

SOMERSHAM PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES of the Parish Council Meeting held online on November 4, 2020 at
7.30pm

PRESENT

Cllrs James Caston, Stephen Wright, Sam Barrell, Keith McKeown, Shaun Whiting and Will Caston Cook were present, together with the Clerk Rod Caird. County Cllr Kay Oakes was unable to attend but District Cllr John Field and 11 members of the public were also present. Three representatives of Cadno Communications and EDF were in attendance for item 8 on the Agenda.

1/041120 Apologies and approvals of absence

None

2/041120 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.

3/041120 To consider the resignation of Cllr Penny Pearson and to consider steps to be taken to fill the vacancy on the Parish Council

Cllr Pearson's resignation was accepted with great regret; but it was understood that after 40 years she needed a little less on her plate. The Council expressed sincere gratitude for all she had done for the Council and the hope that she will still use her knowledge and experience to the benefit of the village. A vacancy notice will be published and if no election is called for, a volunteer may be co-opted to fill the gap. It was understood that two residents had expressed interest and the matter would be discussed at the December meeting.

4/041120 To approve the Minutes of the meeting on October 7, 2020

The minutes were approved.

5/041120 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. Cllr Field drew attention to the Home but Not Alone and Suffolk Advice and Support Service phone lines, which are both available again. Some support payments are available to people obliged to self-isolate. The District Council has responded to the government's proposals on planning reform. A discussion on the two solar farm proposals would take place later in the meeting.

6/041120 To receive and consider a Neighbourhood Watch report

Four crimes had been reported in Somersham during September – burglary, theft, anti-social behaviour and a public order offence. A volunteer is still sought to support Colin Burrows on neighbourhood Watch activities.

7/041120 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 – *awaiting decision*

Members of the public expressed serious concern about this project. It was agreed that when a full planning application is actually received, a public meeting of the Parish Council will be held, and all views would be carefully considered before the Parish Council comes to a view on it. This application, together with the other one at Item 8, may be considered either separately or together. If taken together, the decision may rest with central government.

At this point Item 8 on the Agenda was also discussed, with a presentation made by Cadno Communications and EDF. This second solar farm project is still under consultation, leaflets have been distributed and meetings held. A planning application is likely to be submitted in December for the site, which covers altogether 82 hectares. Concern was expressed by members of the public about nearby homes, the loss of agricultural land and wildlife and environmental issues, to set against the desirability of developing renewable energy sources to help combat climate change.

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” (noted).*

DC/18/03114/15 Land South West of Main Road, a development of 42 new homes – *various conditions discharged or pending; and to consider recent correspondence about the footway arrangements from the site; (a revised footway plan is awaited, and the matter will remain on the Agenda for future meetings)*

8/041120 To receive a presentation from Cadno Communications and EDF

concerning a solar farm proposal at Tye Lane, close to Bramford

This had been discussed under Item 6

9/041120 To consider an update on the Land Trust

It was agreed to put the new Land Trust email address in The Link (somershamlandtrust@gmail.com). New applicants for allotments are welcomed although there is a short waiting list. Lloyds Bank has asked for resubmission of the bank mandate details. An offer of a free supply of horse manure was welcomed.

10/041120 To receive reports from Parish Councillors on meetings attended

None at this time

11/041120 To receive a financial report from the Clerk including any payments due; to establish a timetable for consideration of the budget and precept for 2021/22

A bank reconciliation was presented showing a balance of £19,961.41.

It was agreed to pay £20 to the PCC to cover the cost of cutting back a hawthorn hedge.

Discussion of the budget for 2021/22 would be held over to the December meeting.

12/041120 Correspondence and urgent matters to be brought to the attention of the Parish Council

A working group of councillors will discuss a plan for tractor delivery of Christmas presents in the village and £150 would be set aside to cover costs if necessary.

Former Parish Council Chair Nick Dodd had sadly died in September and Cllr Caston had sent flowers on behalf of the Council.

The next meeting will be held online on December 2, 2020 at 7.30pm.