

**MINUTES OF THE ORDINARY MEETING OF BRENT ELEIGH PARISH COUNCIL
HELD ON 7 DECEMBER 2023 IN THE VILLAGE HALL COMMENCING AT 7.30PM**

Present:

Cllr Kevin Went (*Chair*)
Cllr Martin Austin
Cllr Francesca Scoones

Apologies:

Cllr Natalie Helms
Cllr Karen Marshall
County Cllr Robert Lindsay
District Cllr Bryn Hurren

In Attendance:

William Grosvenor (*Clerk to the Council*)
One Member of the Public

Item No	Item discussed
23.78	Chair's welcome Cllr Went welcomed all present to the meeting.
23.79	To receive apologies for absence Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Helms and Cllr Marshall. Apologies were also received from County Cllr Lindsay due to a clash of meetings and from District Cllr Hurren due to work commitments.
23.80	Declarations of Interest
23.80.01	To receive Amendments to the Register There were no amendments to the Register.
23.80.02	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.
23.80.03	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.
23.80.04	To consider Full / Partial Dispensations for Pecuniary Interests Declared It was noted that there had been no requests for dispensation for Pecuniary Interests declared.
23.81	Minutes of the previous meeting The member of the public present raised a query in relation to Minute 23.69 from the meeting on 19 October 2023 (Cllr Hurren's report) regarding a new heating system for the Village Hall. The Clerk said it appears that whilst there are new business grants available from Babergh of between £5k and £10k that could meet 50% of the costs, such a grant could be topped up either by District or Neighbourhood Community Infrastructure funding. Following that clarification it was RESOLVED to approve the minutes of the Ordinary Meeting held on 19 October 2023 and sign them as a true and accurate record. <i>Proposed by:</i> Cllr Austin <i>Seconded by:</i> Cllr Went
23.82	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 1 .
23.83	To receive the District Councillor's report No report was received.

