BRANDESTON PARISH COUNCIL

The Minutes of the meeting held on Monday 10th January 2022 at 7.30pm, in Brandeston Village Hall.

Present: *Councillors Bange, B Baker, P Baker, Fletcher, Locke, Summers (in the Chair), Williams, Clerk Catherine Bacon, and 3 members of the public.*

10/21-22/1 The Chair welcomed Councillors and the member of the public to the meeting.

10/21-22/2 Apologies for absence was received from District Councillor Freeman and County Councillor Bryce. **It was resolved that these were accepted.**

10/21-22/3 To receive any Declarations of Interest

10/21-22/4 A member of the public wished to raise some points regarding a possible residential scheme on the land adjacent to Mill Lane outlined below:

- Regarding any building in Mill Lane
  - Mill Lane is outside of the Village envelope, questioned the Planning Policy to support a scheme.
  - Brandeston HNS – no housing 'need' revealed.
  - Mill Lane – is a designated 'Quiet Lane'
  - Mill Lane is a single-track lane.
  - Sewage system subject to overload
- Prospect of 'affordable' homes in Mill Lane or elsewhere in Brandeston (or similar village)
  - Not feasible, difficult to justify in rural village
    - No work/jobs.
    - No effective public transport (connectivity).
    - Brownfield site should be targeted, not a greenfield site.
    - No local Primary School or shops (facilities).
  - Housing in rural villages is generally bought for rental, not by those in need of a permanent dwelling.
  - Referred to the shared-ownership housing in Cretingham, and the affordable homes n Brandeston, Mutton Lane.

In order to ensure that the correct facts are on record the Chair responded; the shared ownership housing in Cretingham is now let and managed by a housing association. The affordable housing in Brandeston, Leas was ported to another Landex site in Ufford, as the housing association can more readily manage clusters of housing. In 2021 a social housing rental came available in Cretingham, no take-up locally so Cretingham Parish Council were approached to request their agreement to offering it to others outside of the area/locality.

A parishioner contacted the PC regarding dissatisfaction with the new Heritage signs, commenting that they understood the signs were to be similar to those in Easton. Brandeston's signs are deemed inferior due to factors such as, plastic laminate finger posts which are not in keeping with the Conservation Area status compared with the cast metal pointers in Easton. The Clerk noted that though originally there had been a desire to have signs like those in Easton, the cost and sourcing would have been too significant. It was agreed to go with the Heritage signs provided by SCC. By agreeing to SCC signs, the maintenance cost would be taken up by SCC highways, which would have been a cost to the PC if alternative signs chosen.

It was agreed that the specification agreed for the signs will be double checked against the signs provided and installed by SCC, any deviation from the specification agree can be identified and taken up with SCC.

10/21-22/5 It was resolved that the Chair should sign the Minutes of the Meeting 13th December 2021 as a true and accurate record. *(Circulated and on website)*

10/21-22/6 In the absence of County Councillor Bryce, a summary of her report is as follows:
Suffolk County Council has outlined how it plans to spend money on public services in 2022/23 including:

- More money to support children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND)
- Extra resources for adults in need of care
- Additional funds to prevent flooding and fix footpaths

Regarding Council Tax, the proposed 2.99% increase would be made up of a 1.99% increase in general Council Tax and a 1.00% increase dedicated to funding adult care.
It was announced on December 7th that Cabinet members have committed an extra £20 million over the next three years into further improving Suffolk's highway drainage systems and footpaths.
On December 2nd Suffolk County Council endorsed far-reaching recommendations to improve Suffolk people's mental health and wellbeing. This includes the creation of a dedicated fund of £2.5m and the development of a cross-system group to support community wellbeing in Suffolk.
On December 10th, Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service added to the lifesaving kit at its disposal – cementing the county's continued commitment to protecting its people. A significant investment from the service in new equipment has seen the introduction of digital radios, smoke hoods and smoke curtains – benefitting both residents and firefighters across Suffolk.
On December 21st the county council launched its first ever dedicated campaign about Social Care. The campaign is designed to help the public understand more about the Social Care sector in Suffolk, how the various partners and organisations work together to provide care for people, celebrate the amazing care professionals that work in the sector and ask the public for a little patience and flexibility as we all navigate through one of the toughest winters any of us can remember.
On December 17th Suffolk's LED replacement programme reached a new milestone, with over 10,000 streetlights upgraded with new, sustainable LEDs.

