

MINUTES OF THE FRECKENHAM ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

held on Tuesday 25th May 2021

At 7.30pm at Freckenham Village Hall, Fordham Road, Freckenham

Present: Chairman of the Parish Council David Wheeler, Cllr A Douch, Cllr S Cornell, Chairman of the Neighbourhood Plan Group, Secretary of the Village Hall committee, County Cllr. Lance Stanbury & District Cllr. Brian Harvey, clerk of the Parish Council and 1 member of the public,

The Chairman, Cllr. David Wheeler welcomed everyone to the meeting.

1. Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from 4 members of the public and Cllr M King.

2. Presentation on the Neighbourhood Plan process by Mr Nicholas Woolley

-The Freckenham Plan Group was set up by the Freckenham Parish Council in early 2018 and held its first meeting on 7 March that year. The Group was made up of Cllr David Wheeler, two other Parish Councillors and four other members of the village community, including myself. Over the period, there have been several changes in the membership. The current members are: Cllr David Wheeler, Cllr Andrew Douch, Campbell Pearson, Jacqui Burke, Gary Tucker and myself. Ian Poole from Ipswich is our vital mentor and specialist Planning consultant, who was chosen out of two specialists interviewed. He joined us for his first operational meeting on 14 January 2019. In his semi-retirement he is now advising a huge number of Suffolk villages with their Neighbourhood Plans and so has become a great expert in this work. Jodi Coe is now our invaluable Hon Secretary.

-In order to take the plan forward, Government Funding was essential; our Parish Council Chairman did a great job in obtaining this. Over the subsequent three years, he has undertaken the necessary work with the Gov body, Locality, in balancing the books each year and then applying for further funding for the ensuing year. Thus far, the whole operation to date has not cost the Parish anything material.

- Following the first Drop-in Event in March 2019, questionnaires were sent out to all homes in the parish in April 2019 and again, after the Sunnica Proposals, in order to cover vital, relevant aspects, in September 2019.

- In July 2019, The Parish Council wrote out to all landowners in a call for potential development sites, which could then be considered in detail in order to meet the future development needs of the Parish and to conform with the Local Plan.

- Over the whole period, there have also been a number of discussions with West Suffolk Council, again to ensure conformity with their Local Plan Process.

- Funded by Suffolk County Council, a comprehensive Landscape Appraisal of the Parish was undertaken by an independent specialist consultant. Secondly funded by Locality all potential development sites submitted, following the call for sites and also those previously submitted to West Suffolk Council, were appraised by a specialist planning consultancy. Thirdly, most recently, another specialist planning consultancy undertook a potential spatial master-planning appraisal of the three sites which the Freckenham Community had most favoured, at the second drop-in event on 26 September 2021.

- The results of this latest major piece of work will be on view at the next Drop-in event, probably in July. We shall also display details of houses in the village, which are not listed, but which the group and the homeowners agree are of historic, social or cultural importance, together with some open spaces identified as important in the village landscape.

- All in all, since the inception of your Neighbourhood Plan Group, we have met some twenty-five times, initially face-to-face, but since last March's lockdown, usually on Zoom.

- Looking ahead with our specialist planner, Ian Poole, our timetable to completion appears to be as follows:

- a. Third Drop-In Event for final choice of the potential development site or sites, during July 2021.
- b. Complete Plan and obtain Parish Council Approval for a six-week Public Consultation, starting in early September. Then final review of comments, and revision to finalise our Plan.
- c. After further Parish Council Approval, formal submission of our Plan to West Suffolk Council in Mid-November.
- d. WSC will consult on the Plan for six weeks until early January 2022.

- e. Our Plan will then go for examination by an Independent Examiner for six weeks until end of February 2022.
- f. Assuming the Examination is successful, the Final Freckenham Neighbourhood Plan will go to the Freckenham Village Referendum in April/May 2022.

Nick Woolley finished his report by thanking the Parish Council and all those involved in the plan.

3. Reports from:

County Councillor (Lance Stanbury)

Cllr Stanbury reported that he was attending many online training sessions to learn about the various departments at the council and he intends to be an active councillor who can push SCC on local issues.

Cllr Wheeler confirmed that he would like to arrange a meeting with Cllr Stanbury to discuss Highway issues in the village.

