

Minutes of Ufford Parish Council MeetingHeld on 16th January 2024 ~ 7.00pm

The Community Hall, The Avenue, Ufford

Present

Cllr. David Findley (Chair)
Cllr. Nick Crocker
Cllr. Kathryn Jones
Cllr. Vincent Smith

Cllr. Keith Bennett
Cllr. Pat Edworthy
Cllr. Steve Mayhew

Cllr. Tim Buxbaum
Cllr. Jane Hawthorne
Cllr. Nigel Smith

Judi Hallett (Clerk)

Mr Rob Flory (Tree Warden)

No members of the public
were present

*The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting***1. Apologies for absence:****a) To Receive Apologies:**

All UPC Councillors in attendance. County Councillor Alexander Nicoll and District Councillor Sally Noble had sent their apologies.

b) To Accept Apologies:

Not applicable.

2. To receive any:**a) Declarations of Pecuniary Interest in Agenda Items**

- Cllr. D Findley – Item 10 – Recipient of refund

b) Declarations of Non-Pecuniary Interest in Agenda Items

- Cllr. V Smith – Item 7 – Treasurer of the Community Hall
- Cllr. Edworthy - Item 7 – Trustee of the Community Hall

c) Applications for Dispensation on Agenda Items

- None

d) Declarations of Gifts or Hospitality received over the value of £50.00

- None

e) Notification of Lobbying with reference to any Planning Application to be discussed

- Cllr. Findley – Item 5. b) – site *meeting with interested parties*

Chair's initials.....

3. Public Session:

a) Reports or comment from any member of the public (notes only):

- N/A

b) Reports or comment from ESC and SCC Councillors (notes only):

- **East Suffolk Council** - Cllr. Noble's report had been circulated.
- **Suffolk County Council** – Cllr. Nicoll was not in attendance.

4. To sign Minutes of meeting dated 19th December 2023:

The minutes of the Full Council meeting dated 19th December 2023 had been circulated and there were no further amendments. The minutes were proposed as a true record by Cllr. Jones, seconded by Cllr. N Smith and all Councillors, who were in attendance at the meeting, were in agreement that they be signed.

The Clerk agreed to publish the minutes on the website.

Action: Clerk

5. To discuss and agree responses to the following Planning Applications:

- a) DC/24/0009/TCA | 1no. Beech (T1 on plan) - Fell 1no. Beech (T2 on plan) - Crown lift to 6 metres above ground 1no. Sweet chestnut (T3 on plan) - Overall crown reduction by up to 2 metres 1no. Holly (T4 on plan) - Overall crown reduction by up to 2 metres 1no. Group of Elm (G1 on plan) - Reduce in height to 3 metres above ground at Strawberry Hill, Loudham Lane, Ufford.:

Rob Flory (Tree Warden) was invited to speak and reported to Council; he had inspected the site and his report had been circulated to all. Mr Flory explained that only upon speaking to the land owner had he been able to establish the true picture of the work she wished to be carried out. He had no objection to the required work but the application did not reflect this and, if permitted, would allow the Tree Surgeon to carry out much more work than was either wanted or required.

In response to Mr Flory's report, Councillors made the following comments:

- If the application is wrongly framed then we must object to it
- The application is vague and does not describe the work needed or as specified by the landowner. Perhaps we can send in Rob's report?
- The maps are very sketchy and Rob's pictures in his report are much clearer
- Conclusion: **Objection – on the grounds that the application does not clearly show the work required** – Mr Flory agreed to provide an amended report within 48 hours, that could be sent to ESC – (Prop: Cllr. Findley, Sec: Cllr. Hawthorne, all in agreement). Clerk to write to ESC once Mr Flory's enhanced report had been received.

