

STRADISHALL PARISH COUNCIL
Minutes of the meeting held on Monday 1st March 2021

Councillors present: Ady Swift (chairman), Adrian Lee (Vice-Chairman), Jonathan Masefield, Ed Hollingsworth, Ian Hutchinson, Robert Deeks and Debbie Gates

Also present: County Councillor Mary Evans, district councillors Karen Richardson and Marion Rushbrook and two members of the public

Open Forum

The following issues were raised during the Open Forum:

- Updating the welcome pack for new residents
- The possibility of adopting the phone box
- Litter picking

1. Acceptance of apologies for absence

No apologies were received.

2. Declaration of Interest in items on the agenda and dispensation requests

No councillors declared an interest in any items on the agenda and no dispensation requests were made.

3. Approval of minutes of the meeting held on Monday 11th January 2021

It was resolved that the minutes were correct. The chairman then signed them.

4. County Councillor's Report

Mary Evans sent a written report prior to the meeting which has been published on the Parish Council website. She spoke about the following:

- She updated the Parish Council about the proposal to reduce the speed limit on the A143. Speed surveys will be carried out by Suffolk County Council as an initial step.
- People breaking the lockdown rules and the importance of adhering to the current restrictions

5. District Council reports

Karen Richardson and Marion Rushbrook sent a written report prior to the meeting which has been published on the Parish Council website.

6. Police issues

No issues were raised.

7. Update on list of actions agreed at the last meeting

There was one outstanding councillor action.

8. Finance

a) Approval of payments and signing of the Schedule of Payments

It was resolved that the following payments would be approved:

- HMRC - PAYE - LGA 1972, s111 - **£142.20**
- J P Kirk - expenses - LGA 1972, s111 – **£1.83**
- Risby Parish Council – $\frac{1}{7}$ of cost of print cartridge - LGA 1972, s111 - **£6.18**

Jonathan Masefield and Ady Swift agreed to check the invoices and sign the Schedule of Payments after the meeting. The chairman agreed to countersign it.

b) Approval of payments authorised between meetings

No payments were authorised between meetings.

c) Statement of receipts and payments made since the last meeting.

Adrian Lee Contract Services - clearing vegetation and pruning	£270.00
Risby Parish Council - document shredding	£6.67
Staff costs (as per confidential cashbook)	

It was resolved that the statement of receipts and payments would be approved.

d) Bank balances and confirmation of bank reconciliation as of 28th February 2021

HSBC current account	£2,370.39
HSBC reserve account	£5,927.33
Total in Banks	£8,297.72

Jonathan Masefield agreed to verify and sign the bank statements after the meeting.

e) **Checklist of Internal Controls**

Jonathan Masefield agreed to complete the checklist of internal controls after the meeting.

f) **Review of all regular payments including the clerk's salary and approval of payments relating to these services for 2021-22**

It was resolved the following regular payments would continue to be paid in 2021 - 22:

Payment	2020/21 - Amount ex VAT	2021/22 - Amount ex VAT
Community Action Suffolk - Insurance	£419	£419
Internal audit fee	£65	£65
Scribe accounting software	£58	£129
Risby Parish Council - phone costs	£24	£21
CAS Ltd - website hosting fee	£50	£50
ICO - data protection fee	£35	£35
Grass cutting	£1,260	£1,260
Hedge cutting	£353	£353
Staff costs as per confidential cash book (salary costs, PAYE and pension costs)		

g) **PAYE details and tax code for the clerk's salary**

Jonathan Masefield reviewed the clerk's Confidential Cashbook and confirmed that the PAYE details and tax code were correct.

h) **Review of the income and expenditure for 2020/21 against the budget and the level of reserves for general and earmarked expenditure**

Councillors reviewed the income and expenditure for 2020/21 against the budget. At year-end Stradishall Parish Council will have a budget surplus of **£439**

Budget Summary 2020 – 2021

Receipts	
Budgeted	£8,046
Actual	£8,823
Difference	£777
Payments	
Budget	£7,112
Actual	£7,450
Difference	-£338
Predicted surplus (+) /deficit (-)	£439

