

**MINUTES OF OLD SOMERBY PARISH COUNCIL MEETING  
HELD TUESDAY 2 APRIL 2024 7pm AT THE FOX AND HOUNDS OLD SOMERBY**

**PRESENT:** Cllrs: Vicky Lowndes (Chairman) Nigel Percy (Vice-Chairman), Veronica Stephens, Peter Burrows, and Parish Clerk, David Holmes.  
Also present 4 members of the public.

**PUBLIC FORUM:** 1. A Resident had written to the Parish Council and raised issues concerning flooding on his land. He was in attendance and gave further details explaining the situation with photographs. The issue was noted. There is an item on the agenda dealing with Flooding. The Resident was invited to stay but he declined. The Land Owner responded. Duly noted. (see item 5(e) .

**1. CHAIRMAN'S REMARKS:** The Chairman welcomed everyone present and explained the procedure for residents to be permitted to address the council. The Clerk explained the change of date for this meeting from 25 March 2024 was due to councillor non-availability.

**2. APOLOGIES:** Cllr Betty North had given her apologies to the Clerk explaining she was ill. The apology was accepted.

**3. DECLARATIONS OF PECUNIARY INTERESTS/APPLICATIONS FOR DISPENSATIONS:** None.

**4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES:** i) The draft minutes of the meeting held 29 January, 2024 were accepted as a correct record and were signed by the Chairman. Prop Cllr Lowndes and seconded by Cllr Stephens. Carried. **ACTION: Clerk.**

**5. CLERK AND COUNCILLORS' ACTIONS AND UPDATES/LATEST:**

**a) Cold Harbour traffic etc issues:** Cllr Percy outlined the recent meeting on site with the LCC Area Manager, Rowan Smith and David Holmes. Cllr Percy had provided details of the various issues to Rowan prior to the meeting. It was a positive meeting with tacit agreement given to deal with the potholes on LCC land throughout the Hamlet and also look to resurface the entrance area. That job could be linked with another project planned for the High Dyke. Rowan suggested he contact Lincolnshire Road Safety Partnership with regards the issue of signs including speed limit signs. Cllr Percy had used FIXMYSTREET to good effect. The Clerk indicated he was waiting for a written response from Rowan Smith.

**Post Meeting note:** The entrance is now repaired with potholes marked due for repair.

**b) Next Parish Newsletter** – left to the next meeting.

**c) Speed Indicator issues:** The Clerk reported that the theft of batteries from the Solar Powered Speed Indicator had cost £191.90 to repair with new batteries. The work had been undertaken by a resident and the clerk. £100 was reclaimed from Insurance. The VAT of £31.98 was also recoverable leaving the PC to pay the balance of £59.92. It was noted that the Speed Indicator at Boothby Pagnell was stolen on the same occasion.

**d) Repair to Bus Shelter frontage:** The Clerk reported he had received 2 quotes of £1,250 and £2,650 from 2 sources. He was awaiting a 3<sup>rd</sup> quote which he anticipated would be less.

**ACTION: CLERK.**

**e) Flooding on the Main Road:** Cllr Percy and the Clerk had raised the issue with the LCC Area Manager who had made it clear that whilst householders can “pass on water” from their

property, the water cannot be passed on to the Highway. The Area Manager had pointed out that the rain fall this year had been truly exceptional. The Landowner indicated that some 12 months of rain had been received in the last 6 months and that he had undertaken recent work to allow the water to flood the field, thus relieving the highway on the bend. The Clerk reminded Councillors of the work undertaken by Anglian Water in 2021 to remove weed growth from their drains. It was noted that no dwellings had been flooded.

**ACTION:** The Clerk to contact Anglian Water with a view to consideration being given for the above drain work being re-done.

**6. LCC LOCAL COUNCILLOR UPDATE:** There had been no contact from Councillor Vernon.

**7. SKDC LOCAL COUNCILLOR UPDATE:** Councillor Sarah Trotter had submitted a report. She was unable to attend due to illness. The Clerk gave her report. (*A copy is annexed to these minutes*).

#### **8. FINANCE:**

**a)** The clerk produced the up-to-date **Financial Report** showing funds held, all expenditure to-date this financial year and the bank reconciliation. (*Copy attached to these minutes and to be published on the Website.*) The Report had been signed off by Cllr Burrows the Lead Councillor for Finance and also by the Internal Auditor. **ACTION: The Clerk.**

**b)** To receive an Interim Report from the Internal Auditor who had undertaken an intermediate review of the account system, controls, risk management, governance processes and financial practices of Old Somerby Parish Council. He stated he had found them to be sound, safe and reliable. A copy of his report is annexed to these minutes to be published on-line.