b) To revisit- DC/21/5550/FUL | Erection of a solar photovoltaic (PV) array, with a total export capacity of up to 21 MW. Each of the solar panels will be mounted on a fixed panel system. The panels are covered by high transparency solar glass with an anti-reflective coating which minimises glare and glint, while aiding in the maximum absorption of the available sunlight. The panels are dark grey/blue in colour and are mounted on a frame of anodized aluminium alloy and galvanized steel. At Land At Park Farm, Loudham Hall Road, Loudham. Councillors made the following comments:

- The Chair reminded Councillors that, so far, UPC have sent in two letters of objection to this application (although one has been mis-identified on the Portal). The applicant has issued further plans recently and answered some questions posed. A series of pictures taken by Mrs Westover from Wickham Market, have recently been circulated. Our District Councillor, Sally Noble had recently written a letter of objection.
- The Chair believed we should write again and cover two important aspects:
 - Non-compliance with the ESC Local Plan Policy SCLP10.4 (Landscape Character)
 - Recent Flooding of the Site and its implications
- There would be an increased risk of flooding given the scale and location of the proposed solar farm. The mass of solar panels would have a similar effect as adding areas of impenetrable surface to the landscape. Any resulting flooding would have an effect on Ufford as the water will eventually flow down towards the estuary through Ufford. Ufford has flood meadows but they will be overflowing if there is water coming in to them from both upstream and downstream from a high or surge tide.
- When I visited around a third of the land proposed for the solar panels was under water from recent storms and flooding.
- This development will be very visible from many vantage points in this beautiful valley; unlike the other small solar site along Loudham Lane, which is secluded behind high hedging and does not affect the character of the area.
- Will the footpath across the site be affected? [No, this remains in place but a second 'Permissive Path' is very difficult to use at present and would probably be eliminated]
- More recent comments on the portal speak of the value of the view, the bluebells and the walking/cycling facilities in the area
- I disagree with the comments made so far; this is for green energy and is much better than wind turbines or nuclear power; we have to accept these fields of solar panels if we want to only use green energy. I doubt the present flooding will be altered at all as there will be no hard landscaping
- Solar Panels need to be on roof tops, not taking good arable land and spoiling views
- I feel these panels should be restricted to Brownfield sites
- [Opinions of neighbouring villages were discussed]

- Conclusion: Cllr. Findley proposed that a third letter of **objection** should be sent in, quoting the Non-compliance with Local Plan Policy SCLP10.4, and the risk of increased flooding in Ufford due to rain water being funnelled through the Rover Deben. This was seconded by Cllr. V Smith and Councillors voted 8 For, 1 Against and 1 Abstention.

Action: Clerk

6. Other Planning Matters:

- To acknowledge previous months list of ESC Planning decisions – Receipt of the list of Planning Decisions was acknowledged and there were no further questions.
- To receive update on communications with ESC Planning Department, with reference to the Surface Water Draining Plan for the former Crown Nursery Site – The Clerk reported that she had heard from neither ESC Planning or Ben Locksmith (SCC), however, the correspondence to them was only sent in the previous week. The Clerk suggested she chase both parties if she had not heard from them by 31st January.
- Additional Item – Land at the top of Church Lane – The Clerk reported that she had been contacted by a resident who was concerned at the number of sheds being placed on the garden land at the top of Church Lane, with concerns about the effect they have on the view of the Almshouses from Barrack Lane. The matter had been referred to the Planning Enforcement Officer, to ascertain whether the erection of such structures is permissible without planning consent.
- Additional Item - DC/24/0048/FUL - Retrospective Application at The Old Dairy, Decoy Farm, Old Church Road, Melton – The Clerk had passed details of this application to Councillors for information only, as comments had been made on an earlier application at this location. After discussion, Cllr. Mayhew proposed that no comment was made. This was seconded by Cllr. N Smith and all agreed.

Action: Clerk

7. Community Hall Upgrade:

- To receive update on the project for refurbishing the Community Hall Toilets; and to agree the funding plan – Cllr. V Smith confirmed that at a recent meeting of the Hall Committee, they had agreed to fund 50% of the remaining cost of the project, after a grant from the National Lottery had been obtained.

