

MINUTES

of the Meeting of Occold Parish Council held at 7.30pm on Monday 12th March 2007 in the Village Hall.

Present: Mr K Chittock, Mr A Andrews, Mr B Dyla, Mr S Hubner, Mr B Hull, Mr R Owen, Mr S Warnes.

Also for part of the meeting Mrs Sue Welch, Footpaths Warden, and Mr John Hewitson her successor, County Councillor Jeremy Clover, District Councillor Charles Tilbury and Community Police Officer PC Eaves

1. Apologies had been received from Mrs Careford and Mr Underwood

2. Minutes of the previous Meeting held on Monday 15th January 2007, which had previously been circulated to Councillors, were proposed for approval by Mr Dyla, seconded by Mr Andrews. All in favour

3. Matters Arising

3(1) Item 4(1) 15/1/07: Street Name signs for Tudor Court and Church Lane
The sign for Church Lane had now been installed. Tudor Court sign still awaited

3(2) Item 4(6) 15/1/07: Naming of The Street/ Church Street
The Clerk had received forms from Mid Suffolk District Council for ordering Church Street and The Street signs. The location of The Street had to be confirmed. It was decided that the best place to put it would be outside The Old Vicarage in the verge, but Clerk to check with Mr and Mrs Self that they are happy for this to be done before ordering the sign

3(3) Item 4(2) 15/1/07: Dog waste bin
The new larger bin has been put up. It was not possible to mount it back to back with the old one so that has now been moved to Redlingfield Road, opposite Willow Tree Farm, as lots of dog walkers use this route out of the village. Clerk to notify Mid Suffolk to ensure it is included on the collection route for emptying

3(4) Item 4(4) 15/1/07: Bus stop
A letter had been received from Suffolk County Council offering to install the necessary hardstanding, Disability Discrimination Act kerb, a bus stop pole and a timetable case on the green at a cost to the Parish Council of £777.22. If the Parish Council agrees to go ahead SCC will provide similar across the road on the pub car park. Chairman to check that the landlord is happy for this to go ahead in principle, whilst the Clerk ascertains exact measurements, etc Mr Dyla proposed and Mr Hubner seconded use of money from the Road Safety reserves of £1000 to finance the cost of the new bus stop. All in favour

3(5) Item 4(5) 15/1/07: Ditch alongside B1077
The scheduled meeting with Gerald Clarke and James Gooderham from SCC had been postponed due to forecast bad weather. The Clerk had been in touch with Mr Clarke again and was waiting for his reply on a new meeting date. She will notify all Councillors when a date is

known

3(6) Item 12(1) 15/1/07: Cemetery tap

Essex & Suffolk Water had been called to isolate the tap as we had been unable to locate the stopcock. The tap had now been repaired but not tested as the stopcock had again been covered over. Mr Hubner undertook to uncover it again so that the tap could be turned back on. Mr Tom Rivett has made an insulating box to fit around the standpipe and this could be installed once the tap had been checked

4. Reports from County and District Councillors

4(1) County Councillor Jeremy Clover

Mr Clover reported that the County Council Budget would mean an increase in the County part of the Council Tax of 4½ %. They were in a standstill situation but facing increased costs. The total Budget is expected to be £33½m. Mr Clover attributed some of the costs to Central Government requirements for Returns; for example the Education Department had had to submit 53 Returns in one year. Clearly some people are being employed solely to cope with the work involved in filling in these forms

There were leaflets to hand out about the changes to the Mobile Library Service (see also 5(7) below)

Mr Clover also mentioned the upset that has been caused in some areas regarding the proposal to change the education system to a 2-tier one throughout the County, doing away with the 3-tier system

4(2) District Councillor Charles Tilbury

Mr Tilbury gave his report, a copy of which is attached to the Minutes. He also hoped that he would see Councillors again after elections in May, when he would be standing for re-election

5. Correspondence

5(1) Correspondence for circulation – *Police Direct* leaflet; *Suffolk Garbology Project* information; *EEAPTC News* January 2007; *The Local Councillor* Spring 2007 including details of Revised Model Code of Conduct; *Planning News* from Mid Suffolk District Council; *Suffolk Waste Partnership Annual Report 2005/6*; *Suffolk Scene* Spring 2007; *Clerks & Councils Direct* March 2007; information from SALC on Local Government Review regarding Pathfinder Status and The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Bill; letter from Mid Suffolk District Council on Local Development Framework Core Strategy Issues and Options consultation (deadline already passed)