District Councillor (Brian Harvey)

Cllr Harvey reported on the following:

- his term as Chairman of WSDC has now terminated
- County Lines
- Rough sleepers in the area
- WS Local Plan
- Police non-emergency reporting tool
- COVID-19 variant concerns
- Locality budget
- Installation of electric car charging stations in the area
- Dog fouling
- Sunnica, WSDC and Sunnica are working towards the Statement of Common Grounds

A member of the public asked Cllr Harvey whether there were any plans to install more electric car charging stations in the area as there are none close to the village.

Cllr Harvey confirmed at this time there is no intention to provide more or help for residents to have stations at their own home.

A member of the public requested Cllr Harvey and Cllr Stanbury press the local authorities to press central government to go 'carbon neutral' sooner than planned.

4. Update on Community Speedwatch by Cllr. Sue Cornell

Cllr Cornell posted that the two teams had begun operating again, although more volunteers are required.

Two new guns need to be purchased and the Parish Council have asked Cllr Stanbury and Cllr Harvey if these can be funded from their locality budgets.

5. Report covering the Recreation field by Cllr. Sue Cornell

Dog fouling is becoming a serious problem on the field. It is only a small number of dog owners, but this poses a serious health hazard to people including children. The playing field is generally for the use of people and the Parish Council allow dogs as a goodwill gesture. We the parish council will close it to dog walkers if this issue persists.

We had the Lark Anglian Preservation Society to clear some tree roots and debris from the river earlier in March which took them all morning.

There is quite a lot of work required on the edges of the field. ie clearing riverbank of material washed up during floods, cutting back some of lower branches of trees to facilitate grass cutting.

The grass is cut on a regular basis, although sometimes it is delayed due to weather conditions.

I have set up a subgroup of volunteers to look after the field. Seven members of the public came forward, including a regular volunteer who helps at the playing field, I really do not know how we would keep the field so nice without her.

The group is meeting shortly at the field. If anyone would like to join the group or can offer time to help, please see me after meeting.

6. Report on Sunnica proposal by Cllr. Andrew Douch

The Parish Council's Sunnica sub-group has continued to meet and consider next steps as soon as the formal application is made, thank you councillors and residents taking part and supporting the Parish Council. The

Parish Councils Alliance – Sunnica Group continues to meet regularly, and Freckenham attends all meetings. The Alliance asked each parish to use a standard four question anonymous household survey to confirm residents' views on the quality of the Statutory Consultation. Freckenham's response to the consultation survey has been passed to the District and County Councils, and is available on the Sunnica page of the Parish Council Website. We have also supplied our complaint letter of October 2020, Sunnica's reply, and the list of consultation inadequacies found by the Parish Alliance. We understand that Sunnica and the District and County councils will now be working towards a Statement of Common Ground, progressing questions raised in the councils' responses to the consultation. The next step that we are likely to see is the submission of the DCO to the Planning Inspectorate, which the planning inspectorate website says is expected in Q3 this year. At this time, the District and County Councils will feedback to the Planning Inspectorate on the quality of the Statutory Consultation, including the information we supplied. After the DCO submission (and assuming the application is accepted) the next step is Examination phase, a little like a public enquiry. When the time comes, anyone can make a written "relevant representation" using a form from the Planning Inspectorate, or a form on their website. This should summarise the key issues with the scheme from the writer's point of view, so the Planning Inspectorate is aware of them. Submitting a relevant representation makes that person an Interested Party. Interested Parties can follow up with a longer Written Representation if they wish, and ask to attend or speak at the hearings (which are inquisitorial, or fact-finding, and not adversarial). The Parish Council continues to run the Sunnica awareness stall at each Freckenham Farmers Market, and information about making representations will be available there as well as on the Parish Council website. The stall includes information about submitting reports of wildlife sightings to the relevant parties. In the meantime, anyone can visit the Planning Inspectorate website, search for Sunnica, and subscribe to receive updates on the application by email. The Parish Council remains against the Sunnica proposal in its current form, and continues to liaise with the Community Action Group and Parish Alliance Sunnica Group.

7. Update on Village Hall by Mrs Jane Leitch

As always, we are looking for volunteers to come on the Village Hall Committee, we don't bite and often have a social side to getting things sorted for events, maintenance and the like. We are very grateful to our volunteers who are unable or don't want to be on a committee but happy to help on the day, which is great, so if you want to volunteer and have any particular preference or speciality let us know. We said goodbye to one volunteer in 2019 and now another, we have been grateful for the skills they have brought to the committee.

I am delighted to report that the monthly Farmers Market with some crafts started back in April with over 120 people attending. The May market was of an average attendance of around 80 people. It is lovely that we have so many local growers, producers and sellers of food. As well as some talented growers and crafts people quite a few from within the actual village, which is great as for some it has been a starting point to growing bigger.