23.84	To discuss any Village matters
	In the light of various proposals for speed limits, following up on Cllr Lindsay's report, there was a brief discussion on the expense of the actual signage and concerns were expressed that it has to be borne by the local community.
23.85	To receive a report from the Village Neighbourhood Watch Co-ordinator
	There was nothing to report.
23.86	To receive and consider reports on financial and governance matters
23.86.01	<p data-bbox="315 436 618 466">Financial update report</p> <p data-bbox="315 468 1557 583">The Clerk tabled copies of the updated cashbook, reserves balance and bank reconciliation, together with the current bank statement, which showed the balance in the Council's account with Lloyds Bank, as at 4 December 2023, standing at £4,316.71. From that current balance the following sum is continuing to be held as an earmarked reserve:</p> <ul data-bbox="380 585 1557 646" style="list-style-type: none"> • £380.34 CIL payment received on 11 October 2021. This has to be expended by October 2026 and will be applied to a specific CIL funded project once more CIL monies are received.
23.86.02	<p data-bbox="315 648 760 678">Approval / ratification of payments</p> <p data-bbox="315 680 911 709">There were no payments to be approved / ratified.</p>
23.86.03	<p data-bbox="315 711 862 741">Local Government pay increase for 2023/24</p> <p data-bbox="315 743 1557 827">The Clerk reported on the agreed national salary increase award for 2023/24. The award is a flat rate payment of £1,925 for full time salaries below £52k and results in an increase to the Clerk's remuneration of exactly £1.00 an hour. For 60 hours a year that equates to an increase of £60.00.</p> <p data-bbox="315 829 1110 858">It was RESOLVED to apply the new rate backdated to 1 April 2023.</p> <p data-bbox="315 861 1243 888">Proposed by: Cllr Went Secoded by: Cllr Scoones</p>
23.86.04	<p data-bbox="315 890 932 919">Budget update and draft base budget for 2024/25</p> <p data-bbox="315 921 1557 1100">The Clerk tabled hard copies of a budget paper which had been previously distributed electronically. This showed the original budget agreed for 2023/24 together with the actual year to date expenditure, projected expenditure to year end on the basis of known commitments, and allowing an additional £200.00 for a grant to GoStart for the 112 bus. It also set out the first draft of a budget for 2024/25 based on a precept figure the same as for the current year. It was AGREED to accept the paper as a basis for further discussion and finalisation of figures at the meeting in January 2024.</p>
23.86.05	<p data-bbox="315 1102 558 1131">Precept for 2024/25</p> <p data-bbox="315 1134 1557 1470">As previously distributed the Clerk outlined both the process of precept setting and the basis for 2024/25. The Brent Eleigh taxbase has declined by 2.6%, so if the Band D precept element of the council tax remained the same next year as in 2023/24 (£30.52), it would only yield a total precept of £2,726 rather than the £2,800 collected this year; i.e. to collect the same amount in 2024/25, the Band D precept element would rise to £31.35 – an increase of 2.71%. He distributed financial modelling based on seeking precepts for £2,800, £2,900 and £3,000. Final taxbase figures will be received from Babergh at the beginning of January and Councillors will need to make a final decision on the precept to be sought at the meeting of the Parish Council to be held in late January. The Government has already confirmed that parish councils will be free to set their precept rates without capping / referendum but the levels of increase for County, District, police and fire authorities will need to be borne in mind for their impact on household budgets.</p>
23.86.06	<p data-bbox="315 1472 862 1501">Funding for GoStart to support the 112 bus</p> <p data-bbox="315 1503 1557 1564">Following a formal request for grant aid from GoStart supported by information on their financial situation, it was RESOLVED to make a grant of £200.00.</p> <p data-bbox="315 1566 1243 1591">Proposed by: Cllr Went Secoded by: Cllr Scoones</p>
23.86.07	<p data-bbox="315 1593 776 1623">Grant request from Headway Suffolk</p> <p data-bbox="315 1625 776 1654">It was AGREED to NOTE this request.</p>
23.86.08	<p data-bbox="315 1656 716 1686">Appointment of Internal Auditor</p> <p data-bbox="315 1688 821 1717">Cllr Went confirmed that this is still in hand.</p>
23.87	To receive reports from Councillors
23.87.01	<p data-bbox="315 1787 683 1816">Village Hall heating and wi-fi</p> <p data-bbox="315 1818 1557 1929">It was confirmed that it is not now proposed to install wi-fi. Cllr Scoones reported that two quotes had been received for a new heating system. Cllr Hurren had requested three in the context of eligibility for support from Babergh but Cllr Marshall will speak to Cllr Hurren to see if the two received are acceptable.</p>

23.87.02

Memorial bench plaque wording - update

In a brief discussion it was suggested that the wording should read: 'Queen Elizabeth II 1952-2022'. A final decision to be made at the January meeting.

23.88

To receive the Clerk's report

23.88.01

Iron Bridge adjacent to A1141

The Clerk reported back on his exchange of correspondence with Suffolk Preservation Society (SPS), previously distributed in advance of the meeting. In his letter the Clerk set out detailed background information, the fact that two other similar bridges in Essex and Suffolk are listed whereas Brent Eleigh's is only a scheduled ancient monument, and sought advice / support in terms of making a successful application for listing. In response SPS has indicated that Historic England's own advice on scheduling suggests that the structure is eligible for listing, and has suggested that the Council contacts the Association for industrial Archaeology or see if SAVE (Save Britain's Heritage) would consider the structure for inclusion on their heritage at risk register. Although unlike listing, inclusion on the risk register does not afford statutory protection, it does have some persuasive authority. Following a brief discussion **it was AGREED** that the Clerk in the first instance will make contact with The Association for Industrial Archaeology.

23.88.02

Neighbourhood Planning / Joint Neighbourhood Priorities Statement

Nothing further has been heard from Babergh regarding the idea of a joint neighbourhood priorities statement with 3 other villages since the exchange of emails in May 2023. **It was AGREED** to defer further discussion on this until the January meeting when it is hoped that Cllr Hurren will be present.