5(2) An invitation had been received from Mid Suffolk District Council to enter the Village of the Year competition. Councillors felt that there were more important issues to focus on

5(3) Local Government Elections

The Clerk had received election nomination packs for all Councillors and pre-election publicity. The former were distributed, copies of the latter to be taken to the pub and Church

5(4) A consultation copy of the Revised Model Code of Conduct for Local Authority

Members had been received. Unfortunately the very short period for consultation had already passed. It is expected that the new Model Code will be effective after the local elections in May. It is supposed to simplify the existing provisions. The Clerk directed Councillors attention to the copy of The Local Councillor in the current bundle as this has a comprehensive review of the proposed changes

5(5) A letter had been received from defra explaining that the Review of Quality Town and Parish Council scheme is to be postponed due to the proposals in the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Bill. If enacted the Bill is expected to confirm the White Paper commitment to extend the power of well-being to parish councils that satisfy criteria based on the Quality Parish Scheme. The result may be the introduction of a statutory scheme which could effectively succeed the Quality Town and Parish Council Scheme, which does not have a statutory basis

5(6) The Clerk had recently been told by SALC that it would be advisable for the Parish Council to have a Complaints Procedure in place to deal with any complaints that might be made. She read out a copy of SALC's Model Complaints Procedure. Mr Hubner proposed and Mr Andrews seconded that it should be adopted. All in favour. Mr Hubner also suggested that the procedure should be publicised so that a potential complainant is aware of it. It was suggested that this could be done via ORACle and the website

5(7) Following the consultation last year some changes had been proposed to the Mobile Library Service. Comments on the new services are to be made by 31st March. The Clerk had a poster for the noticeboard. There were also numerous leaflets. These to be taken to the pub and Church, also the Village Hall

5(8) School Organisation Review

Suffolk County Council had sent a letter and 2 leaflets for each Councillor which outline the principal issues in the review so that Councillors can explain these to any interested electors

6. Report from Community Police Officer PC Eaves

PC Eaves reported that there had only been three reported crimes in Occold so far this year. One of these was the recent theft of a motor vehicle from a local landowner. The vehicle was subsequently recovered in Bressingham but no arrests had yet been made

There had been an incident of internet fraud in which someone had fraudulently used credit card details to make purchases. PC Eaves warned of the need to keep personal details safe, as this type of crime is becoming more prevalent

A local man currently on remand had pleaded guilty to the offences with which he had been charged and was awaiting sentencing

Clarification had been obtained on the enforceability of the 20mph speed limit. PC Eaves had been informed that it was considered to be a self-regulatory scheme and as such speeding tickets could not be issued to drivers travelling at more than 20mph. PC Eaves would continue to use the speed gun in Occold approximately once a month and stop those travelling in excess of 20mph to advise them that they should be travelling more slowly. Anyone travelling at excessive speed could be prosecuted for careless driving which, if they were found guilty, could carry a heavier penalty than a speeding fine anyway

7. Parish Paths Partnership

7(1) After the last meeting the Clerk had confirmed that the land across which FP24 passes is owned by Edward Starke, by looking at the Land Registry website. Whilst speaking to Debbie Adams at Suffolk County Council she had been told that the bridge was scheduled for the next financial year, ie from April 2007, and that the County Council would take enforcement action if necessary to obtain a footpath diversion around the lagoon. After consulting the Chairman it was decided that this being the case the Clerk should pass Mr Starke's details to the County Council to deal with rather than the Parish Council trying to negotiate a permissive path directly with him. The question of HLS's willingness to have its part of Redhouse Lane adopted was also discussed. This will depend upon the outcome of the legal challenge to the injunction that is currently in place (see 9(2) below)

7(2) It was noted that new footpath and bridleway signs had been put up for all rights of way where they leave metalled roads