We are also grateful for to the team at the Golden Boar for their support offering venue space for the Christmas Market and now refreshments at the Farmers Market as our team of tea volunteers are all of an age or health conditions, so another slot that needs filling.

Weekly events – the brave FitSteppers started back outside in the car park from 31st March but the spring of 2021 did not reflect the spring of 2020 so for the final two weeks before going back into the village hall they reverted back to zoom. They like Karate, Zumba and the 2 yoga classes started back in the hall from 17th May. Pilates and Dance Club classes are allowing a few more weeks before announcing when they will be retuning. Sadly, the Freckenham Fun Time volunteer organisers are unable to start back for various reasons so we are looking for new volunteers but, in the meantime, we are looking at perhaps an organised tutor lead event like Jo Jingles Music, baby & Parent Yoga, if anyone has any knowledge of potential ideas like these or who to contact please get in touch. The new ChairFit class had a fragmented start at the end of last year and they have decided not to try and restart. Following this the VHC have been in touch with Fit Villages and a suitable tutor has been contacted. She would normally do 2 classes seated and next stage up (FABS and MIOLI franchise names were the classes previously) but with COVID-19 precautions, especially not sharing equipment she's combined her class to Circuits for all ages and ability, in which you can adapt the exercise to your personal level. This will be on a Tuesday afternoon and we are looking to have a free taster session then a few supported few weeks at a subsidised rate to hopefully then continue on its own. More details and possibly a questionnaire/village hall newsletter will be coming soon. We hope we can get

sufficient interest to perhaps start Table Tennis and perhaps even an afternoon session for carpet bowls if we can get some strong volunteers to get the mats out. We were fortunate to receive a Hospitality Grant for the hall being unable to earn revenue whilst it was shut. We have used some of this money as a retainer for our paid member of staff, as well as subsidising the start back of the weekly classes with a free session, with social distancing some are having to do 2 classes to fit everyone in but we are only charging for one hour. It probably paid for the replacement signboard, it's a little larger I didn't want to make it easy to steal like the last one.

With the above events the trustees and committee members feel we are fulfilling our obligation of providing events at the village hall. It's a stand-alone charity community building run by volunteer trustees and I feel that they should have a pat on the back for what they have achieved during the COVID-19 Pandemic. Many village halls have not even reopened since lockdown in March 2020, we are extremely fortunate for the contributions made by a villager with her work experience to get us up and running with Health & Safety Risk Assessments, along with my own personal passion that as a village we fundraised hard to get our new village hall back in 1997 and I just hate seeing it closed. Several people have said they didn't realise how much we would miss the hall not being open.

The trustees as volunteers feel at the moment do not feel comfortable to take bookings for private parties and other events at the VH, but this will be reviewed in the future.

Film Nights – due to social distancing we would be limited on the number of people attending and it would probably have to be on an advance booking only system, not our previous just turn up on the night.

Reduced numbers make the nights not viable as a film licence would be required for each showing, if more than one was held. Bar service is also another issue.

Bingo and Quiz nights might be another option as you can socially distance and be in your bubble by table.

Theatre and Music events with the likes of Eastern Angles and CAE – my passion bringing live professional touring events to the hall, we used to do some great children's shows and we are always in need of volunteers who have children of the age that could help sell the event to that age group. As well as the adult events we have done lately. I have the CAE selection programme if anyone wants to take a look!

I am having to take a step back from being the front runner to get things moving at the VH, as my husband is currently in hospital recovering from tongue cancer surgery so I am very grateful for the volunteer who has taken up the role of Chairman's position and stepping in to do the Farmers Market last Saturday. I think it might be she will be doing the market again next month too! There is background help needed as well as the help on the day at the market, if anyone else would like to help out, it would be gratefully received as many hands do make light work, especially putting up VH tables etc.

Maintenance – we are tackling the issue of the humps in the floor of the foyer, kitchen and toilets. It's been a long process and with ever increasing costs too. It will include the base units and worktops in the kitchen we just wanted to make sure it was a proper job not a patch up. We are grateful for Cllrs Harvey and Stanbury for their support.

Finally, all Village Hall updated can be found on the Parish Council website and social media.

