BRANDESTON PARISH COUNCIL

The Minute of the meeting held at 7.30pm on Monday 12th April 2021 via Zoom video call due to Covid-19 restrictions.

Present: *Councillors Baker, Fletcher, Mitson-Woods (Chair), Summers, SCC Paul West, ESC Maurice Cook and Clerk Catherine Bacon.*

13/20-21/1 Chairman Cllr Mitson-Woods welcomed Councillors, SC Councillor Paul West and East Suffolk Councillor to the meeting. The Chair acknowledge the death of HRH Duke of Edinburgh

13/20-21/2 There were apologies for absence from Cllrs Aitchison (work), Locke (personal) and Williams (work).

13/20-21/3 There were no Declarations of Interest.

13/20-21/4 It was resolved that the Chairman should sign the Minute of the Meeting held on 8th March 2021 as a true and accurate record.

13/20-21/5 County Council report

Suffolk County Councillor West reported that SCC has been awarded £3million from the Government Business and Skills department for a decarbonisation program. The SCC own several buildings across the county and the grant will be used to reduce the carbon footprint of the buildings through a variety of measures such as installation of solar panels.

SCC is making £ ¼ million worth of trees available and are in the process of contacting local landowners to find appropriate planting locations.

SCC are seeking feedback from users regarding the booking system at recycling centres that has been implemented during the COVID restrictions. The feedback can be done on the SCC website.

Following several reports of the state of signage outside schools, £ ½ million has been made available for refreshing signs and road markings.

SCC West was pleased to report that the heritage signs for Brandeston are close to being sent to the installation contractors after a positive Zoom meeting with Charlie Mitson from the Highways department, Cllr Mitson-Woods and the Clerk. Installation can take up to 14 weeks.

13/20-21/6 East Suffolk Council report

Stage two of easing began on today (12th April) with thanks to the vaccination program which has had a strong take up in Suffolk and COVID numbers have remained low, even after reopening of schools. The Economic Development and Environmental Health teams have been working closely with local businesses to ensure they are ready to re-open safely and the teams will continue to support them proactively as we all seek to navigate towards a return to more normal life.

The East Suffolk Bounce Back fund is being adopted at a Suffolk level as a new Community Restart programme which also includes specialist advice and support (including with risk assessments) to enable community buildings and community groups to open back up safely. Funded through the Control Outbreak Management Fund, more information about the whole programme will be available shortly.

In total, since the launch of a plethora of new business grants in November 2020, East Suffolk Council has made over 18,700 separate payments totalling almost £39.1m to businesses struggling due to enforced closure or severe restrictions on trading. In terms of the Additional Restrictions Grant (ARG) this means we have now allocated over 73% of East Suffolk Council's total pot, which is well above the national average and on course to meet the government's 30 June deadline to have allocated all ARG monies. Since the beginning of the pandemic the Council has allocated £105m of grants.

The new Restart Grants scheme launched on 1st April and is aimed at supporting the re-opening of non-essential retail and hospitality/ accommodation providers, leisure, personal care, and gyms. In order to simplify the process for businesses there is now a streamlined application process which can be found on the Council's Covid business support webpage COVID-19: business grant funding » East Suffolk Council. Once completed ESC will determine which grant businesses are eligible and make the appropriate payment. In a further bid to simplify and make the process more efficient; businesses who have successfully applied for previous Covid grants will receive automatic payments from the current grant schemes.
ESC will shortly be implementing longer-term measures to support local businesses through the reopening and recovery period. The Economic Development team have developed draft business support proposals that are in line with our current economic growth priorities and build on the District's economic strengths. The areas of support cover:

- Digital Transformation
- Town Centre Recovery
- Business Start-up

Cabinet recently approved these new business recovery support programmes, and they will be fully developed and implemented in the spring/ summer.
Finally, there is a change in collection of food waste (which may not affect Brandeston), this is down to a new short term contractual issue. The Government Environmental Bill will be amended making it compulsory for local councils to collect food waste and glass waste.

