

PARISH COUNCIL MEETING

Held on Thursday 11th January 2024, commencing at 7.30 pm. in the Village Hall.

Full reports and supporting documents can be found on the Parish Council website under Meetings, January 2024 Meeting Pack. Paper copies are also available.

A District Councillor and a County Councillor spoke during the Public Participation session. This meeting did not contain a section for local Councillor reports. This meeting was convened to consider only Planning matters.

Present:

Chair: Cllr Janice Muckian. Cllrs: Alison Bourne, Matt Chick, Iain Lamont, Mary Morrey, Jane Ranzetta and Chris Robinson. Eight members of the public.

Opening Statement by the Chair:

The Chair began by welcoming everyone and introduced herself.

1. Apologies and approval of absences

Apologies received from Cllrs Falconer and Mitchell, the Clerk reported that these absences had been explained. Cllr Domoney had not responded to the invitation to the Meeting.

2. Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest had been received.

3. Requests for Dispensations

The Clerk reported that none had been received other than those previously reported.

4. To approve as accurate minutes of the 14th December 2023 meeting of the Council

The Clerk reported that a Member of the Public had notified the Clerk that a portion of his comments in the Public Participation session had not been recorded in the first draft of the minutes. The Clerk thanked the Member of the Public and directed Councillors to the sentence which had been added.

Motion: to approve as accurate the minutes of the 14th December 2023 meeting of Council.

Proposed: Cllr Chick

Seconded: Cllr Robinson

Decision: The minutes of the 14th December 2023 meeting of the Council were approved as accurate with no votes against. Cllrs Morrey and Ranzetta abstained, neither had been present at that meeting.

5. Public participation session

The Chair began by welcoming all observers to the meeting of Council explaining to all present that this meeting is being recorded for the purpose of minute taking only and that after the minutes have been approved the recording will be destroyed.

The Chair reminded all that this is not a public meeting, but a meeting of the Council held in public. Members of the Public who wish to ask a question, or make a statement, have 3 minutes. She explained that if a question cannot be answered tonight Members of the Public should inform the Clerk of their email address and will receive a written response within 28 days.

Members of the Public were respectfully asked to maintain silence during the Council's deliberations and not to approach the Councillors.

Councillors were requested not to engage with Members of the Public when Council is in session. All were asked to ensure that their mobile phone was on silent.

The Chair asked who would like to speak and two Members of the Public raised their hands.

A Member of the Public explained that in his opinion it was incorrect to refer, in the minutes of the December 14th 2023 meeting to one of those who spoke in the Public Participation session as a 'Member of the Public' when that person was a Parish Councillor speaking from the Public Participation area having been asked to do so. He said that in his opinion this was a misrepresentation of the situation and that he considered it important to make the distinction between Parish Councillors and Members of the Public as Parish Councillors are representatives of the village and not Members of the Public. He reminded all that the person had spoken with respect to the Allotments but had not been allowed to read out a representation, concerning the precept, which he had been requested to do by this Member of the Public. In his opinion this event had been 'sanitised' in the minutes.

The same member of the Public referred to the Chair's statement at the December 14th 2023 meeting that the precept in Lavenham had been historically low and needed to be increased commenting that Lavenham has the fifth highest precept in Babergh behind Sudbury, Hadleigh, East Bergholt and Pinewood. Each he said was much larger, particularly Sudbury and Hadleigh, with East Bergholt being two and a half times the size of Lavenham. In his opinion the Chair's statement was incorrect and in danger of becoming perceived as 'a fact'. He concluded by highlighting that Lavenham's Band D precept is £2,056 with the aggregate of Babergh, Suffolk CC and the Police and Crime Commissioner being £1,942. He concluded by saying that he considered the Lavenham precept not to be 'low'.

The Clerk replied that Council Practice was always to refer to those speaking from the Public Area as 'Members of the Public', this is he said had been standard practice for some time. He reminded all that the reason that individual spoke from the Public Participation area was because he had an interest in a matter on the agenda for that meeting and so could not speak on it as a Councillor and so had spoken on it as a Member of the Public.

