr Margaret Hudson declared an interest in agenda item 03.20.11.i as a neighbour of the applicant.

Cllr Chris Firmin, declared an interest in agenda item 03.20.11.ii as a neighbour of the applicant.

03.20.05 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

A representative of the applicant for 03.20.11i requested the Parish Council`s support of their planning application UTT/20/0313/FUL - Pond Mead, High Street, Widdington, and detailed their wish to create low impact environmentally sympathetic houses. The applicants claim to offer an opportunity to recreate a currently uninhabitable property into an aesthetically pleasing A energy rated home, using traditional materials, relocating the properties further from the road in response to residents` feedback and with as little impact on the environment as possible.

Members of the public expressed their concerns at the demolition of an historic 18C building and replacement with two mock Georgian mansions, and noted that the massive 10m high, modern executive homes would be entirely out of keeping for Widdington and an extreme over-development of the site. Other concerns raised included the dangerous access to these immediate roadside properties, negative visual impact on the village entrance and domination of the landscape. It was noted that the site plan details the demolition of the existing brick boundary wall with the pavement and a replacement "new brick and flint boundary wall" be erected.

The wall is cited in the, recent "Widdington Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Proposals, Approved October 2013" as an important feature of Widdington Conservation area, and as such should be protected and retained. The Planning Inspector`s recent comment regarding the general unsuitability of Widdington as a `sustainable` location for development was also noted.

A member of the public challenged the applicant`s claim that the property is not renovatable, and detailed their own work transforming a once dilapidated EPC rated F/G 18C, timber frame property in Widdington, into a B/A rated almost carbon neutral home.

The Parish Council were asked to call the application into Planning Committee.

The clerk requested a show of hands from the public in support of the application. No hands were raised.

The clerk requested a show of hands from the public to indicate objection to the application. 21 hands were raised. There were 3 abstentions.

03.20.06 MINUTES OF LAST MEETING

The minutes of the February Parish Council Meeting were approved by Councillors as an accurate representation and signed by Vice-Chair Margaret Hudson.

03.20.07 COUNTY COUNCILLOR'S REPORT

To be heard on arrival.

03.20.08 DISTRICT COUNCILLOR'S REPORT

The Clerk read out the report submitted by District Cllr Hargreaves;

The Corporate Plan was approved last week <https://www.uttlesford.gov.uk/article/6581/Residents-at-the-heart-of-new-Corporate-Plan>

The wording re parish councils was amended based on the discussion I had with the PC a few weeks ago.

Also approved was the 20/21 budget and Commercial Strategy. Council house rents going up 2.7%, to average of £101 a week, after four years of govt mandated (unfunded) 1% pa reductions. Council tax up £5 a year ie 10p a week.

Commercial Strategy is to build a £300m fund of investments to provide income to fill a pending £3.6m pa govt funding cut. The main one is Chesterford Research Park £54m. Another one of £32m has been approved and two more large ones are in process. We are diversifying locations and type of buildings being bought. We are constrained effectively to commercial property

A decision will be taken shortly on the Local Plan next steps and external consultants from the Local Government Association are assisting with this.

A fundamental review of the Planning Dept is in progress.

03.20.09 CLERK'S REPORT

The clerk reported;

- i. Request submitted to District Councillors regarding New Homes Bonus towards the new play park swings and District Cllr Hargreaves has confirmed that he can contribute £376 towards the swings. District Cllr Gerard has indicated that he may also be able to contribute.
- ii. Geoff Gardner has advised that he is not familiar with the Neighbourhood Plan process, and has not been involved in the preparation of a Neighbourhood Plan. Geoff confirms that it is a lengthy, complicated process which requires significant resources but that grants may be available and there is lots of advice available on-line. He also recommends District Cllr Neil Hargreaves as he has been leading on the Newport Neighbourhood Plan. Geoff confirms that the dismissed appeal in Widdington will help to ward off other developments. The Inspector's conclusion on the general unsuitability of Widdington as a 'sustainable' location for development is important but there may be other sites being promoted in the short term with the rejection of the UDC Local Plan, thus making anywhere vulnerable. To be effective, the Neighbourhood Plan would have to be adopted after the preparation phase which could take two years, so until then it would not have any real weight.
- iii. Following attendance at the Unauthorised Encampment Briefing 05/02/2020, I have circulated my notes to the Council.
- iv. I contacted a local farmer regarding the hard core at the play park, who expressed an interest, but has not I believe collected it to date.
- v. Due to the imminent closure of EssexInfo I have transferred Widdington Parish Council's website to Evoice, Widdington Parish Council's website can be found at ; <https://e-voice.org.uk/widdingtonparishcouncil/>
- vi. Suitable dates requested for First Aid training.
- vii. Having contacted various parties regarding the Cornells Lane verge damage, including the owner of Mole Hall, the hedge cutter has subsequently been in touch stating that while the verge was run on, they did not consider they had caused any damage that would not naturally recover as in previous years and has offered to meet with a member or members of the Parish Council to discuss the matter further.
- viii. Rissa Long has confirmed that the planned survey of Cornells Lane will take place in April.
- ix. Letter to all residents regarding safe driving, printed and ready to despatch.
- x. I have submitted my notice of resignation 28/02/2020.

