

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF BRENT ELEIGH PARISH COUNCIL  
HELD ON 25 MARCH 2021 VIA ZOOM VIDEO CONFERENCING, COMMENCING AT 7.30PM**

**Present:**

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

**Apologies:**

None

**In Attendance:**

District Cllr Bryn Hurren  
County Cllr Robert Lindsay  
William Grosvenor (*Clerk to the Council*)

		<b>Action</b>
<b>21.16</b>	<b>CHAIR'S WELCOME</b> Cllr Went welcomed all present to the meeting.	
<b>21.17</b>	<b>TO RECEIVE APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE</b> No apologies were received.	
<b>21.18</b>	<b>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST</b>	
<b>21.18.01</b>	<b>To Receive Amendments to the Register</b> There were no amendments to the Register.	
<b>21.18.02</b>	<b>To Receive Declarations of Pecuniary Interest in Respect of Items on the Agenda</b> There were none.	
<b>21.18.03</b>	<b>To Receive Declarations of Non Pecuniary Interest in Respect of Items on the Agenda</b> There were none.	
<b>21.18.04</b>	<b>To Receive Full / Partial Dispensations for Pecuniary Interests Declared</b> It was noted that there had been no requests for dispensations.	
<b>21.19</b>	<b>MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING</b> It was <b>RESOLVED</b> to approve the minutes of the Ordinary Meeting held on 21 January 2021 and sign them as a true and accurate record. <i>Proposed by:</i> Cllr Scoones <i>Seconded by:</i> Cllr Went	
	<i>Due to both District Cllr Hurren and County Cllr Lindsay being delayed by prior meetings, it was then agreed to defer their Items until later on the agenda</i>	
<b>21.22</b>	<b>TO DISCUSS ANY VILLAGE MATTERS</b> Cllr Marshall reported horses being exercised along The Street with no attempt to clean up after them. She will have an informal word with those responsible.	Cllr Marshall
<b>21.23</b>	<b>TO RECEIVE A REPORT FROM THE VILLAGE NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH CO-ORDINATOR</b> Nothing to report.	

<b>21.24</b>	<b>TO RECEIVE AND CONSIDER REPORTS ON FINANCIAL AND GOVERNANCE MATTERS</b>	
<b>21.24.01</b>	<b>Financial update report</b> As shown in the previously distributed copy of the updated cashbook, the Clerk reported that the balance in the Council's account with Lloyds Bank, as at 1 March 2021, stood at £4,715.09.	
<b>21.24.02</b>	<b>To consider and approve payments</b> <b>It was AGREED</b> to make the following payments: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• £22.80 to SALC for payroll costs</li> <li>• £126.40 to HMRC for tax / NI</li> <li>• £189.20 to the Clerk as remuneration</li> <li>• £8.40 to Cllr Helms as reimbursement for purchase of dog fouling signs.</li> </ul>	Clerk
<b>21.24.03</b>	<b>Section 137 expenditure limit for 2021/22</b> The Clerk advised that the appropriate sum for the purpose of s137(4)(a) local Government Act 1972 for 2021/22 is £8.41. This sum, multiplied by the number of electors, would yield approximately £1,300.	
<b>21.24.04</b>	<b>Declaration of exemption from the requirement for a limited assurance review</b> As neither income nor expenditure in the year ending 31 March 2021 will have exceeded £25k, <b>it was RESOLVED</b> to certify the Council as exempt from the requirement for a limited assurance review. <b>Proposed by:</b> Cllr Went <b>Seconded by:</b> Cllr Scoones	
<b>21.24.05</b>	<b>To authorise the Chair to sign minutes under delegated authority otherwise than at a meeting</b> Due to the exigencies of holding meetings via Zoom <b>it was RESOLVED</b> to delegate to the Chair the authority to sign minutes otherwise than at a meeting. <b>Proposed by:</b> Cllr Helms <b>Seconded by:</b> Cllr Austin	
<b>21.24.06</b>	<b>Meeting arrangements after 6 May 2021</b> As previously advised to Councillors by email on 9 February 2021, the legislation permitting the holding of virtual meetings expires on 6 May, so unless extended, which the Government shows no inclination to do, councils will need to return to physical meetings.	
<b>21.24.07</b>	<b>Annual Parish Meeting (APM) 2021</b> This needs to be held between 1 March and 1 June in any year. No APM could be held last year as there was no provision in the emergency legislation for it to be held virtually, and physical meetings were illegal under the lockdown arrangements. Following discussion <b>it was AGREED</b> that this year's APM will be held on the same evening as the Council's Statutory Annual Meeting.	Clerk
<b>21.24.08</b>	<b>Elections 6 May 2021</b> The Clerk advised Members that, in respect of the forthcoming County Council and Police and Crime Commissioner elections, advice has been received from Babergh DC reminding local councils that there is no automatic right for candidates to speak at local council meetings, but if one candidate is allowed to address a meeting, the same opportunity must be afforded to all candidates.	