The Clerk explained that the Member of the Public had acknowledged that the minutes of the December 14th 2023 meeting accurately report the Chair's statement concerning the precept and so the minutes are correct. He would ask the Chair to respond to the Member of the Public's comments criticising the accuracy of her statement.

A Member of the Public told the Meeting that over 4,000 have signed the petition against the Babergh imposition of car parking charges and that Babergh Cabinet had intended to push this through without debate of the whole Council and consult only with the Town and Parish councils where the car parks are located and not the wider community or other Parish Councils. He explained that because of the number who have signed the petition there will now have to be a debate of the whole Council.

The same Member of the Public reported that Babergh District Council intends not to ring-fence parking revenues for improvements to parking services but to these revenues also to contribute towards General Funds. This he described as 'the thin end of a wedge'. He reported that no economic assessment has been carried out of the effects of the proposed charges. He concluded by saying that the Lavenham District Councillors will challenge the figures presented by Babergh Council of the costs of running the car parks and saying that he believes there will be consequences, in Lavenham, on on-street parking and local retailers. He urged all to sign the petition which he said was in many shops in Lavenham, in hard copy form, for people to sign.

A Member of the Public asked why, considering Sudbury and Hadleigh Town Councils had come out very strongly against the proposals, why Lavenham Parish Council had not made a strong, similar, statement.

The Chair explained that on the Parish Council website were notes of a meeting with Babergh Council Officers in which the Parish Council and others had expressed their concerns and that those Officers are therefore aware of local views. Additionally, she explained, Council had not met since before Christmas and for Council to issue such a statement a motion must be proposed and seconded and voted on. Babergh Council, she reported, had made no concrete proposals. The Clerk added that it was up to Councillors to consider whether they wished to propose a motion for the next Council meeting, that this meeting had been advertised and intended to be only about Planning matters and currently it was not possible to criticise the vague proposals 'forensically'.

A Member of the Public urged Council to consider the arguments for charges considering the reduction in Central Government support to Local Authorities and the backlog of Council House repairs in the District. Many of those tenants, he said, cannot afford a car. Babergh, he pointed out, is one of a very small number of Councils who provide free parking and that in Lavenham cars are used unnecessarily. He said that research, from around the country, shows very little or no effect of charges on local businesses.

A Member of the Public asked if an Extraordinary General Meeting could be held to discuss Car Parking Charges. The Chair replied that the next meeting is only three weeks away with an Agenda and Papers deadline two weeks away.

A Member of the Public told the meeting that only 14% of Babergh residents do not have a car a proportion of whom live centrally in the larger towns and that a survey by Deloittes reported that 60% of respondents consider free parking first when choosing to visit town centres.

Cllr Robinson suggested that it might be sensible to wait until detailed proposals are published and then an agreed response made by all the effected Councils.

6. Chairman's Announcements

The Chair reported that:

- a) The responses from Suffolk Highways to the questions raised at the Public Meeting on 30th November 2023 are now on the Parish Council website.
- b) Suffolk Highways were continuing to refuse to properly maintain the Melford Rd verge and that Highways has given Councillors four options. These are to pay Highways to do the work, engage Qualified Contractors to do the work, employ its own Qualified staff to do the work or the work could be done by a Community Group who had attended a one day course, organised by Highways, at a location determined by Highways, required to ensure that they are suitably qualified to do the work.
- c) The Clerk will shortly be leafletting people at each end of the Lower Rd flood zone asking whether they would like to volunteer to be part of a sign pointing out group. This will require all volunteers to attend the one day course.
- d) The Phone boxes remain insitu because BT have still not disconnected them from the power, BT have apologised and repeated their promise to do this.
- e) Gigaclear has informed the Council that they will be running a public meeting at the Swan and will be setting up a pop-up point in the Market Place to answer questions from Members of the Public.
- f) Council has answered a Freedom of Information request from a Member of the Public.
- g) The Council has sent notes of thanks to all those who helped with the printing and distribution of the Christmas Lavenham Life and Parish Newsletter.
- h) The Council would like to thank all of those who responded in support of the Council's application for improved local bus services.