10/21-22/7 No report received from ESC.

10/21-22/8 Finance – RFO
The RFO reported that HSBC has implemented charges on Charitable Accounts.

a) The RFO reported that the PC account had a balance of £4338.97, but, reminded Cllrs that this still contained £180 of 100+ prize money and £527.87 of MRT funds.
b) The RFO reported that the 100+ account has a balance of £1192.31.
c) PCC Tim Passmore emailed parish councils regarding potential increase in the policing element of the council tax precept. He is intending to ask the Police and Crime Panel to support a proposal to raise the policing element of the precept by £10 a year (for a Band D property) which will fund major improvements to the contact and control service. Tim Passmore wants to address concerns about public dissatisfaction with the 101 service. The PC discussed its response to this proposal and agreed that it wished to know more about the proposition and have reassurance that the money would be allocated to the service and not swallowed up into the generic pot. **It was agreed that the Clerk would raise these issues in response to the survey.**

10/21-22/9 Cllr Locke reported that the Quiet Lane posts had been installed and is waiting to collect the signs to attach.
Cllr Bange reported that the GDPR documentation being created for the PC is still ongoing.
Cllr P Baker confirmed that a new Chair for the BVH committee will soon be in place.

10/21-22/10 A Brandeston parishioner contacted the Chair of the PC regarding BT's planned phasing out of analogue phone lines by 2025. They raised concerns that parts of the village have limited mobile reception, so during a power-cut digital phones would not operate, so if there was an emergency (a need for an ambulance), some residents could be left completely isolated with limited/no possibility of reaching out for assistance.
https://www.openreach.com/upgrading-the-UK-to-digital-phone-lines
The following was discussed:

Battery back-up for the fibre/digital line.
Personal emergency call device e.g. Age UK device which works on 3G.

10/21-22/11 The Chair set out the following timeline to date and the process to provide the forum for an interactive discussion regarding the: Artisan North Scheme. The scheme put to the PC for initial comprises; 6 affordable houses, 1 large private dwelling and an area of land to be gifted to the PC as public open space (POS) with funds to manage it. Artisan Letter & Plan attached*.

Artisan North scheme letter emailed to Parish Clerk – 10.12.2021*
Artisan North scheme letter circulated by email to Parish Councillors (PCs) – 10.12 2021
Chairs' telephone Q & A with Lesley Short, Artisan 10.12.2021 – Q & As circulated by email to PCs on 13.12.2021
Artisan North Scheme added to the PC Meeting Agenda Monday 10th January 2022.
(Lesley Short, Artisan is advising his client, Mike North to attend the meeting.)

For discussion by the PC:
If this scheme came forward as a planning proposal (in its current form) what are the considerations and what would be the likely outcome be (PC support or objection to the proposal?)
In considering the above, compliance with SCLP5.11 – Exception sites, would be the primary planning consideration i.e. Does it satisfy the Policy?

i) Is there need? (Analysis of Artisan & Brandeston PC HNSs information, what is/are the 'need(s)' currently identified?)

The results of the Brandeston PC HNS showed an immediate need for 2 houses, with a need/desire for a further 5 with the next 5 years desire/requirement would meet the criteria for social housing.
Cllrs Summers stated the PC must consider whether these are real 'need' or if they are 'desire' and therefore whether the scheme proposed meets the 'need'.
Regarding the need/desire for an adapted home, cost of building a suitable home v cost of adapting a currently owner-occupied property? And whether the person with this requirement would meet the criteria for an affordable home / social housing.
Cllr Summers confirmed there is 'need' but not all are immediate/short-term need. Cllr Fletcher also noted that looking longer into the future, the need may change due to the aging population of the village.
Cllr Summers noted the aspiration of the owners of the land to provide housing for the younger people, working locally in lower paid jobs.

ii) Is the site location suitable? (Is it adjacent to the defined village boundary and is it well related to the settlement.)