Reserves

Stradishall Parish Council - Reserves Balance 2020-2021					
Reserve	Opening Balance	Transfers	Spend	Receipts	Current Balance

Earmarked					
Election costs	£890	£200	£0	£0	£1,090
Clerk and councillor training	£20	£20	£0	£0	£40
Playing field maintenance	£724	£15	£0	£0	£739
Playing field project	£1,575	-£360	£0	£0	£1,215
Village events (toilet hire)	£0	£100	£0	£0	£100
Inspection of play equipment	£0	£300	£0	£0	£300
Earmarked					
TOTAL RESERVE	£3,209	£425	£0	£0	£3,634
GENERAL FUND					£4,451
TOTAL FUNDS					£8,085

The estimated reserve as of 31/03/21 is: **£8,085** which includes allocated funds of **£3,634**. The general reserve is within the guidelines of no more than one year's annual precept.

i) **Review the register of fixed assets and insurance values**

Councillors reviewed the assets register and confirmed that it was correct. The following assets were purchased in 2020/21:

- Two picnic benches
- 'No parking' sign for St Margaret's Place

The Parish Council's assets current value is £46,396 which is within the current insurance band of £20,000 - 50,000. This does not include the playing field which is listed with a nominal value of £1.

j) **Review of the Council's Risk Assessment**

It was resolved that no amendments were necessary. The Chairman then signed it.

k) **Review of insurance liability cover**

The levels of liability cover under the new Parish Protect Policy are as follows:

All Risks	Public Liability	Officers Indemnity	Fidelity Guarantee (Dishonesty)	Business Interruption	Personal Accident	Employers' Liability
£5k	£10m	£1m	£25k	£5k	£25k	£10m

It was resolved that the levels of liability cover are adequate.

l) **Appointment of an internal auditor to complete the Internal Audit Report in the Annual Governance and Accountability Return 2020/21 and review of the effectiveness of the internal audit**

It was resolved that Cathy Whitaker, clerk to Exning Parish Council, would be appointed as internal auditor this year and that a fee of £65 would be paid. The Council reviewed the effectiveness of the internal audit. It was resolved that the internal audit was effective and that audit regulations would be met for the following reasons:

- Does the internal audit sufficiently cover all aspects of the financial controls relevant to the council (for example risk management, detection of fraud, internal controls) and are terms of reference in place and approved? Yes. New Financial Regulations were adopted on 1st May 2014 to introduce procedures to detect fraud when using electronic banking. A checklist of internal controls is completed by a councillor at every meeting to verify payments on bank statements against actual payments as listed in the accounts to ensure that there are no discrepancies.
- Is the internal auditor independent (i.e. does not have any role within the Council)? Yes. The internal auditor does not have a role within the Council.

- Is the internal auditor competent to carry out their work ethically, with integrity and objectivity? Is there any evidence to suggest that this may not be the case? Yes, she is a parish council clerk and RFO for Newmarket Town Council. There is no evidence to suggest that she will not carry out the work ethically, with integrity and objectivity.
- Is the Responsible Officer consulted in the internal audit plan? Yes.
- Are the responsibilities of members of the Council understood and has the necessary training been undertaken? Yes
- Is there a plan in place for when the internal audit will be undertaken and does the plan properly take account of corporate risk? The internal audit will take place in April 2021 prior to the accounts being approved at the Annual Meeting on 10th May 2021. The internal auditor's report will be presented to the Parish Council at this meeting and any issues raised by the internal auditor will be discussed at the meeting and an action plan produced.

m) Review of the effectiveness of the Council's internal controls

The following internal controls are in place:

- At each meeting a councillor checks bank statements against the Parish Council's accounts to ensure that transactions correspond and that the bank reconciliation agrees with the bank statement
- Where possible payments are approved at meetings and a Schedule of Payments is prepared which is checked by two councillors. Corresponding invoices are checked and signed by two councillors at the same time.
- Regular payments are approved at the March meeting and the invoices paid when they are received. These invoices are checked and signed by two councillors at the next meeting after they have been paid.
- The chairman rules off and signs the Schedule of Payments so that no amendments can be made after the meeting.
- Cheques must be signed by two signatories along with the corresponding invoice.
- A record of payments is kept and checked at each meeting.
- If a supplier changes their bank details, the supplier must supply a written hard copy notifying the change.