East Suffolk Cllr Cook communicated his thanks to County Cllr West for standing in as a representative for the Brandeston area. It is County Cllr West's last meeting with Brandeston with the County Council going into purdah prior to the May elections. The Chairman thanked Paul for his extremely supportive help to Brandeston via attending meetings and supporting the Heritage sign initiative. He assured him he would always be welcome at events in the village.

13/20-21/7

a) Cllr Williams has been working with the RFO finalising the year end accounts and will submit a report on his return from work commitment.

b) 1) The RFO reported that the cashbook and bank statements reconciled for the year and over-all the two accounts balanced at a total of £4812.73. In May 2019 there was money taken from the PC account without authority. The RFO at the time reported it to the bank and the amounts were reimbursed. Barclays Bank refunded the amount paid to Hudson's Electrical for £313.60) once it was alerted to the payment. Barclays reimbursed the amount twice, the second income was reported to Barclays by the RFO. After alerting the bank to the second payment it was not taken back. Subsequently the Council changed banks following repeated failures for the bank to recognise the authorised personnel; it has remained in the PC account for two years. The PC now holds both the PC and 100+ accounts at HSBC. The RFO sought advice from SALC who recommend that the activity is recorded through a written record of what happened, what has been done to try and rectify it and the council approve that the funds are accounted for as a bank reimbursement. **The RFO will obtain a written record from the RFO at the time of the transaction. It was resolved that the RFO should account for the £313.60 as a bank reimbursement for the financial year 2021/22.** The RFO reported that she noticed the lottery license had been paid from the PC account and not the 100+ account but will amend the error by transferring the £20 back to the 100+ account.
2) The RFO reported the PC account (40-47-42 51541412) had been reconciled to the cash book, end of year summary of accounts and the bank statement to 31/03/2021. The end of year balance is £3923.02 (of which £2000 is ESC grant for Heritage signs). The report of the

draft 2020/21 accounts was accepted and the Council will approve the final copy once the internal audit is complete.

3) The RFO reported the 100+ account (40-25-31 02474506) has been reconciled to the cash book, end of year summary of accounts and the bank statement reconciled and the 31/03/2021 balance is £1263.3. The report of the draft 2020/21 accounts was accepted and the Council will approve the final copy once the internal audit is complete.

4) The RFO had circulated the bank statements to Cllrs but wished to clarify the circulation of the bank statements on noticeboards/website. The 100+ statements refer to the names of those purchasing tickets and the RFO queried breaching GDPR by publishing names this way. It was suggested that the names could be blanked out prior to circulation. **The RFO will ask confirmation from SALC regarding GDPR and bank details in public domain.**

c) **It was resolved that payment of SALC invoice 24168, Payroll services (£45 + £9 VAT) should be paid.**

d) **It was resolved that payment of SALC invoice 24473, SALC membership (£144.69) should be paid.**

13/20-21/8

The Chair reported that a plant and cake sale will be hosted jointly by BPC, PCC and Village Hall Committee to raise funds for the Village Hall and Church. The event will take place on 22nd May 10am to 4pm. The contacts for plant donations are Mary Mitson-Woods (684026) and for cake donations Sue Thurlow (685673).

East Suffolk Cllr Cook raised the issue of the temporary regulations that allow local authorities to conduct formal Council meeting remotely, using technology such as MS Teams or Zoom will expire on the 6th May. There is, at the present time, no intention by the Government to extend these regulations or to passing the primary legislation required to allow the use of digital technology for this purpose in the future. ES Cllr Cook highlighted the use of virtual technology has resulted in wider participation by members of the public in meetings leading to better communication and transmission of information. There is at present a legal process which is being pursued by the LGA and others and it is hoped that the result of this may provide some further clarity on the way forward. It would certainly be ES Cllr Cook's wish to continue to attend meetings virtually on a more permanent basis and the Leadership and Officers of ESC will continue to seek workable solutions to achieve this.

Both ES Cllr Cook and the Chair noted that by removing the powers to use remote meetings, it would not be possible for the PC to meet after the 6th May until at least 24th June (provisional date of restriction lifting) when more than 6 persons can meet.