Further consideration may also be given to the potential for other sites, adjacent to the village boundary and well related to the settlement, that, if brought forward would be equally or more suitable?

Cllr Locked reminded the PC that at the Village Meeting in 2019 another site was suggested but near to Broadhurst. General discussion about exploring if there are other suitable/equally suitable/more suitable sites adjacent to the village boundary, well related to the settlement. It was thought that there may be another site or two to consider, further work would need to be done on the subject.

The PCs to consider if the HNSs identify sufficient need to support a scheme of this sort and the appropriateness of this location.
Questions:
If need does not currently exist it is possible that this might not always be the situation and therefore;

A. *Is there merit in supporting a scheme that might deliver other significant long-term benefits to the Parish?*
B. *What is currently being offered in terms of merit?*
C. *Are these merits or other merits significant enough to warrant Parish support?*

The PC need to identify whether there could be significant merit, as well as all of the potential positives and negatives of any such scheme. If the PC agree that it is worth further exploring both the potential positives and negatives of some scheme in this location, the Chair would propose that this should be dealt with through a PC Working Group. The Working Group can then report back to the full PC with a view to considering how best to respond to Artisan North.
The above preliminary process can similarly be applied to other schemes in the future which seek to introduce the prospect of community benefit over and above Policy requirements.

Discussions continued:
Cllr Fletcher questioned whether there was any need to develop further in Brandeston due to the number stating a need, none of them are on the ESC Housing List and there are a number (6) of affordable homes being built less than a mile away in Kettleburgh.
Cllr Summers noted that those with a perceived 'need 'may not fit the criteria for low-cost affordable housing.
Reference was made to the application awaiting decision in Kettleburgh DC/21/0757/FUL on land allocated for residential in the ESC Local Plan, of which 5 out of 16 of the housing scheme are identified to be 'affordable'. Questions were raised about the facilities to be provided for each dwelling in the scheme; namely garages and sheds; Cllr Summers commented that for a family to benefit and enjoy living in a rural location a garage and shed would be required for the paraphernalia, it would not be fair on occupiers/owners not to provide these. Cllr B Baker noted that the houses originally designed/built for social housing in the Leas, Brandeston. Cllr Summers said this reinforced the requirement to have garages and sheds so vehicles and paraphernalia are not left on the street or outside the front of the properties.
Cllr Summers commented that for this scheme to proceed it requires the PC to work with Artisan North and that a scheme must provide significant long-term merit to the village.
Cllr Bange raised the buffer of land between the current houses on Mill Lane and the potential development. Cllr Fletcher questioned whether this was a token gesture. The representative of Artisan informed the PC that this land would become an area to be managed by the PC and would come with a pot of monies to cover the cost of maintenance/management. The site of the scheme itself will remain an 'Exception' site and be designated as such, not being included within the village settlement area.