03.20.10 FINANCE

i. The clerk presented a statement of accounts and reconciliation to cash books which were agreed and signed.

Cheques - 101233 - Play park maintenance - £113.74

101234 - Wicksteed - new swings - £6292.43

101235 - Clerk's salary February 2020 - £234.39

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101236 - Clerk's expenses February 2020 - £107.75

were agreed for payment and signed by Cllr Hudson.

It was noted that two signatories are required to attend at Barclays, together, with appropriate ID, to authorise the transfer of £10,000 from the business account to the current account.

03.20.11 PLANNING

The Parish Council agreed to submit the following comments to Uttlesford District Council relating to planning;

i. UTT/20/0313/FUL - Pond Mead, High Street, Widdington

Demolition of existing dwelling and construction of 2 no. detached dwellings, garages and associated works.

Vice-Chair Hudson recused herself from participating in this agenda item.

It was agreed that the Council objects to this application on the grounds raised by the public at tonight's meeting, and will request that the District Cllrs call the application into Planning Committee.

ii. UTT/20/0440/HHF - Willow House, Wood End, Widdington

Demolition of existing attached triple garage. Proposed two-storey extensions to both sides and single-storey rear extension.

Cllr Firmin recused himself from participating in this agenda item. No objections.

The following planning decision was noted;

iii. UTT/19/2643/FUL - Pond Mead, High Street, Widdington

Construction of 1 no. detached dwelling and associated works (Revised scheme for plot 3 previously approved under UTT/18/3279/FUL) - Approved with conditions.

03.20.12 PLAY PARK

Vice-Chair Hudson confirmed the installation of the new swings at the play park and also the ongoing work to rejuvenate the other areas within the park.

The Council continues to seek support from residents in the maintenance and renewal of the play park.

03.20.13 HAMEL WAY GARAGES

The clerk detailed the results from the recent asbestos management survey and it was agreed that further advice would be sought regarding the removal of items containing asbestos from within some garages before contact is made with the garage leasees.

Clerk to source asbestos warning labels for the garages where evidence of asbestos was found.

03.20.14 CORNELLS LANE

It was noted that following on from concerns raised at the February PC meeting regarding damage to verges on Cornells Lane by a farmer cutting hedges, further damage has been caused by Gigaclear's current contractors Telec Networks, who have promised they will rectify the damage and provide photographic evidence of their repairs.

Cllrs Brookman and Southcott resolved to arrange a meeting with the local farmer who has been in touch.

Clerk to forward photographs.

A member of the public noted that Gigaclear have not returned to restore the far end of Cornells Lane from their work in 2019, which is causing drivers to reroute, causing the road surface to break up.

03.20.15 OTHER BUSINESS

None.

03.20.16 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Parish Council will be at 8pm on Thursday 2nd April, 2020

Vice-Chair Hudson then suspended the meeting for part two and the public left the meeting.

03.10.10ii FINANCE CONTINUED

The Council agreed that the clerk's proposed resignation is very much regretted and following a re-evaluation offered to increase the Clerk's hourly rate to new SCP25 to try to retain the Clerk. The Clerk accepted the proposal and rescinded her notice of resignation.

The Council adopted the HR proposals submitted by Chair Orr.

Vice-Chair Hudson reopened the meeting.

County Cllr Ray Gooding arrived.

03.20.07 COUNTY COUNCILLOR'S REPORT

County Cllr Ray Gooding provided an update on communications with Widdington Recycling;

- i. ECC have requested that lights are turned off in line with their planning consent. Cllr Southcott noted that the lights were on at 4am this week.
- ii. Kevin Bentley's letter was factually incorrect, and ready mix concrete lorries have been given permission by EH to drive through the village as they don't fit under the bridge. Enforcement are now applying pressure to ensure traffic movements are appropriate.
- iii. three planning applications are anticipated;
 - a. Retrospective for large building already erected.
 - b. Drainage tanks.
 - c. Extension of time, further 8 years to 2031. ECC believe that a further 3 years would be more agreeable.
- iv. A meeting has been requested for early April, before the applications are considered, PC to be advised.

The meeting closed at 21.18.