

**MINUTES OF THE ORDINARY MEETING OF BRENT ELEIGH PARISH COUNCIL
HELD ON 19 JANUARY 2023 IN THE VILLAGE HALL COMMENCING AT 7.30PM**

Present:

Cllr Kevin Went (Chair)
Cllr Martin Austin
Cllr Natalie Helms
Cllr Karen Marshall
Cllr Francesca Scoones

Apologies:

County Cllr Robert Lindsay
District Cllr Bryn Hurren

In Attendance:

William Grosvenor (*Clerk to the Council*)
5 Members of the Public

Item No	Item discussed
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23.01	Chair's welcome Cllr Went welcomed all present to the meeting.
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23.02	To receive apologies for absence Apologies were received from County Cllr Robert Lindsay and District Cllr Bryn Hurren.
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23.03	Declarations of Interest
23.03.01	To receive Amendments to the Register There were no amendments to the Register.
23.03.02	To receive Declarations of Pecuniary Interest in Respect of Items on the Agenda There were no declarations of Pecuniary Interest in respect of Items on the Agenda.
23.03.03	To receive Declarations of Non Pecuniary Interest in Respect of Items on the Agenda There were no declarations of Non Pecuniary Interest in respect of Items on the Agenda.
23.03.04	To consider Full / Partial Dispensations for Pecuniary Interests Declared It was noted that there had been no requests for dispensation for Pecuniary Interests declared.

23.04	Minutes of the previous meeting It was RESOLVED to approve the minutes of the Ordinary Meeting held on 24 November 2022 and sign them as a true and accurate record. Proposed by: Cllr Marshall Seconded by: Cllr Austin
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In view of the attendance of Members of the Public for the Item relating to Hall Road parking, it was then agreed to take this Item next on the Agenda

23.05	Reports from Councillors - Hall Road parking Cllr Helms raised concerns, which were supported by residents, relating to the poor state and inadequacy of the parking area off Hall Road opposite Snapes Lane. The site, although understood to have once been part of the Brent Eleigh Hall estate and donated by the late Sir David Barran to facilitate residents' parking, is now considered as part of Highways' land. Following discussions between residents and Councillors, it was AGREED that the Clerk will contact Cllr Robert Lindsay as County Councillor for a meeting to discuss the possibility of carrying out a simple feasibility study to identify the best ways of making improvements acceptable to County which might be funded from CIL monies or other resources.
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It was then agreed to revert to the order of the Agenda

