

Meeting Date: Monday 25th September 2023

Location: The Village Hall, Stiffkey

Minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on the above date and venue.

Present:	Also present:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Paul Claydon• Philip Harrison• Alex Hooper• Rocky Husain• Jamie Lawrence• Martin Williams	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Nea Horsford – Clerk• District Cllr Victoria Holliday• Paul Forecast- National Trust Regional Director East• Victoria Egan – General Manager National Trust• 23 Members of the public

- 1. Apologies and reasons for absence** apologies received from Jane Hiscocks and Michael Dalby
- 2. Presentation from National Trust** Paul Forecast and Victoria Egan presented a National Trust slide show (appendix 1) giving an update on Stiffkey Bridge describing the decision to remove the bridge, the steps to replace the bridge, the progress so far, the next steps and the forecast time scales. They then opened the meeting to the public to ask questions.
 - i) Who originally owned the land?** The land was originally owned by Cadburys and purchased in the 1970's with various grants
 - ii) What were the results of the meeting with Ben Nuttall from the NCC?** The threshold for the historic footpath application has been reached and is now under process. The number of nesting birds has risen over the last two years.
 - iii) Are you going to grant a footpath and bridge?** As the threshold for the path has been met, the legal process will begin on that. In terms of the bridge, there is a legal process to go through first, but the NT will build the bridge and not remove permissive access.
 - iv) The application hasn't really moved forward since March. Is the NT still supporting the application?** The NT is providing NCC with the information asked for. NCC and the NT are satisfied with the application to use the footpath to the north and they are now checking this with other bodies.
 - v) Can the NT confirm that despite saying they would in March 2023, they are no longer actively supporting the application for the historic footpath?** Yes, this is correct.
 - vi) Natural England and Crown Estates haven't been mentioned in the past – why now?** There are 11 different organisations the NT need to consult with. The reason for this meeting is to 'unpack', give a bit more detail and make objectives a clearer.
 - vii) What will the NT going to do to repair their reputation? Are they going to take care in the future?** In this circumstance things haven't gone well and communications have been wrong and the NT apologise for this.
 - viii) Duncan Baker addressed the NT:** over the past six months there has been an erosion of trust. A structural report was requested 6 months ago and it still hasn't been published. Again, he has requested to see it. If it is deemed that it is not scientifically possible to build a bridge on site then the NT need to be honest about it as the time taken has been ridiculous. £250K is a huge amount of money to find for the replacement bridge. The NT then confirmed that fundraising could be found from other sources and the structural report will be shared.

Minutes Approved by: _____ Date: _____

Stiffkey Parish Council - Minutes

- ix) **Can the money from NT carparks be used for funding?** This is not straight forward. Most carparks are in partnerships and so not all the money from them goes to the NT. What money that does go can be used, but is part of a larger pot for all locations. The NT will look to raise the money from other sources.
- x) **Who will be responsible for the ongoing maintenance of the bridge?** the County Council will not be maintaining the bridge; however, NT could potentially maintain it.
- xi) **When and where did you get the permission to take the bridge down?** The NT obtained retrospective planning permission due to safety. They hoped to repair it, but it wasn't possible due to the complexity of different reports and it was considered the right thing to do for the area.
- xii) **The NT has said that the footfall on the marsh to the east is now 30-40,000p.a. What are the plans for that side of the marsh and can we see them? Can the PC speak to Natural England?** Natural England was approached and they were concerned about the birds on the other side. Once the bridge is opened, the natural balance should be restored.
- xiii) **What plans does the NT have in place for the temporary structure?** The NT removed the first bridge on behalf of the Crown. The second temporary structure sits within Natural England's responsibilities, so the NT is not using its resources to remove.
- xiv) **What are the plans for the Food and Beveridge Van?** There aren't any plans at the moment. If this changes, the NT will come back to the PC.
- xv) **Holiday Makers are walking all over the marsh as they cannot use the bridge, so what are the NT plans?** Natural England has expressed concerns and the NT will be speaking to them about a more linear route which should be better.
- xvi) **Can the NT give the above details of Natural England to us?** Yes, to the Clerk
- xvii) **Is September 2024 a definite or can it be moved?** The NT is trusting that all the statutory bodies will comment, but if they take longer, it is not the NT fault.

District Cllr Holliday confirmed she will support the community.

The NT were thanked for their time and the NT left the meeting at 19.45pm.

3. **Further questions from Public** a member of the public representing a group of neighbours from Wells Road as there highlighted the lack of safe pedestrian routes into the village, particularly for those with prams, wheelchairs and mobility issues. There is a short section without a footpath at all, leading down from the junction with Greenway, then a footpath for most of the route (the Muckledyke), but it involves difficult steps. It is not just a speeding issue, it is unsafe. Duncan Baker MP is mindful of rural speeding and has organised a meeting on the 29th September to discuss it with a panel of experts. Representatives from Stiffkey Council will be attending and shall report back.