8. Report from Shores Charity

The installation of the borehole and hand pump at the Fordham Road allotment site has been completed, and the water supply is now available. The Trustees of Shores Charity send their grateful thanks to the Parish Council for organising and funding this project, including the District and County Councillors for their grant contributions. The hand pump is already in use and very much appreciated by allotment holders, and there are now only a few small plots available. Freckenham Shores Charity rents out land in the village and redistributes the income to women in Freckenham parish according to the terms of the will of Katharine Shore, made in 1710. Women over 60, whom are single, widowed, or whose husband or partner has retired are encouraged to make themselves known to the Clerk, Andrew Douch or the Trustees (Bob Gee, Daryl Neal, Sue Cornell, John Leitch) to confirm their eligibility for a small monetary grant at Christmas time.

9. Minutes of the last Annual Parish Meeting held on 15th May 2019

The minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on 15th May 2019 were proposed and agreed that they were a true record of the meeting held.

10. Matters arising from the last meeting

Cllr Wheeler informed Cllr Harvey that the work required on the wall at Shores Close had not been completed. Cllr Wheeler asked the clerk to request Flagship carry out this work.

11. Report from the Chairman of the Parish Council

Thank you all for attending this evening.

This has been quite a period we have been going through with this Covid-19 pandemic and it now looks like we are slowly getting back to normal even though there are some traits that are still concerning.

I would also thank for their support my fellow Councillors and our Clerk Mrs Jadi Coe. All of whom do a sterling job in looking after our interests for the village.

Currently there are just four of us Councillors so we hope in the near future to co-opting a fifth member.

Any volunteers for co-option from one of you here this evening?

Following on, I would extend our thanks to our outgoing County Cllr Louis Busuttil who decided not to put himself forward again at the recent elections but in the years he was for the grant contributions he arranged for us and helping me in matters to do with our village roads. Also, to our District Councillor, Brian Harvey for contributing also from his locality budget towards the costs of items required for the benefit of the village.

We welcome this evening, Louis' successor for the Mildenhall Area Cllr Lance Stanbury.

Following "E" mail discussions with the County Council Highways department in respect of their roads some limited work has been done over this past year. Following changes within their department we now have to report on line rather than have face to face meetings. Their highways inspectors apparently review on a regular basis. However, Cllr Stanbury and myself will shortly be doing inspections to cover parts of our roads that need attention also the safety issues. Villagers have mentioned to me about a 20mph restriction. Unfortunately, legislation will not allow these on A or B class roads

We still have a bus service to Mildenhall and Bury St Edmunds which thankfully will continue, although it is a limited service.

The Coffee Caravan will commence its monthly visits to Freckenham Tuesday the 1st June and will continue every first Tuesday of the month until the last one on the 5th of October.

As I have mentioned before the staff members provide information and help, on most matters to do with the public's welfare.

The Parish Pump was again produced three times this last year and delivered to every household.

Any news items that villagers feel should be included in forthcoming issues then still pass to Mrs Marilyn Badger, myself or our Clerk. I will then subsequently pass relevant news items to our editor Peter Taylor-Whiffen. Next deadline for copy covering the summer edition is Monday 7th June.

The circular paths at Elms Road/ Badlingham, as well as in the recreation field, are well used but as you have heard from Sue Cornell's report who looks after and maintains the field for our benefit with her relatives, there are still issues of dog matters that do not go away, despite this problem being stated many times.

As a reminder our telephone box is well stocked with books, CD and DVD's. Thank you to those that have placed items in the box but please anyone when placing do not put them on the floor.

If there is no space then most charity shops will take them.

Neighbourhood Plan

As you have heard this evening from Mr Nicholas Woolley this is well under way now.

Sunnica

You have heard from Andrew who has worked very hard on these issues to fighting against this project.

Oil Purchasing Scheme

I have mentioned in previous years about the scheme, which county wide has proved successful. As explained at previous meetings a minimum order of 500 litres is required and you will find the discount pricing very beneficial. The annual membership fee of £20.00 is not now required.

If you are not yet on the scheme, do consider. The direct contact is now AFAffinity based in Colton, Norwich. Tel: 01603 881888. who have assumed responsibility for the scheme from Community Action Suffolk There are twice a month deliveries.

Police

Crime does occur at times in our village unfortunately, so keep vigilant and report no matter how small direct to the police.

Speeding through the village is still a concern, but our speed awareness team do a sterling job on a frequent basis. The police attend periodically.

Volunteers

I would further thank all those volunteers who assist the parish council, keeping the village nice and attractive.

Jadi Coe and a previous resident of the village who continue to keep our village web site updated for which we thank them.

St. Andrews Church

Church services have also re-commenced.

Village Hall

The Village Hall held their Annual General Meeting yesterday.