The Artisan representative acknowledged that the Brandeston HNS had a better response, and a more detailed response than that of the Artisan HNS. He highlighted that 'need' can change during the period in which it takes to obtain planning permission and to build homes, and that in his experience additional 'need' surfaces when schemes become general knowledge.
There is also the factor that applications to purchase/occupy the affordable housing are made through the Gateway Home Choice, and as a result the applicant may not necessarily have links to the village. The Artisan representative informed the PC that dwellings in such a scheme would be registered on Land Registry as 'affordable' limiting their purchase price to 70% of open market value, and have strict criteria for the potential purchasers to meet such as (but not limited to); links to Brandeston, links to nearby parishes etc.
Concerns were raised about future development of the retained land surrounding/adjacent to the scheme. The PC directly questioned Artisan's client as to whether he had other 'option agreements' on the land to be retained, the PC also questioned if there were any other mechanisms in the existing option agreement which could be triggered on the granting of planning permission, commencement of build etc. Artisan's client confirmed that his type of agreement is an 'option agreement', and that this does not include additional mechanisms covering the land to be retained or any future development on this land.
Cllr B Baker questioned Artisan's client regarding the finances of the scheme and the profitability. This was not something he had been asked previously but could look into what information could be provided, highlighting that the banks only provide funding for such developments if they can show a 20-21% profit (net 17-18%). As a result, the client noted that it tended to be landowners that took the hit with regard to keeping costs down.
Cllr Summers raised the subject of the provision of an 'overage' mechanism, that if of one of the 'affordable' homes was sold on in the future (second sale) above the discounted value, the purchaser would have 'overage' to pay to the PC, this could be the equivalent sum paid above the open market value less the 70%.
For example:
First sale open market value £100k @ 70% = £70K affordable home value.
Second sale open market value five years later £120k @ 70% = £84K. So, if the property sold for £90k (£6k above the open market value) the purchaser would pay the PC £6k overage.
Cllr Summers also highlighted her concern about retaining the houses in perpetuity at a discounted open market value, mentioning that a mechanism could also be put in place to provide for overage on rental income, in the event that the owner occupier had a change in circumstance and had to let the property (e.g.; relocated forces employee). This would ensure that the dwellings would not become investment rentals (apparently three of the affordable homes at Ufford were purchased as investment properties for the rental market, with no cap on the rent paid/received).
Cllr B Baker questioned what would prevent the same 'scheme' scenario from happening again in the future. Cllr Fletcher also questioned whether it would trigger other developments. The Chair responded that the PC are forming a 'process' and gaining experience which can be used in considering and responding accordingly to future schemes/applications.
Cllr Fletcher highlighted that a few years ago the village voted against development in the village excepting for small infill single dwelling plots. This area of land is not an area designated for development in the Suffolk Coastal Plan. Cllr Summers pointed out that 'infill' is not covered by Planning Policy and Guidelines.
The PC questioned Artisan about finding out who are those 'specifically' in 'need' of the 'affordable' housing; the response being that further on down the line the applicants are asked to come forward. Artisan also commented that the Starter Home scheme is all but dead, the First Homes scheme is currently the flavour of the month.
Cllr Bange noted that the PC need to be open, so people have opportunity to come forward. Cllr Fletcher confirmed the PC need to issue Artisan's plan and email to the village.

Cllr Fletcher responded that villagers haven't yet seen the plans. The Chair responded that if the PC were to suggest the Parish consider the scheme/a similar scheme, details of the scheme would be presented to the Parish over a series of open-days/evenings, the PC would actively seek to obtain, collate and evaluate the feedback. Artisan's client confirmed that this is the norm and that he and his advisors would be present on these days to answer questions and receive feedback.
Cllr Williams noted that the Planners need to be collaborative including inside the village boundary. Cllr Bange raised the aesthetics of the potential houses. The developer responded that he would only wish to provide high quality homes. He also noted that house styles can be ranked vary differently when asking a range of people but wanted to assure the PC that he planned on good quality. Cllr Summers stated that the design, palate of materials to be used would be part of the process.

The PC agreed that it is worth further exploring both the real 'need', the potential positives and negatives of a scheme/similar scheme in this location (or on an alternative site), and that this should be dealt with through a PC Working Group (WG). The WG will then report back to the full PC with a view to considering how best to respond to Artisan North.
The WG is to be made up of Cllrs Summers and Fletcher (with their planning portfolio), together with Cllrs B Baker, P Baker and Bange. The WG will report back at the PC meetings.

The PC rejected the Artisan proposal but there was an agreement to explore a possibility of a scheme having merit. In summary the proposed Artisan North scheme has not been agreed in its current format. The WG will discuss the 'need' and significant merit required in order to warrant possibly putting a proposal to the Parishioners (if indeed the criteria can be met). At any point in time of the process the PC can withdraw from the process. This exception site scheme requires the agreement of the PC; Artisan North need Brandeston PC to agree to partnering the process.

10/21-22/12 GDPR updates are ongoing and will be discussed in more detail at future meetings.

10/21-22/13 Cllrs have all watched the video from the Climate Forum circulated by Cllr Locke and will be discussed in more detail at future meetings.

10/21-22/14 The Queen's Diamond Jubilee Beacon is an ongoing and will be discussed again at the next meeting.

10/21-22/15 Date of next PC Meeting, Monday February 14th 2022 at 7,30pm, Brandeston Village Hall.