<b>21.24.09</b>	<b>Grant requests</b> The Clerk reported requests for grant aid from Fresh start, New Beginnings and also East Anglia Children's Hospices. The requests were <b>NOTED</b> .	
	<b><i>It was then agreed to revert to the order of the Agenda</i></b>	
<b>21.20</b>	<b>TO RECEIVE THE DISTRICT COUNCILLOR'S REPORT</b> Cllr Hurren presented his report. The text of the report is appended below at <b>Appendix 1</b> .	
<b>21.21</b>	<b>TO RECEIVE THE COUNTY COUNCILLOR'S REPORT</b> Cllr Lindsay presented his report. The text of the report is appended below at <b>Appendix 2</b> .	
<b>21.25</b>	<b>TO RECEIVE REPORTS FROM COUNCILLORS</b>	
<b>21.25.01</b>	<b>Dog fouling</b> Cllr Helms reported the purchase of 10 rigid plastic prohibition signs and needs advice on where they should be located.	All
<b>21.25.02</b>	<b>Defibrillator update</b> Nothing to report. How best to case the equipment is being considered.	Cllr Marshall
<b>21.25.03</b>	<b>Footpaths</b> It was reported that the permissive paths off Cock lane have been closed. The position regarding the one from the vineyard parallel to the A1141 was queried. The surface of Clay Lane is reported to be in a very bad state. Cllr Hurren promised to speak to the landowner.	Cllr Hurren
<b>21.25.04</b>	<b>Village Hall</b> Cllr Scoones reported that one estimate has been obtained for a new heating system and others will follow. There was a brief discussion in relation to Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) monies that are likely to accrue to the Parish Council as a result of the various barn conversions and new dwelling in Brent Mill Drive. Cllr Hurren will seek information from Babergh as to the likely overall amount that the Council will receive.	Cllr Hurren
<b>21.26</b>	<b>TO RECEIVE THE CLERK'S REPORT</b>	
<b>21.26.01</b>	<b>Quiet Lanes</b> The Clerk reported that on the latest estimates, the cost to the Council in terms of top – up for the signage necessary to designate both the Brent Eleigh part of Tye Lane and Cock Lane - would be £240. Following discussion <b>it was RESOLVED</b> that only the Brent Eleigh part of Tye Lane would be taken forward and the Clerk to advise the Quiet Lanes Team accordingly.	Clerk
<b>21.26.02</b>	<b>Consulting Facebook groups</b> The Clerk reported receipt via SALC of a request from the Public Health Team in Suffolk County Council for information on community facebook groups. This was <b>NOTED</b> .	
<b>21.27</b>	<b>PLANNING ISSUES</b>	

21.27.01	<p><b>To consider Planning Applications received</b>  <b>(1) DC/21/00961 – Second Meadow Stables, Brent Eleigh Road – Proposed erection of dwelling following removal of temporary mobile home.</b>  Following discussion it was <b>AGREED</b> not to comment on this application.</p>	
21.28	<p><b>DATES OF NEXT MEETINGS</b>  The Annual Parish meeting will be held on 27 May at 7pm in the Village Hall, followed by the Statutory Annual meeting of the Parish Council at 8pm. In view of the failure of Government to extend the legislation allowing virtual meetings, both these meetings will take place physically, with appropriate social distancing and other Covid - compliant measures in place.</p>	
21.29	<p><b>CHAIRMAN'S CLOSING REMARKS</b>  The Chairman thanked everyone for attending the meeting. There being no further business the meeting closed at 9.00pm.</p>	

#### APPENDIX 1: REPORT FROM DISTRICT CLLR BRYN HURREN

Despite concerns being voiced from almost all who were consulted, it does seem that the CC and PCC elections are going to go ahead on 6<sup>th</sup> May this year, the PCC elections were already delayed from last year. The popular view from a huge majority of returning officers was to delay the elections until September when hopefully we will all be able to move around much safer and the District Councils will have had time to recover and allocate staff to this function.

Should the election be formally declared on 25 March the Councils will enter a period of Purdah which means that no favour or political view should be shown by staff and Chief Executive. Postal votes will be readily available by all those who wish to apply and all precautions will be taken in the polling booths so that all feel safe to vote. These elections are important for local democracy so I would urge all to engage and exercise their right to vote.