It was resolved that these controls are adequate and are working well.

n) Appointment of a councillor to inspect the Council's property for damage or defects by 30th April 2021 and complete the inspection checklist.

It was resolved that Adrian Lee would inspect the Council's property and report back at the next meeting.

9. Planning

- a) Email from NALC about a new Government consultation on changes to the National Planning Policy Framework and the creation of a National Model Design code**
<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/national-planning-policy-framework-and-national-model-design-code-consultation-proposals/national-planning-policy-framework-and-national-model-design-code-consultation-proposals>

It was resolved that the Parish Council would support NALC's position: *"NALC will support changes to the planning system which it perceives will strengthen the system and the voice of democracy and lead to better quality, appropriately sited developments. It will not support planning changes which it perceives will work in the opposite direction."*

10. Highways/Rights of Way issues/tree/transport issue

- b) Draft tree and hedge policy**

It was resolved that Tree and Hedge policy would be approved and uploaded onto the website.

11. Draft Scheme of Delegation

The National Association of Local Councils (NALC) has advised parish councils to have a Scheme of Delegation in place to mitigate the impact on meetings having to be cancelled in future due to COVID or any other reason to ensure that parish councils can continue to function effectively. It was resolved that the Scheme of Delegation would be approved and uploaded onto the Council's website.

12. Playing field issues:**a) Play inspection report**

No new issues raised

b) Renewal of West Suffolk Council's playing field Service Level Agreement.

West Suffolk Council will inspect the play area monthly and pay for an annual inspection without charge. It was resolved that the clerk would sign the agreement on behalf of the Council and that she would be authorised to sign future agreements provided there no material change to the agreement (for example if a charge for the service is introduced).

13. Dates of meetings in 2021/22 (dates may change depending on Coronavirus restrictions)

- Monday 10th May 2021 – Annual Parish Meeting at 7pm followed by the Annual Meeting of the Parish Council – one week later because of the Bank Holiday
- Monday 5th July 2021
- Monday 6th September 2021
- Monday 1st November 2021
- Monday 10th January 2022
- Monday 7th March 2022

At the moment remote meetings are only allowed until 7th May. After that face-to-face meetings will have to take place which follow COVID guidelines. Councillors will need to sit 2m apart as will any members of the public and everyone will have to wear masks. The Government is being lobbied to allow parish councils to continue to hold remote meetings.

14. Village issues**a) Future project**

The Parish Council has received an email about the possibility of adopting the phone box and using it as a library, an information point or to house a defibrillator. The phone box is listed, therefore there may be constraints as to what work would be allowed.

It was resolved that the Parish Council would consult residents about possible options for the phone box. The clerk agreed to produce a flyer, in conjunction with the resident, for delivery once the lockdown regulations have eased.

The Parish Council will also update its Welcome Information Pack. The resident agreed to work with the Parish Council to update it and will help deliver it to newcomers.

b) Possible purchase of bin stickers to remind vehicles to drive carefully

It was resolved that the Parish Council would ask residents to email them if they would like bin stickers if they live in a part of Stradishall where they are concerned about speeding. Information will be included in the next newsletter and on the Facebook page.

15. Correspondence:**a) Email from CAB requesting a donation**

It was resolved that no donation would be made.

b) Email from Arthritis Action giving information about support which is available for people with arthritis

It was resolved that the information would be uploaded onto the website.

16. Any other business for noting or including on the agenda of the Annual Meeting of the Parish Council on Monday 10th May 2021 at 8pm or the Annual Parish Meeting at 7pm

This was Mary Evans' last meeting with Stradishall Parish Council as she is not standing for re-election in May. The Parish Council thanked her for all her hard work and support over the years and wish her well in her retirement.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 8.21pm.

Signed (Chairman) Dated