

SOMERSHAM PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES of the Parish Council Meeting held online on April 7, 2021 at 7.30pm

PRESENT

Cllrs James Caston, Stephen Wright, Thomas Hallett, James Rook, Sam Barrell, Will Caston Cook and Shaun Whiting were present, together with the Clerk Rod Caird. District Cllr John Field and County Cllr Kay Oakes were present, together with one member of the public.

1/040721 Apologies and approvals of absence

None

2/040721 Declarations of Interest and Requests for Dispensation

Cllr Caston declared an interest in planning applications DC/21/00060 and 05895, referred to in Item 13 on the Agenda. He will leave the room during that discussion, passing the chair to Cllr Wright. Cllr Caston Cook also chose to absent himself during discussion of those matters on the Agenda, although he has no pecuniary interest in the applications.

3/040721 To approve the Minutes of the meeting on March 3, 2021

The minutes were approved

4/040721 To receive comments from members of the public on matters on the Agenda, and reports from the District and County Councillors (subject to election restrictions)

Cllr Oakes had submitted a written report. She also noted that there is no strategic plan to resolve the Flowton Road badger problem other than a Highways commitment that damage will be repaired. Hopefully the County Ecology team will get involved in efforts to persuade the badgers to stay away from the road.

Cllr Field reported that the Joint Local Plan has now reached the stage of being submitted to the Planning Inspectorate. The Felixstowe/Harwich freeport announcement will bring benefits in jobs and investment. Cllr Wright noted that as a result of problems arising from Brexit it is virtually impossible currently to export tomato plants.

5/040721 To receive and consider a Neighbourhood Watch report

The most recent report was circulated to councillors. Cllr Caston will look at how best to match crime incident maps with the Neighbourhood watch reports. It was noted a police chase had taken place in the village.

6/040721 To consider updates on current planning applications, including:

DC/21/01560 | Planning Application - Erection of 1No single storey dwelling with detached double car port and store. | Land Adjoining Shiralee With Access From Main Road

After discussion it was decided to comment as follows: The Parish Council objects to the application on the following grounds: Policy LP05 in the forthcoming Joint Local Plan states that on a subdivided plot there must be "adequate and acceptable access and parking"; Parish Councillors consider that this criterion will not be met. The access to the site is via a very narrow lane off Main Road between the existing properties of Stowaway and Danecote and there must be serious doubt as to whether this is adequate for residents, emergency vehicles or delivery vans. The same access problems will apply acutely during the construction phase. The site directly adjoins the Primary School playground and a majority of Parish Councillors also felt this could present safeguarding and privacy issues which are not addressed in the application.

DC/21/00320 | Notification for Prior Approval for a Proposed Change of Use of Agricultural Building to 1no. Dwellinghouse (Class C3), and for Associated Operational Development. Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 2015, Schedule 2, Part 3, Class Q | Gunns Farm Hadleigh Road – *refused*

DC/21/00514 | Householder Application - Erection of first floor extension and single storey rear extension (following demolition of conservatory). Installation of first floor window | Old Barn Stores Main Road – *withdrawn*

DC/21/00548 | Notification of Works to Trees in a Preservation Order - T1 (Holm Oak) - Reduce crown to reduce load on partially decayed stem by approx 3m in height north 2-3m east 1-2m south 3-4m and west 5-6m. See accompanying arboricultural report | The Old Rectory Main Road – *granted*

The current status of these applications was noted

7/040721 To discuss recent incidents in the Village Hall car park

It was agreed the Clerk would raise the issue of recent littering, drug use and anti-social behaviour with Stefan Henriksen the Police Community Engagement Officer.

8/040721 To discuss any update on support for the Duke of Marlborough pub and the Village Shop

The pub now has a repaired and functioning marquee and will be opening on April 12.

The Clerk will contact the shop to discuss further the funding needs arising from the decision to renew the chiller and freezer unit, in the knowledge that the cost is more than £13,000.00 The issue will be brought back to the next meeting.

9/040721 To consider an update on the Land Trust

All allotments are now occupied. The bank mandate change has progressed.

10/040721 To receive reports from Parish Councillors on meetings attended

The Environment Agency has commented at a meeting with Cllr Hallett that very little can be done to alleviate the flooding problem unless there is direct damage to homes.

11/040721 To receive a financial report from the Clerk including any payments due

It was agreed to authorise the Clerk and Chair to complete the end of year paperwork.

A bank reconciliation was presented showing a balance of £17,467.94. No payments were currently due. Cllr Caston now has internet access to the bank accounts, making direct online payments possible instead of cheques.

12/040721 Correspondence and urgent matters to be brought to the attention of the Parish Council

A new planning proposal had been submitted for the revised SnOasis project, now rebranded as Valley Ridge. A revised planning application will be required for what appears to be a more manageable development.

13/040721 To note any developments on the current and future Solar Panel planning applications, including:

DC/21/00060 | Full Planning Application - Installation of renewable led energy generating station comprising ground-mounted photovoltaic solar arrays and battery-based electricity storage containers together with substation, inverter/transformer stations, site accesses, internal access tracks, security measures, access gates, other ancillary infrastructure, landscaping and biodiversity enhancements including Nature Areas | Land To The East Of The Channel, Burstall Hill – *closing date for comments was February 28, 2021*

DC/20/05895 | Full Planning Application - Installation of renewable energy generating station, comprising ground-mounted photovoltaic solar arrays and battery-based electricity storage containers together with substation, inverter/transformer stations, site accesses, internal access tracks, security measures, access gates, other ancillary infrastructure, landscaping and biodiversity enhancements including Nature Areas. | Land To The South Of Church Farm, Somersham, IP8 4PN And Land To The East Of The Channel, Burstall

There have been no further developments on these applications to date

The next meeting on May 5 will be the Annual Parish Meeting as well as the AGM of the Parish Council. As things currently stand that will be the final online meeting, as the legislation enabling remote meetings expires on May 6. As of May 17, meetings can be held in person under Covid-safe conditions.