Action: Cllr Claydon/Williams

4. **Update from District and County Councillors**

4.1. **Michael Dalby sent his report in advance** (appendix 2)

4.2. **Cllr Holliday** (appendix 3) circulated her report and requested they are published on the website. She reminded the council the consultation for Blakeney Surgery ends on Saturday and hopes everyone signs the petition if they wish to. **Action: Clerk**

5. **To receive declaration of interest and requests for dispensations** Cllr Harrison declared an interest in Planning Application PF23/1982

6. **To approve the minutes of the meeting on 31st July 2023** Cllr Williams PROPOSED the approval, however, Cllr Hooper listed the following changes/amendments to be made to the minutes:

Minutes Approved by: _____ Date: _____

Stiffkey Parish Council - Minutes

- The minutes on the website are not the corrected draft of 9th August that the Clerk was supposed to publish – as per her confirmation email of that date. It is also not clear which minutes we are supposed to be approving
- Item 10 Governance
Planning Policy does not reflect what was agreed. This was circulated by Cllr Hooper after the meeting and the Clerk failed to update the draft minutes. (Appendix 4)
- Item 12.4 Dark Skies Policy.
It was agreed at the meeting to adapt the Dark Skies policy with the change proposed (subsequently circulated by Cllr Hooper). Not to wait until the next meeting to approve (Appendix 5)
- The clerk has not updated the website as a result of approvals at the meeting – policy updates (planning, safeguarding, complaints)
- The clerk was supposed to list the payments approved as part of the minutes – they are absent. In addition, a report, as per article 4h of our financial regulations was supposed to be added to the minutes and has not been

It was decided the Minutes will be amended for approval at the meeting in November. **Action: Clerk**

7. **Clerk's report** the Clerk thanked the Council for their warm welcome. It was mentioned the laptop despite being fixed, still wasn't suitable to use due to not having Windows loaded. The laptop was purchased many years ago and it maybe it won't be able to load Windows. Cllr Hooper is going to see if it is possible to sort and will be reviewed next meeting. **Action: Clerk/Cllr Hooper**

8. Matters arising from July Minutes

- a) **Community First Responders** Cllr Hooper stated that they are averaging 90 hours per month with 7 callouts. After some more investigation, she confirmed that VAT can be claimed and the clerks' information in the minutes from the meeting in July is not correct. The correct interpretation is as per Para 10.2 of VAT Notice 749 it is acceptable to reclaim the VAT. <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/localauthorities-and-similar-bodies-notice-749#section10> There is still the issue of funding as CFR's are still having to cover all their costs – with the exception of call out mileage. This does not include compulsory meetings each month, collection of supplies – like oxygen and so on. They still need £2,000 for the Raizer Chair. Duncan Baker confirmed that every single Responder does a brilliant job, but they are so much better now than where they were five years ago. Cllr Hooper responded that this may be the case, but it is still not acceptable for a volunteer to give up the equivalent of 2 working weeks each month and still have to pay their own costs including uniform, etc
- b) **Parish Partnership** there was much discussion regarding projects and the need to demonstrate data if the PC were to apply for anything. Cllr Hooper suggested wheelie bin stickers and Cllr Husain suggested green signs to be placed onto the 30mph speed signs. Cllr Husain volunteered to take photographs of the ones seen in Letheringsett and will circulate via email. The Clerk to find out if permission is needed for signs. **Action: Clerk**
- c) **Speeding Meeting.** Cllr Williams and Cllr Claydon to attend the Speed Meeting on Friday and report back. There are a few 20mph repeater signs missing, Cllr Williams to enquire about replacements. It was decided the best option would be to try to extend the 20mph speed limit. **Action: Cllr Williams & Cllr Claydon**
- d) **Historic footpath registration progress** Ben Nutall will provide an update when it is available and a full report will be requested.

9. To discuss any planning applications received since the last meeting

- a) PF/23/1982 The Old Army Catering Hut – conversion into three holiday lets – **no objections but should be Dark Skies appropriate. Action: Clerk**
- b) PF/23/1597 Church Cottage, Church Street – single storey extension – **comments submitted and available on the website**

Minutes Approved by: _____ Date: _____

Stiffkey Parish Council - Minutes

- c) PF/23/1782 1 Warborough Place, Wells Road – Erection of single-story rear extension, garden outbuilding (shed/covered BBQ area), roadside wall, insertion of rooflights in east/west facing roof slopes of existing dwelling and alterations to fenestration – **comments submitted and available on the website.**
- d) LA/23/1783 Warborough Place, Wells Road – Erection of single-story rear extension, garden outbuilding (shed/covered BBQ area), roadside wall, insertion of rooflights in east/west facing roof slopes of existing dwelling and alterations to fenestration – **comments submitted and available on the website.**

