

TERLING AND FAIRSTEAD PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Meeting of Terling and Fairstead Parish Council held on Tuesday 26th January 2021 at 7.30pm, (Remote Meeting by Zoom)

Present: Mrs S McNamara (Chairman) Mr A Dyke
Mrs S Alder Mr R Dixon
Mr S Thatcher Mr M Tugwell
Mrs J Long Mr M Webster
Mrs L Sime

Cllr Abbott, Cllr Bebb, Cllr Dervish

F Killby – Parish Clerk/Responsible Financial Officer

6 members of the public

SM welcomed all to the meeting.

25.09 ***Apologies for Absence-*** were received and accepted from C Barker and P Bird.

25.10 ***Declaration of Interests*** – Although no longer employed, AD declared a non-pecuniary interest in all Agenda items relating to his past employer Lord Rayleigh’s Farms Limited, Lord Rayleigh and Lord Rayleigh’s family, and stated in particular that he would not be participating in any debate relating to Longfield Solar Farm. MW, SA, SM and JL declared a non-pecuniary interest in item 25.20, Planning Application Rosemead, as the applicant is known to them.

25.11 ***Meeting Open to the Public*** –

Two members of the public stated they were there to monitor progress on Longfield Solar Farm.

A member of the public had attended a recent Great and Little Leighs Parish Council meeting in connection with his concerns regarding the water quality in the River Ter and the Great Leighs Sewage Works.

F Strutt reported that the Estate had just been accepted into the Countrywide Stewardship Scheme, which involves setting up wildflower sites and bird food sites along the river, flood prevention and encouraging ground nesting birds. This does mean that walkers will need to keep dogs on leads for the ground nesting birds in the designated areas. There will also be a coppicing programme which will involve some work on hedges but these are not being ripped out, the work is to stimulate the growth of hedges at the bottom.

Another member of the public attended regarding his planning application to be discussed later on in the meeting.

25.12 ***Minutes of Last Meeting*** –

It was proposed by RD and seconded by SA that the Chairman should sign a copy of the minutes of the meeting of 15th December 2020 as a true and accurate record, with the addition that in Minute 24.98 SA visited the treatment centre as a private individual, not as a member of the Parish Council. Unanimously approved.

Cllr Abbott

The impact on ECC due to Covid is £160 million and it is only thanks to government support that the Council has not faced severe financial peril. The Budget went to Cabinet recently and will go to full Council next month. It is likely there will be no increase in council tax but a 1.5% increase in social care. A top priority of the budget consultation was highways repairs for all local areas.

The Council has a number of recovery schemes in place, including programmes to supply laptops to families for home schooling and support for vulnerable families in the form of clothing, food etc. Cllr Abbott also has a fund of £2000 which can be used to help local organizations dealing with the Covid crisis. The Locality Fund paperwork needs to be submitted by 31st January 2021, Clerk to action. The Local Highways Panel budget is being reduced from £4.3 million to just over £4 million and the gateway scheme for Terling will be in next year's budget, to be discussed at next Highways Local Panel meeting. Cllr Abbott is chasing approval for the Parish Council to replace the metal fingerposts, and he is also chasing the wooden signposts which are in validation. He has booked a Highways Surgery meeting with the cabinet member for February regarding the flooding at Waltham Road. There are various road closure notices for the parish coming up which means that some repairs will be done imminently.

The Longfield scoping response from BDC has now been provided. Cllr Abbott is still not able to support this planning application on the grounds that it is too large, its negative impact on the rural landscape, the loss of good quality farming land, habitats etc. He still continues to receive letters and email from residents on this subject.

Cllr Bebb

Local Plan – no further information since the last update in December 2020.

Financial Affairs - Some Council Tax and Business Rates payments are late, approximately 82-83% have been paid. Various grants have been distributed by BDC's Revenue and Benefits Team (25 different initiatives from government). The Local Council Tax Support Hardship Scheme is being well used - £827,000 distributed so far.