23.88.03

Abbots Drift byway

The Clerk reported receipt of an email from a member of the public complaining about the state of this byway which, it is claimed, is "neither safe or accessible to horse riders". The Clerk responded to the email by saying that the legal obligation to maintain / repair restricted byways lies with Suffolk County Council; however if the correspondent provided more precise information the matter could be discussed at the meeting of the Parish Council, and if appropriate, referred to Cllr Lindsay. Nothing further was received. Councillors queried the exact status of Abbots Drift, but otherwise to take no further action. [**Clerk's Note:** According to the SCC Definitive Map Abbots Drift is a restricted byway, which provides a public right of way for people on foot, horseback or cycling.]

23.88.04

Milden Road flooding

The Clerk reported receipt of an email from a resident of the parish asking for advice on who to contact to have the flooding issue in Milden Road outside Wells Hall resolved. A response was sent giving details on how to use the Highways reporting tool, and this has been used, and the Highways website indicates that remedial work has been programmed.

23.89

Planning issues

23.89.01

To consider planning applications received

1. DC/23/05327 – Cobblers, Snapes Lane – works to trees in a conservation area.

The Clerk had consulted with Councillors prior to the deadline of 5 December and there were no objections to this application.

2. DC/23/05479 – Tudor Cottage – mounting solar PV panels on cart lodge roof.

Following discussion **it was AGREED** to recommend approval of this application.

23.89.02

To consider updates on planning applications.

3. DC/23/02659 – Second Meadow Stables, Brent Eleigh Road, Lavenham – outline application for Wellness Centre (see also Minute 23.69 above).

This outline application is for the construction of a Wellness Centre on the site of Second Meadow Stables requiring a change of use. The location is just outside the Brent Eleigh parish boundary. It will involve a gym, swimming pool, fitness centre, treatment rooms etc., together with 44 parking spaces. The deadline for comments was 8 September. Following email consultation with Councillors the Clerk lodged an objection before the deadline on the grounds of both the impact on floodplain storage with consequent implications downstream as well as very poor connectivity and the inevitable increase in car journeys along unsuitable roads (e.g. Water Street). Following discussion at the meeting on 19 October it was confirmed that the Council formally objected to this application. As at 7 December 2023 the application has still not been determined. The Clerk to check the position with Cllr Hurren.

4. DC/23/04524 – 4 The Glebe – works to trees covered by a TPO.

Planning consent was **GRANTED** on 23 October 2023.

5. DC/23/04413 – Flat A, Hill Farm – listed building consent for removal of unsafe external staircase.

Planning consent was **GRANTED** on 14 November 2023.

6. DC/23/04643 – Chim Chimineys - listed building consent for replacement of external wooden steps.

Planning consent was **GRANTED** on 13 November 2023.

7. DC/23/05027 – Serendipity, Brent Mill Drive – works to trees in a conservation area.

Planning consent was **GRANTED** on 24 November 2023.

23.89.03

Babergh / Mid-Suffolk Joint Local Plan – update

The Clerk advised that Babergh has now adopted the new Babergh / Mid-Suffolk Joint Local Plan Part 1. The Plan can be accessed at:

<https://www.babergh.gov.uk/joint-local-plan>

Part 2 of the Plan (to follow) when approved will include the spatial distribution of housing and settlement boundaries.

23.89.04

Consultation on proposed local listed building consent orders

As a stakeholder, the Parish Council has been invited to participate in consultation on Local Listed Building Consent Orders. Such Orders are legal tools which aim to simplify the process for making certain types of improvements to listed buildings, as many owners find it difficult to navigate the current legislative framework. There is a questionnaire available at <https://www.smartsurvey.co.uk/s/MUEQAA/> which is open for responses until 29 December. Councillors **AGREED to NOTE** this survey.