Cllr Ranzetta expressed concern that Gigaclear might dig in Water St unaware of the Culvert below. The Chair responded that Water St was not on the list of digging locations provided by Gigaclear. The Clerk added that Gigaclear had agreed to share a Digging Plan and had not honoured that arrangement.

7a. To receive an update on Planning Decisions received in December 2023

The Clerk reported that only one decision had been received and that it was an approval in line with the recommendation of this Council. He added that that no decision had been received from Babergh Council with respect to the Second Meadows project.

7b. To receive a report and recommendations from the Planning Group.

DC/23/05658 APPLICATION FOR PLANNING PERMISSION Rowan Cottage, The Common.

Erection of a single storey rear extension to car port and installation of cladding to side flank wall.

Comments by 12th January 2024

This property is inside the Conservation Area & Settlement Boundary. It is not listed. Currently there is a Car Port to the side of Rowan Cottage. The side finish is wooden vertical battens with open gaps in between. Proposal extends to the rear 1.175 m with flat roof & side to be clad in Vertically hung Slates. The change will have little visual impact on adjacent properties as the side profile change is minor & the finish low visual impact.

Recommend Approval

Discussion:

Cllr Lamont explained that Cllr Mitchell had an interest in this application and so had absented herself from the Planning Group discussion with respect to this application. The Clerk added that he did not declare that Cllr Mitchell had an interest in this property as she is not at this meeting.

Cllr Robinson asked if the proposals were in accordance with the rules of the Conservation Area and commented that there is no detail of the colour and finish of the proposed slates.

Cllr Robinson proposed an amendment to the motion so that it read 'Council recommends approval subject to the cladding slates being consistent with the existing slates and meeting Conservation Area requirements'.

Proposed: Cllr Robinson

Seconded: Cllr Ranzetta

Decision: The motion was carried unanimously.

DC/23/05244 Application for Listed Building Consent 73 Church Street.

Application for Listed Building Consent - Installation of a Stair Lift

Comments by 12th January 2024.

This installation does not affect the heritage asset. It attaches to the current modern staircase & property wall and could be removed if needed in the future.

Recommend Approval

Proposed: Cllr Chick

Seconded: Cllr Morrey

Decision: The motion was carried unanimously.

DC/23/04883 APPLICATION FOR PLANNING PERMISSION Land Off Norman Way

Planning Application - Erection of a detached cartlodge/store building to serve dwelling being constructed under planning permission DC/21/06797.

Comments by 12th January 2024

The location of the proposed cartlodge is not in the Conservation Area and is outside the current settlement boundary but adjacent to it. The location is between existing property on the High St and the new development on Land off Norman Way.

However, the cart lodge 3 bay, has a steep roof pitch laid with Clay Pantiles (at 47.5 degrees) & is excessively high at 6.1m hence is not a permitted development. At this height it will also be prominent from Number 2 & 3 Deacons Close and is nearly as high as the two storey part of the main house. This height is not required for a cartlodge and seems to be set in order to achieve a 2m high storage area in the roof space.

We advise that the cartlodge height is reduced to 4.4m maximum with a roof pitch of 30 degrees similar to Section B-B of the main house roof specified in application DC/21/06797 "Amended proposed dwelling - floor plans, elevations, roof plan and sections." Alternatively, the cartlodge roof could be laid in slate with a roof pitch of 25 degrees similar to Section AA to keep the ridge height to 4.4m.

In addition, this application does not comply with recently approved Joint Local Plan policy SP03 for developments outside the Settlement Boundary and is not listed in Table 5 as an exception.

Recommend Refusal

Discussion:

Cllr Morrey emphasised the height of the building and the proximity to Number 2 & 3 Deacons Close.

Cllr Lamont commented that the development is above the permitted development height of a garage of 4m though that may be irrelevant as it outside the settlement boundary. Amendments to the settlement boundary will be in JLP Part 2.