Full Council to meet on 22nd February to finalise the budget. The government funding has not covered all extra costs, but the financial settlement just before Xmas helped. Cllr Bebb had a letter published in Braintree & Witham Times detailing how money has been spent. BDC are looking at options for Council Tax increase and it is possible that there will be no increase in Council Tax as a one off for this year.

Capital development schemes progressing well including central Braintree and A120 business park which is near completion. The Council are also going ahead with an enterprise centre as some funding has been allocated to cover half of the scheme.

Cllrs Dervish and Bebb have some funds from their grant scheme to donate to the Council if there is a need.

Cllr Bebb read a statement to say that he was sadly resigning from the Council as, after fifteen years, he will be relocating to the west country due to family circumstances. He will be stepping down and a by-election will be called for May. He will greatly miss working with the Parish Council and thanked councillors for their support over the years. SM responded by thanking Cllr Bebb for all his hard work and efforts over the years and said that he would be very much missed. All councillors echoed these sentiments and wished him well.

25.14 **Chairman's Report –**

Nothing to report.

25.15 **Finance**

Copies of Receipts, Payments, Bank Reconciliation, Budgets and Forecast for the current financial year were distributed prior to the meeting to all councillors. JL proposed that the following cheques/direct debits be approved for payment, seconded by SA, unanimously approved. RD asked if Clerk's hours on Longfield Solar Farm could be listed separately on the financials, it was agreed that separate timesheets were sufficient. AD asked if C Cutler could research a cheaper option to Arrowmail for the clerk's email account, Clerk to action.

15 Dec	DD	British Telecom	Clerk's Phone Line	42.96
18 Dec	DD	EDF Energy	Elec Recreation Ground	19.00
31 Dec	BACS	Arrowmail Ltd	Annual Fee Email Hosting	56.16
11 Jan	BACS	F Killby	Salary	701.59
11 Jan	BACS	F Killby	Expenses	17.33
11 Jan	BACS	Inland Revenue	PAYE/Tax	188.96
11 Jan	BACS	Essex Pension Fund	Clerk's Pension	250.87
11 Jan	BACS	Lord Rayleigh's Farms	Garage Rental	25.00
11 Jan	BACS	A H Jiggins	Handyman Services	126.20
11 Jan	BACS	E.on	Street Lighting	84.47
11 Jan	BACS	James Todd	Payroll Services	93.60
11 Jan	BACS	PKF Littlejohn	Audit Fees	240.00
15 Jan	DD	British Telecom	Clerk's Phone Line	42.96
18 Jan	DD	EDF Energy	Elec Recreation Ground	19.00

Budgets - AD queried if the proposed grant of £6000 for 2021-22 was separate to the £10,000 grant given for the Changing Cabin. It was clarified that the £6000 grant was an estimate of CIF Funding for the new playground equipment.

The Finance Committee had met to review the current (2020-21) and draft budget and precept (2021-22) and recommended that the precept be increased from 23,262 to £25,356, an increase of £2,094, which is equivalent to 9%. BDC supply the Parish Council with a calculation based on a Band D property of the Parish Council element which will be as follows:

Parish Council Element - Band D property – annual cost - £59.99, an annual increase of £5.56, which equate to a 10% increase. It should be noted that this percentage increase can differ on the Council Tax bill depending on the Banding of the property.

AD proposed the figure of £25,356 be approved for the 2021-22 Precept, seconded by MW, unanimously approved.

RD proposed and JL seconded, the renewal of membership of the Rural Community Council of Essex at a cost of £60.50 excluding VAT, unanimously approved.

25.16 ***Environmental and Footpaths***

Footpaths – Clerk reported from PB her concerns about people straying off the footpaths.

Parish Map – As the designer is again on furlough AD suggested that Parish Council look at alternative print companies as this has been on hold for some considerable time. Clerk to action.

Water Quality – River Ter – Sewage Plants - The Parish Council thanked Paul Guppy for attending the recent Great and Little Leighs Parish Council meeting to brief them fully on the condition of the river.

Mr Guppy suggested a meeting be set up with EA to see where we can go now as his impression is that the plant could do better if they were instructed to do so. SA agreed with Mr Guppy and thanked him for all his efforts.