Their committee works hard arranging weekly hire and events covering dancing lessons, yoga classes, to theatrical events for the benefit of adults and children from Freckenham. Two in particular, the Farmers market and film nights which now we see the easing down of restrictions should start to get back to normal.

Mrs Jane Leitch mentioned they were looking for additional Committee members and volunteers as there is a decline in volunteers. Our representative to their committee is Cllr Michael King.

Again, if you the villagers have any thoughts that concern the village, then let the Clerk or one of your Councillors know and it will be considered.

Finally, it is pleasing to know our village Golden Boar pub has now been allowed to fully open for business.

12. Parish Council Accounts

The clerk Jadi Coe read the following report:

The accounts to 31st March 2021 detail:

- Income for the year totalling £24,305, this is just £16 more than the previous year.
Included within this income total is:
The precept amount of £13,800
£8,203 from Groundworks UK which is used to fund consultants' fees for the Neighbourhood Plan.
£500 from both SCC and WSDC to help towards the borehole costs at the allotments
And £992 from HMRC in respect of input VAT paid on supplies and services in the year 2019/20
- Expenses in the year totalled £24,392.
Included in expenses was:
£2,049 for street light maintenance and energy costs
£7,735 to fund costs in relation to the Neighbourhood Plan broken down as £4,090 costs funded by Groundworks grants and £3,645 funded by SCC.
£1,400 for the borehole at the allotments
£899 on expenses to print & publish the Parish Pump
£461 for administration costs, subscriptions, audit costs and clerk's expenses
£4,112., which was paid back to Groundworks UK as this was the amount of unspent grant income in the year. Further funding will be requested to fund future costs.
- At 31st March 2021 the Parish Council held £12,418 in the bank.
- The Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) has now been completed and was approved at the Annual Parish Council Meeting last week, the exemption certificate has been forwarded to the external auditors and all relevant AGAR documents can now be found on the Parish Council website.

A member of the public asked the following questions, answers were provided by Cllr Wheeler and the clerk:

1. There is an established campaign group which is fighting the Sunnica proposal. They are fundraising to cover the cost of expert witnesses and legal advice. Under what grounds would a Parish Council be required to appoint their own legal advisers in a planning matter of this nature? Surely that is the role of the campaign group?

Clerk - This was discussed and agreed in January 2020, and it was unclear whether the Sunnica Alliance may need financial support to oppose Sunnica, this followed receiving results from the initial survey showing that 98% of residents were against Sunnica's current proposal

Cllr Wheeler - Possible legal costs and any eventualities concerning the energy farm and also in association with The local Parish Council alliance fighting the proposal as well to help if necessary the Action Group.

We would not be appointing our own legal advisers only in conjunction if needed with the alliance.

2. How and when was the decision made to hold this sum of money for this reason? I am not aware of any consultation with Parishioners about this. I feel sure that there are some parishioners who either support the Sunnica proposal or who don't feel that this is an appropriate way for Parish Council funds to be used.

Clerk – This was discussed and agreed at the January 2020 meeting this followed receiving results from the initial survey showing that 98% of residents were against Sunnica’s current proposal, and meeting and additional amounts on the 2021/22 budget discussed and agreed at the meeting on 11.1.21

Cllr Wheeler- This was put to us by Parishioners who attended a Parish Council meeting including a member of the Action Group at least a year ago that we put aside funds to help if necessary. Some at the meeting felt we should put aside even more and increase the precept further which we have not done.

3. I note also that the precept was increased by £1,300 for 2020/21. To what extent was this increase required to fund the provision of Restricted Funds? With so much hardship being experienced by people as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic I wonder if this money could be put to better use to support Parishioners and local businesses.

Clerk - The 2020/21 budget was agreed in January 2020 before the COVID-19 pandemic. At the time the members of the PC felt this increase was needed as it was unclear whether any financial help would be needed to help oppose Sunnica. If the budgeted amounts are not spent and the PC can carry this forward or used these reserves for other future expenditure, which could help prevent the precept increasing in the future.

Cllr Wheeler - The increase was carried to cover all possible expenditure. You will note from the P and L accounts for 2020/2021 that we made a small loss at year end. The precept request has been reduced from £13,800.00 to £13,712.00 for 2021/2022. Band D is at £101.31 against last year of £98.90 due to changes which amounts to £1.95 a week as against £1.90 for the previous. An increase of 5 Pence for this financial year.

13. Any Other Business

None

The meeting closed at 9:10pm

D.E. Wheeler

D E Wheeler, Chairman of Freckenham Parish Council