

# **SOMERSHAM PARISH COUNCIL**

**MINUTES** of the Parish Council Meeting held online on December 2, 2020 at  
7.30pm

## **PRESENT**

Cllrs James Caston, Stephen Wright, and Will Caston Cook were present, together with the Clerk Rod Caird. County Cllr Kay Oakes and District Cllr John Field together with four members of the public were also present. James Rook joined the meeting as co-opted Parish Councillor during item 5 on the Agenda

### **1/021220 Apologies and approvals of absence**

Cllrs Sam Barrell and Shaun Whiting had sent apologies and their absence was approved.

### **2/021220 Declarations of Interest and Requests for Dispensation**

Cllr Caston declared an interest in the solar farm proposal referred to in item 7 on the Agenda. He will leave the room during that discussion, passing the chair to Cllr Wright.

### **3/021220 To approve the Minutes of the meeting on November 4, 2020**

The minutes were approved.

### **4/021220 To receive comments from members of the public on matters on the Agenda, and reports from the District and County Councillors**

Cllr Oakes had sent a written report which Cllrs were welcome to consider. She undertook, in response to a resident's inquiry, to approach the school about opening their back gate, as a possible solution to the difficulties of walking along Flowton Road, where there is no current walkway. She also noted that the Home but Not Alone telephone helpline is now once again up and running.

Cllr Field also emphasised the availability of Home but Not Alone and Suffolk Advice and Support Service phone lines. Covid 19 Support Grants are available. The Joint Local Plan has reached its next stage; details are available on the District Council website. The Green/Lib Dem group on the council does not support the current policy of investment in commercial property. Some councillors feel it would be more acceptable if there was a policy of supporting local investment. A supplementary planning document on biodiversity will become part of the Local Plan, in response to the climate emergency. It was reported that the badger situation on Flowton Road continues to cause problems, with no sign of a coherent plan to improve the situation for all concerned.

**5/021220 To consider the current vacancy on the Parish Council**

It was agreed without dissent to co-opt James Rook to the Parish Council with immediate effect. Cllr Rook has lived in the village for 14 years.

It was reported that Cllr Keith McKeown has resigned from the Parish Council as he is leaving the area; a vacancy notice would be published with a view to co-opting a further volunteer to fill the vacancy at the January meeting.

**6/021220 To receive and consider a Neighbourhood Watch report**

The October report, showing no crime in Somersham during that period, was presented to the meeting. A volunteer is still sought to support Colin Burrows (who was unable to attend the meeting) on neighbourhood Watch activities.

**7/021220 To consider updates on current planning applications, including:**

**DC/20/04125 | Request for formal Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Scoping Opinion. Proposed solar farm and battery storage facility | Land South of Church Farm Somersham IP8 4PN And Land East of The Channel IP8 4JL – listed as “received”. Cllr Caston left the meeting during discussion on this item. No planning application has yet been received, and Cllr Wright confirmed that when an application is received a full public meeting will be held giving everyone an opportunity to express their views. Members of the public explained their strongly-held opinion that a solar farm will damage the rural character and appearance of the area. It was agreed special efforts would be made to gather opinion, beyond those who are comfortable with email and internet use. The Link would be one forum for this and Cllr Caston Cook also volunteered to draft a leaflet for distribution throughout the village.**

**DC/20/04005 | Listed Building Consent - Change of use and conversion of Grade II listed barn to 1No dwelling, alterations as Design & Access inc Heritage Statement | Watering Farm Main Road Nettlestead – *awaiting decision; noted***

**DC/20/04004 | Full Planning Application - Change of use and conversion of Grade II listed barn to 1No dwelling and erection of 3no new dwellings. | Watering Farm Main Road Nettlestead – *awaiting decision; noted***

**DC/18/05313 Outline Planning Application (Access and Layout to be considered) Erection of 32 dwellings on Land On The South Side Of Bildeston Road, Offton, IP8 4RR – appeal *dismissed; application outcome currently listed as “unknown”*. It was agreed to remove this from the Agenda for the time being.**

**DC/18/03114/15 Land South West of Main Road, a development of 42 new homes – *various conditions discharged or pending, new footway plan awaited. It was noted that a detailed biodiversity plan now exists as part of the planning paperwork, allowing among other things for integral nesting boxes and hedgehog routes. The proposal from Hopkins concerning “excess” land outside their boundary being cared for by the Parish Council would be considered at the January meeting.***

**8/021220 To consider a request for financial support towards construction of a new hut at the tennis courts**

It was agreed in principle to support this and to ask for further details of cost. There may also be support available from the District and County Councillors.

**9/021220 To consider an update on the Land Trust**

Allotment rents are being collected and renewed efforts are being made to update the bank mandate.

**10/021220 To discuss the Christmas gifts plan raised at the November meeting for consideration by a working group**

After discussion it was agreed with regret that Covid restrictions made this impossible this year. But the £150 set aside in the budget would be devoted to provision of a Christmas tree and decorations instead.

**11/021220 To receive reports from Parish Councillors on meetings attended**

The Duke of Marlborough will be open on the next three weekends but may close during January and February.

**12/021220 To receive a financial report from the Clerk including any payments due; to consider a budget and precept for 2021/22**

A bank reconciliation was presented showing a balance of £19,649.01. The following payments had been made since the last meeting:

Oct 30 2020	Vertas	133	£ 396.36	VAT £ 79.27	Grounds work
Oct 30, 2020	Rod Caird	134	£ 292.40		Clerk Pay
Oct 30, 2020	Somersham PCC	135	£ 96.00		Mowing
Oct 30, 2020	CAS Ltd	136	£ 234.08		Insurance
Nov 27, 2020	Rod Caird	137	£ 292.40		Clerk Pay
Nov 27, 2020	Somersham PCC	138	£ 20.00		Mowing

Discussion of the budget and precept for 2021/22 would be held over to the

December meeting. It was noted that payments to the PWLB for the Village Hall costs would be completed during that year, and that a substantial CIL payment from Hopkins Homes could be expected.

**13/021220 Correspondence and urgent matters to be brought to the attention of the Parish Council**

Everyone was to be encouraged to take great care during the holiday period in case of continued spread of the coronavirus, with particular concern for the school.

It was noted that some people are walking behind the playing field where there is actually no footpath; more signage may be needed.

The next scheduled meeting will take place on January 6, 2021.