- 23.06 To receive the District Councillor's report**
Cllr Hurren had previously distributed a report via email which was read out by the Clerk. The text of the report is appended below at **Appendix 1**.
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- 23.07 To receive the County Councillor's report**
Cllr Lindsay had previously distributed a report via email which was read out by the Clerk. The text of the report is appended below at **Appendix 2**.
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- 23.08 To discuss any village matters**
None were raised.
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- 23.09 To receive a report from the village Neighbourhood Watch Co-ordinator**
There was nothing to report.
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- 23.10 To receive and consider reports on financial and governance matters**
- 23.10.01 Financial update report**
The Clerk tabled copies of the updated cashbook and bank reconciliation, which showed the balance in the Council's account with Lloyds Bank, as at 17 January 2023, standing at £5,383.49. From that current balance the following sums are continuing to be held as earmarked reserves:
- £1,000.00 as a contribution towards running costs / improvements at the village hall.
 - £380.34 CIL payment received on 11 October. This has to be expended by October 2026 and will be applied to a specific CIL funded project once more CIL monies are received.
- 23.10.02 Approval of payments**
There were no payments for approval. **It was AGREED** to delegate approval for the payment of the Highways Licence in respect of the Memorial Bench (see Minute 23.12.03 below) to the Clerk in conjunction with the Chair once all the Highways requirements have been satisfied. **It was also AGREED** to consider payment by the Parish Council for use of the Village Hall for meetings and that will be put on the Agenda for discussion at the next meeting.
- 23.10.03 To agree the Budget for 2023/24**
The Clerk tabled copies of updated budgets for 2022/23 and for the Council year 2023/24. The 2023/24 budget figures were based on the same precept as the current year (£2,700), with an opening balance of £5,325 and proposed expenditure of £2,458. **It was RESOLVED** to agree the draft budget for 2023/24 as presented subject to further discussion about the precept requirement.
Proposed by: Cllr Went **Seconded by:** Cllr Scoones
- 23.10.04 To agree the Precept for 2023/24**
The Clerk advised that the Council's precept requirement has to be notified to Babergh by 31 January 2023. Because of an increase in the parish tax base, if the precept requirement stays at £2,700 the Band D requirement will fall from £30.13 to £29.43, a *decrease* of 2.31%. If the Band D requirement is kept at £30.13, then then it will yield an additional £64.00 giving a total of £2,764. This will show as a 0% rise on the tax bill. If the Council requires £2,800, then the Band D rate will be £30.52, an increase of 1.31%. If the Council requires £2,900, then the Band D rate will be £31.61, an increase of 4.93%.
Following discussion **it was RESOLVED** to request a precept of £2,800 for the Council year 2023/24.
Proposed by: Cllr Went **Seconded by:** Cllr Scoones
- 23.10.05 Electronic banking – update**
As Members were previously advised, the Clerk now has online access to the Council's Treasurer's account with Lloyds Bank and is in possession of a business debit card, in accordance with the resolution of the Council at its meeting on 13 October 2022. In order to facilitate fully electronic banking, **it was RESOLVED** to arrange to add the Clerk as an authorised signatory (first signatory) and to arrange for the existing Councillor signatories to have online access to approve (so one of them can countersign).
Proposed by: Cllr Went **Seconded by:** Cllr Scoones
The Clerk tabled the necessary paperwork and the application form to add the Clerk as a signatory was signed by Councillors Went and Scoones as existing full power signatories, for the Clerk to forward to Lloyds Bank. The Clerk advised that he had previously forwarded a link from Lloyds Bank to the existing signatories in order that they can register for electronic banking as well.

23.10.06 Notification of appointment of External Auditor 2022/23 to 2026/27
The Clerk informed Members that the government has awarded the contract for external audit services to P K F Littlejohn – the auditor that has held the contract for the past 5 years. It will be unlikely to affect Brent Eleigh PC as the exemption from external audit for councils with a turnover of below £25k is likely to be continued.

23.10.07 Appointment of Internal Auditor for 2022/23
The Clerk reminded the Council of the urgent need to find a replacement for the previous auditor who has resigned for health reasons. Cllr Went responded that he is hopeful of finding someone suitably qualified.

23.11 To receive reports from Councillors

23.11.01 Clay Lane - update
Cllr Marshall reported that the condition of Clay Lane at the Lavenham end has deteriorated, and its condition needs to be drawn to the attention of Lavenham Parish Council.

23.11.02 Quiet Lanes
Cllr Went reported recent exchanges with a resident of Monks Eleigh, who had queried why the 'Quiet Lane' designation of Tye Lane eastwards from the end of the built up area of Monks Eleigh ends at the parish boundary, instead of continuing on to the junction with Hall Road in Brent Eleigh. Unfortunately funding considerations had led Brent Eleigh PC to decide not to join the scheme. After that decision Highways found the money to undertake the designations proposed without parish funding, which was unfortunate. Although there is no County funding to develop the scheme further at the present time, it is still possible to nominate potential new 'Quiet Lanes' for future consideration, and **it was AGREED** that the Clerk will submit the stretch of Tye Lane from the parish boundary to the junction with Hall Road for such consideration when possible. Cllr Went will inform the enquirer accordingly.

23.12 To receive the Clerk's report

23.12.01 SALC Member Survey 2023
The Clerk took Members through the questions contained in the survey relating to the Council's priorities, challenges and training needs for 2023/24. Following discussion **it was AGREED** to delegate a response to the Clerk, to be made by the deadline of 31 January.

23.12.02 The coronation of King Charles III on 6 May 2023
It was AGREED to defer a discussion on this until the next meeting.

23.12.03 Queen Elizabeth II Memorial bench
The Clerk reported that he had received the paperwork required for the street furniture licence from the Highways Licensing Office. The application form required details both of the proposed method of fixing and date of installation, and he was awaiting information on those points from the contractor. If the licence is granted there will be a fee (not so far specified) and a decision on that is delegated to the Clerk in conjunction with the Chair (see Minute 23.10.02 above).