At Babergh the incidents of Coronavirus amongst the local population are down to 36 per 100,000 which is the lowest they have been for some time, having said that we have lost now, 236 of our Babergh residents to this horrible virus and care needs to be taken now more than ever as we try to move back to our more normal lives.

Since we have last met Babergh District Council have set their 20/21 budget.

We have proposed an increase to our share of the Council tax by 2.96% which is £5.00. yearly for a band D property, or just under 10p weekly.

Our share of the council tax is however only about 9% and as other authorities are raising their share by at least the same amount, the total increase in tax per household will be at least £60.00 per Band D property. I do feel that these constant increases are unsustainable and we either need to look at three unitary councils across Suffolk better devolved government or better funding from central government.

There is also a small increase in the Brown bin service of £2.50 per year and free car parking has been cut to one hour which was bitterly fought for by a combined section of councillors including myself, across the political spectrum. We also had to deal with what was basically a no confidence vote in the Council leader John Ward, I chose to register an abstention vote which is unusual for myself, but I did make my feelings clear that I was very unhappy with some of the directions that the Council was being pulled into.

We are also increasingly supported by our CIFCO investment of now nearing £100 million which in the last financial year brought in close to £1.5 million. to help with budgetary pressures.

This along with income from our services and the solar project are now making up an ever increasing percentage of our income.

Despite having to scratch around for finance to run our day to day services, we have been successful in obtaining a grant to introduce and improve carbon saving measures across our council owned buildings. The total grant awarded is 1.4m and will be used for installing solar panels on Hadleigh Pool and our Wenham works depot and hybrid air source heat pumps at our Kingfisher Leisure centre in Sudbury. These improvements will I hope help the council achieve carbon neutrality by the year 2030 which is the councils declared ambition.

I will comment on locality budget and other matters at your meeting this week.

Happy as always to answer questions from members of Council or Public as I hope to be in attendance on the evening of your meeting.

All Very Best Regards. Bryn.

## **APPENDIX 2: REPORT FROM COUNTY CLLR ROBERT LINDSAY**

### **Up to 10 year delay to flood repairs**

It has emerged from a report to the Suffolk Flood Risk Management Scrutiny subcommittee on 3<sup>rd</sup> March, that funding restrictions meant it would take highways ten years to repair all the highways flooding issues currently on its list.

Meanwhile, the County Council has been told it will receive £27m from Government for highways repairs, maintenance and drainage in 2021-22, a reduction from £31m the previous year. This has necessitated the use of £2m of reserves to top up the grant.

### **Suffolk County Council Budget**

The Suffolk County Council Budget was voted through Full Council on February 11<sup>th</sup>. 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.
- A council tax income forecast to be £7.9m lower than usual, to be met by using reserves.
- Planned spending is £597.9m, 7.4% more than 2020-21.
- £15.3m of spending to address ongoing COVID-19 costs.
- No proposed reductions in council services or personnel.

### **Green Budget Amendment voted down**

My political group submitted an amendment to the administration's budget. This would have authorised the use of the full 3% social care precept to avoid impacting SCC's reserves and generate an extra £3.45m for social care at a cost of only £13.41 per year to a Band D household. The extra income would have provided funding for a wider service offer for Suffolk residents, including a new officer for the flooding team to unlock more government funding, and the re-enablement of concessionary bus passes on community transport. The amendment was unfortunately not passed.

### **Suffolk moves school bus contracts from Norse to Vertas**

The county's school buses have been run since 2013 by Suffolk Norse, a joint venture in which Suffolk has a 20% stake. However, Suffolk Norse went into losses in the last two years and has handed notice in on the contract. Suffolk cabinet decided on 23 February to move the contract in-house by handing it to its wholly owned company Vertas.

The 40 home-to-school transport routes and a school swimming service will be delivered by Vertas from September onwards. The move does mean the county can look at replacing diesel with electric vehicles as the technology becomes viable, to help meet its zero carbon by 2030 commitment.

### **March full council backs identifying unpaid carers**

The council unanimously approved a motion proposed by my political group to support Suffolk Family Carers in expanding their database to pick up all carers within Suffolk, drawing information from community organisations and GPs. It has also committed to run an annual marketing exercise to encourage carers to identify themselves and sign up to the database. Suffolk has this week begun offering vaccinations to unpaid carers of clinically vulnerable people or elderly and is urging them to sign up

### **Number plate recognition cameras**

The county council has just announced this scheme which will involve them buying ten number plate recognition cameras and installing them in villages where there is a speeding issue for up to a week at a time. Spots will be "identified by parish councils, with support from county councillors, where there are known issues with speeding or rat running in a 20mph or 30mph zone."