RD also attended the meeting and also felt that the Parish Council should engage directly with the EA. AD was strongly of the view that all actions should be in collaboration with GL&LLPC through Cllr Raven. It was agreed that RD would prepare a draft letter for EA which would go to Cllr Raven for his input and approval. LS also offered support as she lives within Great Leighs.

Replacement of Litter Bin in Owls Hill – this is awaiting fitting by BDC.

JL asked if the litter bin by the noticeboard opposite the school could be moved to the village green next to the bench. Clerk to contact D Brien to request this.

Clerk to clarify if BDC will move bin at no extra cost because it needs repairing. A Jiggins is responsible for emptying bins, which he is doing twice weekly at the moment.

Repair of Noticeboard and Installation of Posts opposite school - CB to get quotes for timber.

25.17 ***Estate Liaison*** – see Minute 25.11 on Countryside Stewardship Scheme.

25.18 ***Health and Welfare***

Playground – CB is currently repairing the rockers and the new rocker is ready to be fitted. A Jiggins is going to replace the broken fence. SA reported that there are a number of other crossbeams that will need replacing, Clerk to action with A Jiggins.

JL is currently researching sail shades and climbing frames. It is hoped that CIF funding can be used to buy these.

Still waiting for the Oak Tree survey to be carried out, clerk has chased.

Defibrillators – clerk is looking at quotes for the casing of the donated defibrillator.

Telephone tree – emergency plan – this needs to be updated, clerk to action and arrange date for telephone tree ring round.

25.19 ***IT & Publicity –***

RD asked if the Council should implement a strategy for media comments on Longfield Solar Farm. SM responded that we have nothing to say at the moment, but if asked for a quote she would give it careful thought and consult other councillors.

F Strutt – asked for an update on when superfast broadband coming to village. C Cutler is Broadband Champion so Clerk will liaise with him for update. A member of the public suggested looking on Superfast Essex for updates. AD is of the understanding that it is available in the village but if you are on the old distribution lines you may struggle to get it.

25.20 ***Planning and Highways***

Planning App: 20/00462/FUL - Demolition of bungalow and erection of 2 dwellings, The Lincoln, New Road, Terling. - RD pointed out that it has taken 119 days for Mr Paggi to respond to the PC's complaint and 102 days to respond to a parishioner's complaint. The parishioner has now elevated it to a Stage 2 complaint and also made a FOI request to BDC on their planning application process. He has received a Stage 2 response which RD will circulate. RD suggested the Parish Council should now submit a Stage 2 complaint, he will liaise with MT and AD on this.

Planning App: 20/00161/VAR – Great Warley Hall, Ranks Green, Fairstead - Removal of Condition 2 'Annex Occupancy Restriction' of approved permission 06/01863/FUL granted 03/11/06 for rebuild of existing barn into 2 bed annex – still awaiting determination.

Planning App: 20/02068/FUL – Demolition of house and erection of replacement dwelling – Rosemead, Fairstead Road, Terling - SM reported that a response had today been received from applicant's agent and as requested read this out at the meeting. This letter has also been sent to all councillors in advance of the meeting. SM clarified a point in the letter which related as to why the planning application was not being discussed at this meeting, and when the Planning Subcommittee had met to discuss the application, as follows:

“The planning subcommittee has delegated powers to put in comments on planning applications as the Parish Council only meet every six weeks, which means that the Subcommittee submit proposals in the interim. All planning applications are eventually on the agenda.”

The suggestion is that the Planning Subcommittee meet again to discuss the letter and the applicant would be very welcome to join them. The applicant queried as to why he had not been invited to the meeting to discuss this application as he was unaware of the Council's views until they were posted on the BDC website. He also wanted to know if the views reflected all councillors' opinions and he also felt that some of the comments were unnecessary and irrelevant to the application. At this stage he felt that his agent's response was sufficient and a meeting would not be relevant.