Grass Cutting: the Clerk reported that all 9 cuts had been undertaken by the contractor before the end of the financial year. The Contractor proposed a small increase of £5 pa for the contract. Approved.

#### **9. PLANNING:**

**a)** S23/1645.6 Bungalow Development School Lane: As previously reported Building Control from SKDC would not approve the suggested siting of the soakaway. The Contractors were required to suggest a more suitable location. A Resident nearby had corresponded with the clerk expressing his concern of the proposed site being far too close to his property. He was more content with the report from Building Control. We now await further information.

**ACTION: The Clerk.**

**b)** S23/2219 (an amendment to S23/1097) Proposed two storey extension at 13 School Lane, Old Somerby. The amended application had been approved by the Planners with conditions.

**c)** S24/0177 Proposed change of use of part of a field to Residential. The Clerk reported that the Planners were not content to grant that application but had suggested a change to a "Temporary siting of a static caravan within garden curtilage to be used as ancillary living accommodation". It is understood the applicant is content with that amended proposal. The Clerk had spoken to the Applicant.

#### **10. CORRESPONDENCE INCLUDING ISSUES FOR INFORMATION ONLY:**

**a)** Letter of thanks received from the local church for the donation towards the cemetery upkeep.

- b) LCC email offering an Officer's attendance to address a future meeting regarding the "Right thing, Right Bin" concept. Not accepted.
- c) Market Cross Surgery at Corby Glen had been received regarding local interest groups. Noted.
- d) Election of Police and Crime Commissioner – due to be held 2 May 2024 with the local polling station being at the Fox and Hounds Old Somerby.
- e) LALC NEWS: The Lincolnshire Association of Local Councils currently undertakes the Website Maintenance. The fees for next year were noted and had been allowed in Budget.
- f) SKDC had circulated all local Parish Councils asking for the completion of an on-line engagement regarding Village Services and Facilities 2024. **ACTION: The Clerk.**

#### **11. REVIEWS:**

- a) Policies – General Review. The Clerk reported no further action at this time.
- b) NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN- the annual review was adjourned until the next meeting to await the SKDC review of their Local Plan.
- c) i) INTERNAL REVIEW -APPEAL BY A RESIDENT TO THE INFORMATION COMMISSIONER and
- ii) REVIEW OF A DETERMINATION MADE CONCERNING THE RESIDENT UNDER THE PARISH COUNCILS' VEXATIOUS ETC POLICY:

The Clerk was able to report that the Resident's appeal to the ICO had been unsuccessful and rejected by The Information Commissioner. The Commissioner found that:

*".....the Commissioner is satisfied that the Council has demonstrated that the requests in this case are part of a wider pattern of requests, complaints and challenges made by the complainant. When viewed in that context, they go beyond what is would be reasonable to expect a small parish council, with limited resources ... to absorb in the name of transparency and accountability. He considers that the Council has shown that it is having to spend disproportionate amounts of time and resources in dealing with the complainant's approaches to it and that this risks its ability to carry out its core functions. "*

*The Decision Notice indicates that "The Commissioner's decision is that the requests are vexatious, and the Council was therefore entitled to refuse them under section 14 (1) of the Freedom of Information Act. He does not require the Council to take any steps."*

The Decision to be published on the ICO website.

- ii) REVIEW OF A DETERMINATION MADE CONCERNING THE RESIDENT UNDER THE PARISH COUNCILS' VEXATIOUS ETC POLICY: Renewed for 6 months in the light of 11(i) above.

**12. DATE AND TIME OF THE NEXT MEETING:** The next meeting will be the **Annual Parish Council Meeting** to be held on Monday 20 May 2024. The **Annual Parish Meeting** will also be held on that date at 7pm to be followed by the Annual Parish Council Meeting. The Meeting closed at 8.17pm.

**South Kesteven District Councillor Sarah Trotter - 2 April 2024.**

Dear All,

Following discussions with David Holmes I understand there is a satisfactory solution in respect of the incorrectly placed soakaway on the site for 6 Bungalows, after discussions with the planning officer Miranda Burrows, other applications in hand and to be discussed later on in the agenda.