Cllr Robinson asked if the Planning Committee was recommending Conditional Approval subject to a reduction in the height. Cllr Lamont replied that approval could not be given to an unseen design.

Proposed: Cllr Ranzetta

Seconded: Cllr Morrey

Decision: The motion was carried unanimously.

DC/23/05680 Application for Listed Building Consent 37 Water Street

Application for Listed Building Consent - Insertion of new front first floor window and rear roof lights and replacement of existing upvc doors and windows including internal layout alterations as per Heritage Statement.

Comments by 12th January 2024.

Noted that the property is Grade II listed and is inside the conservation Area.

The application involves replacing UPVC doors to the Dining Room with Timber frames, this is a good heritage improvement. However, we agree with the Heritage & Design Officer that a condition is added that full details of all fenestrations are provided for approval.

The addition of Velux Conservation Specification rooflights to a rear facing roof, over the dining room is acceptable, due to the lack of visibility from the street & the specification of a low-profile Conservation Style Rooflight.

The internal changes do not affect the Heritage Assets.

The New External West facing bathroom window was previously approved under DC/18/04379.

Recommend Approval subject to the condition as proposed by the Heritage Officer.

Discussion:

Cllr Lamont confirmed to Cllr Ranzetta that the property is Grade 2 listed.

Cllr Lamont confirmed to Cllr Chick that the permission under DC/18/04379 had expired.

Proposed: Cllr Ranzetta

Seconded: Cllr Robinson

Decision: The motion was carried unanimously.

DC/23/05679 APPLICATION FOR PLANNING PERMISSION 37 Water Street

Recommend Approval subject to the condition as proposed by the Heritage Officer.

Proposed: Cllr Bourne

Seconded: Cllr Ranzetta

Decision: The motion was carried unanimously.

DC/23/05724 APPLICATION FOR PLANNING PERMISSION 4 Butfield

Conversion of garage to additional accommodation; Conversion of loft and insertion of roof windows. Erection of a two storey front extension, installation of hardstanding. (as approved under DC/20/03918). Comments by 12th January 2024

This application is outside the Conservation Area & the building is not listed.

The proposed changes make a minor change to the footprint of the building – the addition of a porch. The proposed external appearance of property is in keeping with other properties. The loft windows face out from the rear of the property so are not visible from the road. Also, the current layout of the site means that the only off road parking is inside the garage. The proposed new drive allows for 3 off road parking spaces, reducing on-road parking.

Recommend Approval

Discussion:

Cllr Muckian highlighted the current lack of off-street parking and that proposed parking area is permeable. She added that the pitch on the front will make it a much more attractive property.

Proposed: Cllr Bourne

Seconded: Cllr Ranzetta

Decision: The motion was carried unanimously.

7.c To receive a report from the Planning Group concerning the anticipated further Focused Consultation.

The Chair explained that events have now moved on a little since the paper was written, a second 'Focused Consultation'; has been announced with a closing date of January 26th 2024.

A second consultation is needed because just before Christmas the Government revised the National Planning Policy Framework in response to the Levelling-Up and Regeneration Bill.

The Neighbourhood Plan must be consistent with the NPPF and so the Examiner now consults, seeking views as to whether the Neighbourhood Plan is still consistent.

Professional advice has been received and it is expected that most revisions will not require comments but that comments on relatively modest matters may be needed.

To avoid a further Council meeting before January 26th 2024 the following motion is suggested: The Parish Council is asked to delegate authority to its Chair and Vice Chair, with the Parish Clerk to agree its representations, if needed, to be made as part of the additional focused consultation and to respond to any other representations made as part of this additional consultation.

The Council's representations (if needed), and its responses to other representations, will be reported for information to the next Council meeting.

Cllr Morrey moved an amendment to the draft motion adding 'any one further Councillor' to the list.

Proposed: Cllr Morrey

Seconded: Cllr Ranzetta

Decision: The motion was carried unanimously.

The meeting closed at 20.52

Date of next meeting

Thursday 1st February 2024 7.30 pm in the Village Hall.