23.89.05

Lavenham Neighbourhood Plan 2 – update

The Clerk reported that a short, focused, further consultation on the updated Lavenham Neighbourhood Plan is required because, since the statutory consultation, there have been changes to the wider planning context. An updated National Planning Policy Framework was issued on 5 September and Part 1 of the new Babergh / Mid-Suffolk Joint Local Plan has been adopted. The revised consultation focuses on: *“Does publication of the new NPPF and / or the adoption of the Joint Local plan Part 1 have any implications for LNP2 with regard to it meeting the relevant basic condition tests?”*

The consultation runs up to 4pm on 11 December 2023. Brent Eleigh PC is being consulted as a statutory consultee, it being a neighbouring local council. The Clerk advised that there were no specific issues for Brent Eleigh; a response having been sent to the original consultation emphasising (1) the importance of maintaining the Lavenham end of Clay Lane to protect a safe, environmentally friendly mode of access between the two communities and (2) the importance of retaining optimum parking in the Market Place bearing in mind that Lavenham is a hub village and important for elderly and disabled residents of surrounding villages to be able to park and shop safely.

Councillors **AGREED to NOTE** the consultation.

23.90

Date of next meeting

The next Ordinary Meeting will be held on 25 January 2024 at 7.30pm in the Village Hall.

23.91

Chair’s closing remarks

The Chair thanked everyone for attending the meeting. There being no further business the meeting closed at 8.56pm.

APPENDIX 1: REPORT FROM COUNTY COUNCILLOR ROBERT LINDSAY

Buses and new funding

I have told GoStart that I will contribute £500 towards the existing 112 service. I have left it to Brent Eleigh and Bildeston PCs to see about whether they want to bid for extra services involving the 112. There is a big gap I believe in getting people from Hadleigh and villages north of Hadleigh to Stowmarket and I have been encouraging parishes to make expressions of interest for routes from Hadleigh to Stowmarket and Hadleigh to Bury St Edmunds. Lavenham PC is bidding to improve the 753 service between Sudbury and Bury via Lavenham.

Resurfacing minor roads before May 2025 County Council election

After the local elections in May the Conservative administration announced it would borrow £10m to spend on resurfacing minor roads up to end of March 2025, when County Council elections are held. At Cabinet on Tuesday 7 November, we heard the detail that the Council plans to use reporting of poor road surfacing on quieter residential roads and cul de sacs where residents live to plot a programme of repairs over that period. This would seem to indicate that the more people report the need for resurfacing or potholes the more likely the road is to be resurfaced.

New Highways Contract for Suffolk Roads

At Scrutiny Committee on 23 November my group had the opportunity to examine the new Highways contract with Milestone, which began on 1 October 2023. The contract promises better communication with Councillors and Suffolk residents, and contains incentives for the new contractor to work efficiently – for example, undertaking other works needed in the same geographical area when they are called out. The Committee agreed to review the performance of the contract in 12 months.

Flooding Investigations and Repairs

Following the recent Storm Babet flooding around the county, Suffolk County Council teams have pumped away 4.7m litres of water, cleared 8,412 drains of storm debris and removed over 100 trees blocking roads. It will be administering the funding recently announced by the Government whereby owners of flooded properties are able to apply for up to £5,000 to protect their homes and businesses from future flooding. Details of how to apply will be shared once they are known.

Libraries Consultation

The Council is consulting on the new library service for the county as the contract with the current provider ends in May 2025. A consultation has been launched to gather views from residents about what they value about the current service and what they think should be developed, especially in terms of outreach and mobile libraries used in the county. If you would like to share your views, you can access the consultation at the following link: <http://www.suffolk.gov.uk/LibraryConsultation>

Suffolk Adult Care Rated Good

Suffolk County Council's adult social services were inspected by the Care Quality Commission (CQC) in August and September, and the judgement is that services are good, with strengths in safeguarding, leadership, use of digital technologies and the way SCC works with other local partners to provide care. However the inspectors did find that not all clients had equally good experiences of services and there were gaps in dementia and nursing care provision. Delays in getting through to the Customer First phonenumber – the main first point of contact for social care – were also highlighted for improvement.

Semer A1141 60mph to 40mph application

My application to reduce the speed here has been approved. However I have not yet been given a cost and most of the funding will need to be found by the parish councils.

Lavenham's 20mph design completed

Lavenham's 20mph limit design is about to go to consultation. A few roads, including Melford Road, is not included in the limit. I will leave it to Lavenham PC as to whether they want to push ahead or delay it still further in the (faint) hope they can get more of the village included in the scheme.