AD responded to say that as statutory consultees the Parish Council responds to every single application in the same way. The onus is on the applicant to engage with the Parish Council and the concerns that the Council has relate to the history of this property with regard to the number of applications submitted over the years, and the present application for the demolition and replacement of a new build property. As the applicant's agent has responded in some detail the Planning Subcommittee now need to look at this document in depth and discuss it as a committee.

RD stated that any councillors are welcome to comment on the letter received from the applicant.

Clerk will arrange a meeting and invite the applicant and his agent to attend in due course. Clerk is also to ask BDC to upload the letter from the agent to the Planning Portal.

- Waltham Road flooding – See Minute 25.13. Cllr Dervish also voiced her concerns about access out of the Hull Lane part of the village as both Waltham Road and the road close to Norrells were badly flooded. Cllr Abbott will also raise this flooding issue with Highways. Cllr Dervish also offered to liaise with Cllr Bentley if his emails are not responded to on this and other issues.
- Fuller Street flooding – SA reported that Highways visited the site last week. Clerk has also reported the leak near the pub.
- River Hill – Clerk has reported this to Highways.
- Road Repairs – Pothole in Fairstead Road has been repaired and a small amount of patching. Clerk has also reported the large pothole at Sandypits on the Braintree Road. Councillors were also concerned about a very bad pothole in Hatfield Peverel’s jurisdiction, near the station - Cllr Dervish to action.
- United Reformed Church - no update
- Local Plan – no update
- Directional Signs – see Minute 25.13. One new signpost has gone up.

25.21 ***Recreation Ground***

This is currently closed for organized sport. One fence section has collapsed, A Jiggins to repair. Clerk has emailed T Meredith regarding the parking issue and has also requested that he clean the changing room. Clerk clarified that family members can use the ground if they wish, but no team games or parties can be held.

25.22 ***Longfield Solar Farm***

RD reported that some submissions including the Parish Council’s are still not on the Planning Inspectorate’s website, Clerk to chase. Clerk has emailed BDC planning regarding two comments on their commentary on the Scoping Report which reported two areas of contaminated land within the application site, and has asked to see a copy of the BDC Settlement Fringes Landscape Character Assessment which was also referred to in their submission. F Strutt will speak to D Brien regarding the above.

In response to a member of the public’s request for an update, RD reported that the Parish Council is currently in the process of information gathering and dissemination and can do nothing until the next stage of the formal process. The Parish Council does not yet feel it is in a position to formally express its position on the planning application.

For information, RD stated that there was a comment in the Scoping Document that the applicant is to come forward with figures on employment loss, to be supplied by LRF. F Strutt had not been made aware of the need for this information, but stated that as far as he was aware, LRF was not currently planning for any employment loss as a result of Longfield's proposed scheme.

25.23 ***Open Spaces Action Plan 2021***

This was reviewed, with the suggested addition of the tidying up of Terling Cricket Club grounds.

25.24 ***Councillors' Reports, including Village Hall Report, School Report and Church Liaison***

SA – has made reports to Highways on the Sandypits hole in the road and also the erosion of more soil opposite Brookside Cottages, creating an even more vertical drop into the stream.

LS – reported that there some scam emails, etc relating to covid vaccine appointments and suggested putting information about these on the Terling Hub. Clerk to action.

ST – a pane of glass has been broken in the phone box at Ranks Green, clerk has ordered replacement glass.

RD - has phoned Paul Humphreys about some noise from concrete crushing at Barleylands. He confirmed that they are crushing onsite and also transporting some of it in a crushed state for Blixes car park and Warley Hall Farm for a hard standing apron. One of the logs at the Ford has floated off and is now obstructing the River Ter. RD and SA attending EALC climate conference on Thursday.

25.24 ***Clerk's Report***

Has circulated a Parking Partnership email for one-to-one surgeries if councillors have any issues.

The bench for Terling Ford has not been ordered yet due to flood waters.

CB requested UK Power change the socket at the Terling Ford light. Clerk to contact CB to ask him to check if this has been actioned.

25.25 ***Information exchange / next agenda items*** – nothing to report.

25.26 ***Date of next meeting, including committees:*** - 7.30, 9th March 2021 (zoom)

Meeting closed at 09.40 pm