23.12.04 Iron Bridge adjacent to A1141
Cllr Scoones reported that she had made enquiries of suitable contacts to seek further information regarding the bridge and responses are awaited.

23.12.05 Protection for the grass triangle around the village sign – update
A response from a Highways' engineer via Cllr Lindsay received on 25 November 2022 did not support the Council's proposals on this on the grounds that such bollards might impede vehicles and cause accidents with insurance and maintenance problems and impede grass cutting! This seems to put traffic before amenity and if a bench is going to be installed then safety should trump the convenience of drivers to drive across the grass. **It was AGREED** that a discussion with Cllr Lindsay is required.

23.12.06 Cundys Lane - update
The Clerk reported that following confirmation from Highways Records that Cundys Lane south of the A1141 is a highway maintainable at public expense (see Minute 22.93.04 of the 24 November 2022 meeting), he has advised the manager of Brook Farm over the company's responsibilities in relation to the maintenance of trees and hedgerows.

23.13 Planning issues

23.13.01 To consider planning applications received
1. **DC/23/00042 – Alder Carr, The Street – notification of tree works in a conservation area.**
Following discussion **it was AGREED** not to make any comment on this application.

- 23.13.02 To consider updates on planning applications**
2. DC/22/04805 – Brett Lodge – alternative outbuilding.
The Council objected to this revised application on 20 October 2022 and a decision is still awaited. On 22 December 2022 the Babergh Heritage and Design Officer commented that the revised proposal would cause a very low level of less than substantial harm to the character and appearance of this part of the Conservation area.
3. DC/22/06066 – Bridge Cottage – construction of pool, pool house and associated infrastructure.
On 30 December 2022 the Council raised concerns about the arrangements for the discharges of any chlorinated water given the site has no mains drainage and is located immediately adjacent to the River Brett. A formal decision is awaited.
- 23.13.03 To receive notifications on planning applications determined by Babergh DC**
4. DC/22/05490 – Macs Folly, Brent Mill Drive – single storey extension.
Planning consent was granted on 22 December 2022.
5. DC/22/05879 – Bennetts Piece, Cock Lane – discharge of condition relating to lighting of the menage.
This was approved. The way this decision was reached raises concerns and Cllr Hurren has been included in the note which the Clerk distributed to Parish Councillors on this on 30 December 2022.
6. DC/22/05852 – Bridge Farm – conversion of farm buildings into 2no. dwellings.
Planning consent was granted on 17 January 2023.
- 23.13.04 Neighbourhood planning**
Whilst Monks Eleigh PC has expressed an interest in undertaking a joint Neighbourhood Plan with Brent Eleigh, Cllr Hurren has passed on details of a new Government 'light touch' approach to neighbourhood planning which is being piloted by some local authorities, including Babergh. It is suggested that a meeting be arranged locally where Babergh's officers can set out these new proposals to local parishes. Details of the date, time and venue for the meeting are to be finalised. Cllr Hurren to co-ordinate.
- 23.13.05 Lavenham Neighbourhood Plan – proposed revisions**
The Clerk had previously distributed to Councillors a link to the pre-submission version of the revised Lavenham Neighbourhood Plan, which is open to consultation until 1 February. Whilst there is nothing particularly controversial with the revisions, important for Brent Eleigh residents will be retention of short term parking in Market Place, given the elderly demographic of residents (41% of Brent Eleigh residents are aged 65 or over). **It was AGREED** that the Clerk will submit a response before the deadline.
- 23.13.06 Babergh Planning Local Validation List**
Babergh has published a list of proposed changes in requirements for planning applications to be accepted as valid, and these are subject to consultation until 20 January. The Clerk took Members through the list of changes proposed and **it was AGREED to NOTE** them.

23.14 Date of next meeting
30 March 2023 at 7.30pm in the Village Hall.

23.15 Chair's closing remarks
The Chair thanked everyone for attending the meeting. There being no further business the meeting closed at 9.25pm.

APPENDIX 1: REPORT FROM DISTRICT COUNCILLOR BRYN HURREN

BaberghmidSuffolk are once again reverting to public liaison meetings to explain to PC reps, councillors and Clerks their policies, strategies and decision making.

The meeting for Babergh is at the Constable Hall, Gandish Rd, East Bergholt at 9.30 – 11.30am.