7(3) Mrs Welch reported that there were problems on the Occold Circular Walk route on the land at Thorndon Hill Farm. It had been reported to her that manure had been dumped on the route coming up the hill from HLS to the road near the barn where the footpath comes out on the road. This meant that walkers now had to pass around the other side of the barn to get out to the road. Also the cattle in the fields further towards Rishangles have churned up the land to such an extent that it is very difficult to use the path. However, it was acknowledged that it was not possible to keep livestock off the part of the field in question. On other footpaths towards Thorndon, owned by the same landowner, there had been reports of barbed wire and electric fencing obstructing the right of way. The Clerk was asked to write a polite letter to the landowner, Mr Jones, reminding him of his obligation to keep rights of way unobstructed

8. Planning Matters

8(1) A Notice of Adoption of the Supplementary Planning Document for Social Infrastructure Including Open Space, Sport and Recreation as part of the Local Development Framework had been received from Mid Suffolk District Council. The aim of the SPD is to support the adoption of local standards and provide the mechanisms to obtain commuted sums of money from developers to provide and manage social infrastructure including open space, sport and recreation, based on a rigorous survey and analysis of need and demand (the Needs Assessment). The SPD and accompanying documents can be inspected at local libraries, Council Offices and on Mid Suffolk District Council's website

8(2) It was noted that permission has been granted for application ref 0838/06/FUL for conversion of outbuilding to guest annexe at White House Farm, Occold

8(3) It was noted that the granting of permission for application ref 1676/06/FUL for the erection of a domestic wind turbine at Willows, Dublin Road, Rishangles had received some local press coverage after the Parish Council issued a press release. An application for a similar domestic wind turbine at a house in Weybread had subsequently been refused by Mid Suffolk District Council despite there having been no objections from neighbours there, in contrast to the fact there had been 5 objections to the application here. These decisions seem contradictory on the face of it. Clerk to write to MSDC for an explanation of the

differing decisions

9. Meetings

9(1) A planned visit by Councillors to Masons MRF Facility on 15th February 2007 had not gone ahead as no-one was available on the day except Mrs Careford. The Chairman had spoken to the lady at Masons who was happy to rearrange the visit for another time. The Clerk to contact her to fix another date, not a Friday by request of some Councillors

9(2) The Chairman and Clerk had received an invitation at short notice to attend a meeting at HLS on Friday 2nd March to be briefed on the current situation regarding the injunction that restricts the activities of protestors at the site. As neither of them was able to attend Mr Andrews went instead. This is his report: -

Report of visit, on behalf of Occold Parish Council, to Huntingdon Life Sciences, Friday 2nd March 2007

Briefing by Guy Mathias, Associate Director, UK Security, Huntingdon Life Sciences plc

I) When I arrived a little after 6.00 pm I gathered that the Chair and Clerk of Thorndon P.C. had been briefed an hour earlier. In addition to the below they had raised the question of speeding, attributed to HLS staff, through Thorndon. Mr Mathias had said that they will put up notices to staff on the issue but requested number plate numbers if he was to be able to take effective action. I have heard similar complaints in Occold; perhaps we should encourage residents to take advantage of this suggestion.

II) The main purpose of this meeting was a courtesy notification that the injunction which currently restricts protestor activity around the laboratories in Barrack Lane is being legally challenged and that this may lead to increased political activity in the village.

The Injunction was taken out in May 2003 and it is remarkable that it has been untouched for so long as it is only an Interim Injunction.

This injunction was taken out by HLS and named individual members of their staff against the animal rights group SHAC and named individual activists. A number of these listed activists have since received related criminal convictions carrying up 14 years imprisonment. The injunction restricts activities around HLS premises and staff homes.

The main restrictions which affect Occold are:

- 25 maximum protestors
- Maximum duration 6 hours
- Maximum 1 protest per 7 days
- Only in designated areas (mainly the lay-by)
- Half mile exclusion for vehicles
- Must notify Eye Police before protest.

It is these restrictions that have allowed the western side of Occold to be a much more peaceful and unthreatening place to live in, for the last three years after several years of increasing noise and disturbance.

There are three possible outcomes:

- The injunction is overturned allowing a full return to the level of activity, including

- national/international demonstrations, that prevailed prior to 2003
- Some of the clauses may be rescinded or relaxed eg the use of megaphones has recently been allowed again in Oxford
- The injunction is upheld in full

It appears that the middle option is the most likely.