### Flooding

A couple of weeks ago, I attended a joint meeting of the Environment & Rural Overview and Scrutiny Committees to discuss a report produced by Graham Watts, Assistant Director (Governance and Public Protection) and Monitoring Officer, to note the contents of the report in January 2024 and previously Storm Babet and SKDC's response.

I highlighted villages within my ward which had been particularly affected, I spoke of how the Parish Council, residents, farmers had come together to address the issues, and would welcome a "Preventative Strategy" rather than waiting for a Reactive measure and would welcome these parties to be included in a group meeting of minds which also included Anglian Water, Environment Agency, LCC & SKDC.

### Travellers' Sites

You will note the proposed Travellers' site at Cold Harbour remains empty, unfortunately I do not have any further information to offer, rumors that the land has been sold, remain unsubstantiated.

The Gypsy and Traveller issue is difficult and will continue to prove contentious in the rural area as no sites have been put forward for these uses. I am now on the Planning Committee and last week an unauthorized settlement at Foston applied for planning permission, officers recommended approval, however the Planning Committee voted this down and the application was refused. The Council have a duty to allocate land for these purposes as there is an identified and growing need; hence a further call for sites has been issued.

In the interim, we remain vulnerable to unauthorized sites being set up. When a planning application has been submitted, criteria have been inserted into Policy SP5 which detail that Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Show people accommodation sites will be supported in the open countryside. This leaves it wide open, albeit subject to compliance with Policy H5, Gypsy and Traveller and Policy H6, Show people but with a new, very welcome, requirement to consider design, scale and layout.

You will note that Landscape impacts, whilst considered, are not given high priority – hence the need for the NP policies. I am aware that the latest application for Church Lane, Welby is causing some local concern, I am in regular contact with the Planning Officer dealing with the application, they are still awaiting further information from the applicant and it will be my intention to "call in the application" before the planning committee, when it is submitted in full, following advice from the planners

### The Budget

The Council is required to set a balanced budget. It is aligned with the ambitions of the Council's Corporate Plan and the Vision to be 'a thriving District to live in, work and visit'. Whilst the plan was approved in January 2024, I have concerns around how realistic, affordable and the wider implications are for some of the recommendations, particularly around climate change.

The context is significant financial external events which have had a detrimental impact – increased inflation, energy prices and employee pay proposals. The cost-of-living crisis has the potential to increase demand for council services. The financial future and risks remain uncertain, but the Budget Stabilisation Reserve can fund short term pressures if needed however it is not a long term approach.

As you will be aware Full Council voted to a Council Tax increase by 3%, equating to £5.31, just over 10p weekly.

A capital loan of £8 million for a new depot for the bin lorries has been approved to replace the current site which is no longer fit for purpose. It is hoped that the land could be sold for development in the future.

The council has approved somewhat controversially a Fair Tax Policy for SKDC to use only companies for our investments that do not have tax avoidance policies. This was not costed and has unknown outcomes. Unlike tax evasion, tax avoidance is perfectly legal.

Leisure SK, which runs our 3 leisure centers in the district, have been granted £447K to help them through a difficult financial situation due mainly to difficult trading conditions post covid and financial challenges ranging from increased utility costs to staffing costs.

Furthermore, after a vigorous debate, £850k was agreed to 'gift' as a subsidy to the Deepings Leisure Centre which closed in 2021 as unaffordable refurbishment was required. A Community Interest Company has been formed by residents and including the new Leader and councillors to try and reopen the centre.

Fortunately, the money has been severely caveated before any release as there are concerns around the feasibility of the plans and complications with LCC's intentions as owner of the building.

### Bins

I was asked for an interview on BBC Radio Lincolnshire's early morning show with Scott Dalton, in relation to bingate, having featured 3 weeks prior when the initial furor started!

The rollout of the purple lidded bins appears to have gone well. However, there are issues with the silver bins. For example, if there was just one small item wrong eg crisp packet or a sock in a bin the bin was rejected. Some 6000 bins were rejected ending in 'bingate' with so called tags of shame. The council waste operatives and office staff suffered significant abuse and the Chief Executive called a halt and arranged for the discarded bins to be recollected. Even so, contamination rates and non-acceptance at the recycling centre were high despite education on Right Thing Right Bin. Please ensure that only dry clean paper and card go into the purple lidded bin and be very careful with the contents of your silver bin. If in doubt put the item into the

black bin. I believe that the silver bin issue was introduced too soon, and advice was ignored. Caveated apologies were made, and more education and more time will now be allowed for people to get on board with the requirements. Unfortunately, there will always be a part of our society that doesn't care and contaminates with dirty nappies and dirty food packaging etc – what to do?