The meeting for Mid Suffolk is at The Mix in Stowmarket at 1.30 – 3.30 pm.

The main subjects at these events will be Budget, Joint Local Plan and forthcoming Elections.

Presentations at these events will usually take about an hour with another hour devoted to questions and developing other issues that the attendees wish to develop.

These events are well worth attending and informative. Such a shame that they are during the working day and are not really possible to attend for anyone who works normal hours.

On environmental issues, we have now taken delivery of our fleet of brand new refuse vehicles all running on hydrated vegetable oil and named by members of our public in a recent competition. We can now look forward to seeing Gary

Bineker, Ed Sheerbin and Binnie the Poo cruising through our streets, picking up recyclate and black bin rubbish for our energy from waste plant to turn into electricity.

On the same theme Baberghmidsuffolk have been achieving good results in finding home markets for our recyclate picked up from kerbside (blue bin collections) and bring centres.

As an example 2,609 tons of metal collected out of a total of 2,691 is marketed and sold to buyers in the UK with the remainder bought by Germany.

With Card the totals are 645 tons (approx. 12%) of the total 5,270 being collected with strong markets in India 1,097 tons, Malaysia 1,029 tons and Turkey 1,554 tons. It would be nice to process more in the home economy and we are working on that but are being outbid at this moment.

With paper we do better with 8,121 (approx. 35%) tons of the total of 22,630 tons collected with strong competition from Netherlands 1,118 tones and India 8,900 tones.

We did better on plastic also with 5,135 out of a total of 6,621 tons being processed and once again entering the manufacturing process within UK shores.

A good effort I feel with none of our waste products being exported to China.

Of course all these figures could be massively improved if only everybody made the effort to recycle as much as possible and not put things in the wrong bins, especially the ones that soil recyclate by adding items such as dirty babies nappies.

Our biggest task at the moment at the District Council is setting a balanced budget and finding out what other authorities and the parish councils are doing, as it falls to the District Council to add it all together, send out the bills and collect the total amounts.

We are very near to doing that and our budget meeting to agree what the districts tax levels will be will be held in late February. It is likely that the Babergh increase will be around 2.9% which equates to about £5.00 per annum but as our share of the total Council Tax bill is now only about 8.5%, I would estimate that the total increase across the board will be about £70.00 per household. Horrible news indeed and totally unsustainable.

We are at least in Babergh giving an amnesty to those who can afford nothing at all as it would cost us money to try to collect it and then give out the benefits to keep them alive in monetary terms.

Have a good meeting tonight and I will see you in March if not before. Bryn.

APPENDIX 2: REPORT FROM COUNTY COUNCILLOR ROBERT LINDSAY

Floods and drainage backlog

Due to a number of long-running flood issues in my division which are not being prioritised by the county's drainage team, I requested details of what jobs had been done. Just 17 of the nearly 1000 flood and drain problems on Suffolk County Council's list have been completed. The extra £10m that was allocated in Dec 2021 to be spent over 3.5 years is being used for "low hanging fruit" – minor civil work – that are not in this list, and that work has been speeded up. Climate scientists have been predicting an increase in rainfall for some time so it is a shame drainage repairs and maintenance appears to have been underfunded.

County budget, update from survey

For the 2023/24 budget the county council is proposing to increase the council tax precept by 4%, below the 5% cap they are allowed. There are growing pressures from inflation, social care and children's services. By not going up to the full cap they are missing out on £3.78million and they will have to part fund a predicted shortfall by taking from reserves.

The residents' budget survey found that when asked to choose one thing they'd like to see more money spent on, most chose the environment, including net zero and wildlife, with social care close behind and road maintenance coming third. However when asked to choose five things, net zero only came 8th, beaten by social care for children and adults, mental health, bus services and roads and pavements.

Update on "Directly Elected Leader"

The leader of Suffolk County Council and the Levelling Up Department have now revealed some of the details of their deal that will create the post of directly elected leader of Suffolk County Council. This does not affect the district councils, it is essentially a reshuffle of county council governance. The county is being handed about £16m extra a year for next 30 years but a lot of this is ringfenced for particular items and is less than has been cut from grants over the years. It is hard to find a firm promise of extra powers in the deal.