Cllr Baker reported that there is no date yet for opening the village hall and meeting could not meet after the 6th May until a change in these circumstances. **It was agreed that the Chairman should lobby SALC/NALC to extend the legislation to extend the provision of remote meetings.**

13/20-21/9 Proposal for a Parish Council led 'Housing Needs Survey' (HNS)

Cllr Summers commenced by asking the Chair, if the Chair would like to introduce the subject to provide the background and the context, the Chair responded 'no, not at this time'.

Cllr Summers commenced reminding the PC that they had previously agreed not to proceed with a Neighbourhood Plan, and that all NHPs require provision for some housing. Cllr Summers stated that although the recently adopted Local Plan makes no provision for new housing in the Parish of Brandeston, future ad-hoc planning applications for new homes are probable. Adding that landowners and developers use tactics, knowledge and experience to attempt to navigate the planning system.

With this in mind, Cllr Summers has proposed a Parish led 'Housing Needs Survey' is carried out, to enable the 'stakeholders' to have some steer on possible future development within the village. The results of the survey will help the PC to determine if there is a current requirement for the provision of housing / types of housing for qualifying parishioners and their families.
Having an understanding of what is required (desire and need being different), will enable the PC to be ready and prepared to consider any future applications. A Parish led HNS will ask questions relevant to those qualifying parishioners living in the Parish. In the future, a developer may instigate a HNS, a developer led survey will have a different skew on the questions asked, signposting the answers to be more likely in favour of the developer/landowner.

Cllr Fletcher commented that what they want will not necessarily reflect what is needed. He also stated that he didn't think the PC were qualified to identify housing needs – responses from parishioners would be aspirational only. He questioned whether parishioners would complete the surveys in full, also raising doubts about the response / rate of return of completed surveys? A small number of replies may not be a true and fair reflection of the 'stakeholders' views. Cllr Fletcher believed there was no need for a HNS and questioned why this had been raised.
Cllr Mitson-Woods acknowledged that the village is likely to grow and that it would be better to have the information regarding the villagers' needs in order to help influence the type of development that could occur.
Cllr Fletcher asked Cllr Summers to identify the location of possible development sites, Cllr Summers stated that although no sites have been identified and included in the Local Plan and that infill of linear development is currently not permitted, reference was made to land either side of Mill Lane (Ian Harvey's and Eileen Leach's), and opposite the Leas on Mutton Lane. In addition to these areas, Cllr Summers made reference to the 'green open space' between the Harveys and Mill Lane (this site would only ever be considered as an 'exception site'). Cllr Summers continued to explain that developers have ways of working round the system to make their scheme(s) attractive, and that as a parish we would be better prepared if we could establish if there are any immediate requirements for housing for parishioners and their families.
Cllr Summers also mentioned that 'exception sites' require the identification of demand for housing through a HNS, and such schemes require the support of the parishioners.
Reference was made to Cretingham where lack of take-up of shared ownership designated houses had to be changed to 'rental'.
Cllr Summers believes that under the circumstances, the Parish would be better placed to be proactive rather than reactive.

East Suffolk Cllr Cook agreed that a village survey was a good idea in the absence of a Neighbourhood Plan. He reassured the Parish Council that ESC currently have no major developments permitted in the Framlingham ward. There are several multi-use properties and there are different types of property. Planners will put in more effort to grant planning permission with knowledge of the residents' requirements including factors such as help-to-buy and environmental schemes.

The Chair proposed that Cllr Summers put together a HNS proposal presentation for the APCM. Cllr Fletcher questioned how many residents would attend the APCM whilst it is held via Zoom. It was noted that residents do attend meetings when topics interest them and that the nature of the subject may well attract more attendees.

Vote on proceeding with HNS: 3 For, 1 Abstain (Cllr Fletcher). Though Cllr Fletcher abstained from this vote, he later agreed to assist Cllr Summers with the HNS.

It was agreed that Cllr Summers and Cllr Fletcher will work together to prepare a presentation for the APCM.

13/20-21/10 A date for the APM is yet to be confirm based on reasons outlined in 13/20-21/8. **The Clerk will contact SALC for further guidance.**

13/20-21/11 It was agreed to bring the Annual Parish Council Meeting forward to Wednesday 5th May, 7.30pm to allow the meeting to be held via Zoom before changes in government guidelines outlined in 13/20-21/8.

05:05 ~~12:01~~ :21