I attended some training which included an update on Grantham High Street Funding, as a local girl born and bred, I am always sad to see empty shops in Grantham, and some of which in a bad state of repair. I remember when the High Street was thriving, and I know with the way of the world, we are moving to on-line shopping, but feel the town and our villages has so much to offer in South Kesteven. So felt a bit of positive information was required with this incessant rain, and doom and gloom we hear on the news!

### Grantham High Street Heritage Action Zone

In 2019 SKDC was successful in securing £887,000 in funding from Historic England through the High Street Heritage Action Zone programme, to support regeneration of the historic town centre. This was matched with £375,000 in funding from SKDC.

This is part of a national programme of funding. There are 68 High Street Heritage Action Zones across England, and Grantham's scheme is one of only two in Lincolnshire (the other being in Lincoln).

An additional £90,000 of funding was secured from Historic England to support cultural activity within the town centre.

The focus for the work is High Street, Westgate and the Market Place.

The project began in May 2020 and is now coming to a close, it will formally finish on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024.

The project has included:

- Supporting a major restoration project at Westgate Hall  
A £300,000 grant was awarded to support the restoration of the long term vacant Grade II listed former Corn Exchange. The property owner provided an additional £120,000 in funding.  
This grant supported urgent repair works to the roof – to reinstate skylight windows, repair and replace rotten roof timbers which had been damaged through excessive water ingress, and prevent further water damage to the building. It also supported the reinstatement of appropriate windows, internal doors and joinery, and resolved other structural issues with the building.

Unfortunately, due to the rapid increase in construction costs, we were not able to resolve all of the issues with the building through the grant – however we have been able to prevent further deterioration. The property owner and tenant will now work together to complete the other works and complete the fit out for the building's new life as a restaurant.

It is estimated that this will result in an additional £200 – 250,000 in investment in to the

building.

- Shopfront Regeneration

Grants have been provided to eight projects to support the restoration and reinstatement of historic shopfronts within the High Street Heritage Action Zone.

As well as supporting the restoration of individual properties, these schemes make a significant positive impact on the wider environment, improving the quality of the conservation area as a whole.

The scheme has leveraged over £200,000 in private sector investment in direct match funding contributions from the grant recipients. Additional investment has also been made by grant recipients completing work over and above what the grant has funded. We are currently in the process of calculating the total investment generated as part of the evaluation process.

This follows on from the previous scheme which was in operation from 2015 -2020 during which time 22 shopfronts were restored.

- Other projects have included:
  - Community consultation to understand the long term ambitions of residents and businesses for the town
  - Funded feasibility studies and survey works to support future long term regeneration projects
  - Community engagement projects to highlight and celebrate Grantham's town centre heritage - including the creation of a Top Trumps style game which highlights historic buildings in the town, and the Trigge Library Colouring Book celebrating artwork from the Chained Library within St Wulfram's church (available free from St Wulfram's)
  - A cultural programme which supported the Festival of Angels at St Wulfram's (2020), Ghost Dances – a special commission from Chantry Dance which used the music of Grantham born composer Nicolas Maw, Community print and ceramics projects, Costumed history tours led by Grantham Dramatic Society, and supported the creation of the Society's Westgate Hub which will support a long term legacy of community arts activity on Westgate.

Finally in February I attended Horncastle for the Police & Crime Panel, where we met with the proposed new Chief Constable of Lincolnshire Police, Paul Gibson (now formally selected) and where able to ask him questions and learn more about his former career and aspirations going forward. I am pleased to report he is Lincolnshire born & bred, started his career as a Police Constable in 1998 and spent 19 years in the force before leaving to take the role of Assistant Chief Constable in Derbyshire Police and then took on the role as Deputy Chief Constable of the East Midlands Special Operations Unit in January 2021 then briefly temporary Chief Constable with Northamptonshire Police. He brings with him a wealth of experience and has a sound awareness of the issues in Lincolnshire, particularly in rural districts.

Thank you,

District Councillor Sarah Trotter - 2 April 2024.