Cllr. Buxbaum had produced an alternative plan, for the redesign of the toilets to provide three separate cubicles in a single space rather than two separate toilet spaces.

After discussion Councillors agreed they preferred the alternative plan and Cllrs V Smith and Edworthy agreed to take them to the Hall Committee for their opinion; before seeking a re-quote from the preferred supplier, Stowe Building Contractors Ltd.

It was agreed that a discussion on where the UPC funds were to come from, i.e. CIL money or not, would be had when the exact costs were known, hopefully at the February meeting.

- b) To discuss quote for refurbishment of the Kitchen – Cllrs. V Smith and Edworthy confirmed that the Hall Committee had requested that the refurbishment of the Kitchen be put on hold until the refurbishment of the toilets had been completed.

Action: Cllrs. Edworthy and V Smith

8. Projects List:

- a) To receive update on D-Day commemorations 2024 – The Clerk reported that she had spoken to Mr James Mutton and although he could not help with any event on the day, he was very happy to assist with the planning of an event. Cllr. Hawthorne had also spoken to Mr Pritchett who had suggested an article in the PUNCH to request further assistance; that article would be in the February PUNCH.

It was also reported that the historic records held by the late Mr Tony Prentice, would soon be passed to his son; but these may hold some details of the development of the 'Hobart Funnies'.

- a) 'Wild About Wickham' – To receive details of this project from Cllr. Findley and an interested party in leading the 'Wild About Ufford' project – Cllr. Findley reported that a resident had expressed an interest in getting involved with the project, but had not wished to lead. He had suggested that they link up with both the Ufford Gardening Club and the Friends of Parklands Wood Group to start discussions and perhaps to visit the Wild About Campsea Ashe group.

The official launch of the 'Wild about Wickham' programme would be on 3rd February, at Wickham Market Village Hall and it was suggested that any Ufford group may wish to launch at the Annual Summer/ Garden Club Show. It was also confirmed that funding for 2024/25 would be available from ESC Community Partnership monies.

- b) Deben Water Quality Testing – To receive update – A report had been circulated from Cllr. Findley and he further reported that recent testing of Byng Brook following Storm Babet and Henk had thrown up some very high e-Coli readings. It was also stated that both Bealings and Grundisburgh were now testing the River Fynn and the River Lark.

Action: Clerk

9. Emergency Plan – To receive update from Cllrs. Bennett and Hawthorne on establishing an Emergency Plan

Cllrs. Bennett and Hawthorne reported that they had met with the Clerk to discuss her experience of an Emergency Plan in Hollesley. It had been agreed to write an article for the March PUNCH and to contact residents who administered the Helping Ufford Group Facebook page.

Action: Cllrs. Hawthorne and Bennett

10. Finance Matters:

a) To receive and agree Accounts as of 31st December 2023 - The accounts had been distributed and Cllr. Bennett had verified the figures in the bank accounts. There were no questions.

b) To discuss moving funds to a CCLA Account, in order to achieve greater yield – Cllr. Bennett had produced a paper explaining the fund, which had been circulated to all; and he was thanked for this. Councillors made the following comments:

- The returns are double but there is higher risk
- It is a very large fund (over £1 billion) and many Local Councils (including ESC and SCC) invest in it
- Should we perhaps split the funds?
- The risk is small but like any investment it is not risk free unlike the funds we currently hold on deposit with Lloyds Bank
- Are the funds repayable on demand - Yes - if required funds can be withdrawn on a daily basis
- Is the fund diversified? Yes, and it is closely controlled
- If/when the interest rates come down, will the costs make it uncompetitive?
- We are receiving £2.16 per day at present, we should double this.