District Councillor Victoria Holliday left the meeting at 8.26pm

10. Correspondence received

- a) **Duncan Baker MP – speeding in North Norfolk** confirmed two members of the PC will attend
- b) **Anglian Water – Stiffkey Project** due to sensors it was discussed whether the project information should have gone on the Council website and noticeboard. Cllr Hooper did say that as a PC we should be mindful that we did not need to have such a discussion about this over email. It was not something which required action and should have waited until the public meeting.
- c) **Highways Inspection** the clerk has submitted comments, but the Council felt there could be a bit more notice from Highways when the inspection is due. Clerk to monitor. **Action: Clerk**
- d) **Norfolk Community Foundation** to be monitored for fundraising opportunities. **Action: Clerk**
- e) **Slow Ways National Walking Network** not all walks are verified. Maybe in the future the Council could publish a leaflet with walks in Stiffkey

11. **Financial Matters** the accounts were circulated and listed on the Agenda were unanimously approved for payment. Copies of the balances had been circulated and approved. Cllr Hooper raised a concern that the Payments against Budget Report hadn't been circulated since May 2023 and this was a requirement of our financial regulations. The Geosphere Map subscription could be cancelled next year. The Clerk to circulate the login details to Councillors. There was much discussion about the Clerk's PC and if it is suitable for use. Cllr Hooper is going to look at it and see if it can be updated. **Action: Clerk/Cllr Hooper**

Approved payments:

N Horsford	Salary from 23 rd Aug- 24 th September	£323.20
NPTS	New Councillors Training	£ 88.00
HMRC	Locum Clerk	£ 76.00
M. Hayes	Locum Clerk Final salary	£307.90
M. Hayes	Locum Clerk Printing Costs	£ 0.90

Paid since last meeting:

SSE Energy	Street lighting July	£ 47.57
SSE Energy	Street lighting August	£ 50.07
Simnor	Laptop repair	£130.00
Geosphere	Map	£ 38.00

Cllr Hooper raised concerns about the payment to Simnor for the laptop. There was an issue here because the locum clerk had this repair done 1 week before leaving and just before the bank holiday in August. The clerk had used a financial regulation designed for emergencies to pay for the work without the need for prior approval. Cllr Hooper felt this was inappropriate on a number of levels: - The locum clerk said in her email justifying the expense that the repair was necessary since the laptop had not worked since early June – so why was this not brought to the attention of the council beforehand – and certainly for inclusion in the July meeting? There had been no investigation or efforts to ensure that the best value for money was obtained and due process properly followed

Minutes Approved by: _____ Date: _____

Stiffkey Parish Council - Minutes

- a. Given the laptop was purchased in 2016 – and a new more up to date laptop can cost as little as £300 – was this the best use of public funds?
- b. The components replaced were very expensive given what the actual retail price of these were
- c. It seems rather strange that the locum clerk was able to use the financial regulations for this – but unable to use them to ensure that the council received the reports it was supposed to
- d. Parish councillors really need to pay more attention to these kinds of matters and not simply thank the clerk. Cllr Williams did point out that the Council were in a difficult position as neither the Locum Clerk or previous clerk had informed the PC that the laptop wasn't working properly. The incoming Clerk had asked for a working laptop at the handover and the Locum Clerk had pointed out that each Council should have a separate working laptop.

12. Confirm appointment of new clerk and RFO clerk started in their new role on a yearly contract on the 23rd August and had a hand over from the Locum clerk.

13. Full Fibre Access Plans

Cllr Hooper asked about plans for Full Fibre Access to Stiffkey. Duncan Baker asked for a formal request from the Clerk so that he could then draft a letter to Open Reach to request they try to escalate their plans for the local area.

Action: Clerk

14. Dark Skies Information Letter.

Cllr Hooper asked that since the policy was approved, we should be looking at ways to inform our residents. It was agreed that publishing the policy would be the first step and this would be followed by individual letters if necessary. Noticeboards and possibly Lynx could be used to do this. **Action: Clerk**

15. Provision of dental services.

Cllr Hooper reported that there was no access to NHS dentists in our area and even if people could travel, no NHS dentist was currently taking on new patients. This was a serious issue for our residents. Duncan Baker confirmed the difficulties of getting NHS Dentists to work in North Norfolk and that a number of incentive schemes were underway. It was agreed to keep this on the agenda. **Action: Clerk**

16. Remembrance Wreath.

Cllr Williams asked as to whether or not we should purchase one. Cllr Hooper reported that this was never optional and was sent automatically and the invoice enclosed.

17. Receive Update on Blakney Surgery Cllr Hooper gave a brief update on where things are. The deadline for the consultation is the 30th September. Cllr Hooper proposed a final letter should go to the ICB in support of keeping the surgery open. It was agreed that Cllr Hooper would write a response and the clerk would send directly. **Action: Cllr Hooper/Clerk**

18. Items for next Agenda

- a) Electricity Tariff – put out to tender
- b) Litter
- c) Possible Official Social Media for PC
- d) Freedom of Information Guide and Code of Conduct
- e) Clerk's Laptop

19. Next meeting Monday 27th November 2023 at 7pm

Minutes Approved by: _____ Date: _____