It is possible that the Judge may visit the Occold HLS site early next week and a demonstration may accompany this visit but it is likely to be a low key one to impress the judge.

The Judge is expected to rule by mid-March.

III) At the request of Sue Welch (OPC Footpath Warden), who had in turn received the suggestion from SCC's representative, I brought up the question of Redhouse Lane being adopted as a footpath. Also the ugly gate and barbed wire fence being removed.

The ability to lock the gate gave them a modicum of extra security and the police an element of crowd control at larger demonstrations. But this is no longer needed with the injunction in place.

Providing the injunction is largely intact after this legal process, Mr Mathias is sympathetic to our objectives to make the lane available to Occold Residents both as a route and a visual amenity/conservation area

Sue has suggested that if a 'kissing gate' or similar entrance (which stops vehicles gaining access) was in place before it is adopted as a footpath we are likely to have less problem with Highways insisting upon the removal of 'unauthorised furniture'.

IV) The proposal to put in parking restrictions was again raised. What is envisaged is yellow lines on the far side of the road to the lay-by. This has the support of the local police. The aim would be to prevent the use of zig-zag parking to obstruct Barrack Lane.

I asked Mr Mathias to put what he proposed in writing to our Clerk in order that it could be discussed at our next meeting.

V) Mr Mathias suggested a visit of councillors to look around the laboratories after the May elections.

I suggested that he ensure that the animal viewing rooms were in use at that time in order that councillors could obtain a more representative impression of their activities than was obtained on a visit some years ago.

9(3) An invitation had been received for Councillors to attend the Rural Coffee Caravan Project AGM on Wednesday 28th March 2007 from 2.15pm, preceded by lunch at The Old Library, Red Gables, Stowmarket

9(4) Information had been received from SALC about its conference on Building and Strengthening Your Community to be held at Stowupland Village Hall on Thursday 22nd March 10.30am – 3.30pm

10. Finance

10(1) It was noted that acknowledgements had been received from the following charities for

recent donations from the Parish Council: -

Diss, Thetford and District CAB
Occold Pre-School
Mid Suffolk CAB

Eye Volunteer Centre
Suffolk Accident Rescue Service
East Anglian Air Ambulance

10(2) The donations to be made to Church and Chapel from 2006/7 Budget (£1000) were considered. Mr Hubner declared a personal interest as Treasurer of the PCC. Mr Owen proposed and Mr Hull seconded that £700 be given to the Church and £300 to the Baptist Chapel as in recent years. All in favour

10(3) It was noted that the Audit Commission had appointed Lubbock Fine Accountants as external auditors for a further year

10(4) The adoption of new Standing Orders and Financial Standing Orders was considered further to comments made in the Audit for 2005/6. Councillors had been provided with the National Association of Local Councils model orders in advance of the meeting. Some minor amendments were made to these by consensus. Mr Warnes then proposed and Mr Owen seconded that both sets of Orders be adopted in their amended form. All in favour

10(5) The following were submitted for payment: -

(i) Invoice from Essex & Suffolk Water for locating stopcock for cemetery tap - £36 +£6.30 vat = £42.30

(ii) Invoice from Suffolk ACRE Services for additional insurance premium to increase Fidelity Guarantee to £20,000 - £3.64

(iii) Invoice from Glasdon for fixing kit for new dog-waste bin - £17.85 + £3.12 vat = £20.97

(iv) Invoice from Suffolk County Council for Street Lighting Maintenance and Energy for period 1/10/06 to 31/3/07 - £287.63 + £50.34 vat = £337.97

(v) Clerk's salary for 6 months to 31st March 2007 - £755

(vi) Invoice from Essex & Suffolk Water for water rate for cemetery tap for £78.70 (minimum standing charge)

Mr Hull proposed and Mr Owen seconded payment of all of the above. All in favour

10(6) It was noted that interest at Alliance Leicester of £19.52 and £18.20 had been received for January and February 2007 respectively

11. Date of next meeting

The next meeting will be held on **Monday 14th May 2007 (Annual Parish Meeting at 7pm followed by Annual Parish Council Meeting)** in the Village Hall.

Meeting closed