In conclusion, Cllr. Bennett proposed all the funds currently held in the Lloyds Deposit Account [£30,313.79 as of 31st December 2023] be moved to the CCLA Public Sector Deposit Fund, as soon as the 32 days' notice had been given. This was seconded by Cllr. Mayhew and all were in agreement.

c) To authorise the following Invoices for Payment:

i.	J Hallett (Salary and Expenses)	£894.71
ii.	SCC Pension Fund (Clerk's Pension)	£254.90
iii.	HMRC Cumbernauld (Clerk's PAYE)	£511.76
iv.	East Suffolk Services Ltd (Grass Cutting 2023)	£414.18
v.	J & A International Ltd (Play Park Sign)	£31.68
vi.	Thurlow Nunn Standen Ltd (Consumables for Woods Group)	£25.87
vii.	D Findley (Water Testing Consumables)	£156.26
viii.	Ufford Community Hall (Booking for APM and NP Meetings)	£80.00

The above payments were proposed by Cllr. Mayhew, seconded by Cllr. N Smith with votes of 8 in favour and 2 abstentions that the payments be paid. Cllrs. Bennett and Edworthy agreed to authorise the online payments the following day, and viewed the invoices during the meeting.

f) To note Payments made since last meeting:

- i. None

g) To note Payments received since last meeting:

- i. None

Action: Clerk

11. Parklands Wood and Recreation Ground:

- a) To discuss latest communication from Suffolk County Council with regard to the Electric Vehicle Charging Point – Cllr. V Smith had circulated an email from SCC with reference to this subject. The managers of the project had now changed and the Parish Council were being urged to sign back up to the project and re-start the charging unit. However, there was little detail around charges in the information provided and it was unclear as to exactly who owned the unit. Cllr. V Smith was granted permission to contact SCC to ascertain further information.

Action: Cllr. V Smith

12. Documentation – To discuss and agree:

- a) Bring Your Own Device Policy (Dec 2023)
b) Health and Safety Policy (Dec 2023)

The above Policies were taken as one. Cllr. Hawthorne proposed they be adopted and published. This was seconded by Cllr. Mayhew and all were in agreement.

Cllr. Bennett stated that our Health and Safety policy was quite onerous given its prescriptive nature and consequently at the newly proposed quarterly review stage a definitive 'check list' should be reviewed by the council to try and ensure we are strictly adhering to our own policy guidelines. He undertook to help compile the necessary check list document.

Action: Clerk and Cllr. Bennett

13. To receive reports on meetings attended on behalf of the Council:

- Clerk's Annual Review (Cllr. Jones) - A record of the Clerk's review had been circulated and a small error was corrected. The Clerk was thanked for her diligent work by all. A small celebration to mark the Clerk's 10 Year anniversary was to be planned.

- Framlingham Flood Resilience Update (Cllr. Findley) – This meeting was to happen on Sunday 21st January and a full report would be provided prior to the next UPC meeting.
- Joint Parishes Traffic Initiative (Cllr. N Smith) – An ad-hoc meeting of the JPTI members had been held, to revisit some of the actions agreed when they met with ESC. A follow-up letter had been sent.

14. To receive agenda items for next meeting and agree date of Next Meeting (20th February 2024):

- Signing off of Draft Pre-Submission Neighbourhood Plan

Action: Clerk

Exclusion of the press and public from this item by virtue of Public Bodies (Admissions to Meetings) Act 1960 s1 (2) because of the confidential nature of the matter to be discussed

15. Neighbourhood Plan:

- a) To receive an update on the work done by NP Steering Group and the progress of the Draft Plan: Updates were passed to Councillors on the following items:

- Cllr. N Smith ran through the timetable for the coming months. All Councillors who had not been part of the Steering Group were encouraged to set aside time after 31st January to read the draft Plan and prepare any questions
- The Clerk was asked to circulate links to the 'made' Neighbourhood Plans of Wickham Market, Melton and Bredfield and to request a link to a Plan of a village a similar size to Ufford, constructed by Rachel Leggett and Andrea Long

Action: All

The meeting was closed at 9.00pm

Signed:.....
Cllr. David Findley - Chair

Date:

Judi Hallett
Clerk to Ufford Parish Council

Chair's initials.....