

LACKFORD PARISH COUNCIL**Minutes of the meeting held on Monday 11th December 2023**

Councillors present: Stan Green (Chairman), Harry Lidster, Naomi Palmer, John Sadler, Owen Jones, Roland van Wijk and Andrew Ramsay.

Also present: Joanne Kirk (clerk), County Councillor Beccy Hopfensperger, District Councillor Susan Glossop and one member of the public.

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 received.

3. Approval of the minutes of the meeting held on Monday 9th October 2023 and the extraordinary meeting held on Wednesday 1st November 2023.

It was resolved that an additional note would be included in the minutes to clarify that glyphosate has not been banned in UK but West Suffolk Council has made the decision not to use it. The chairman signed the minutes.

4. Public session.

The following item was moved up the agenda for discussion during the public session:

a) Email from a resident about flooding along the River Lark.

A resident has raised concerns about the recent flooding following storm Babet and the fact that his property is vulnerable to future flooding due to its proximity to the river Lark. The resident would like Lackford Parish Council to work with the Environment Agency, Suffolk County Council, Bury Trout Club and Suffolk Wildlife Trust to produce an integrated water management plan for the area, with the overall aim of reducing the risk of flooding in Lackford.

Cllr Rebecca Hopfensperger gave the following update:

Paul Gibbs from Suffolk County Council is going to arrange to meet Stan Green to look at all the ditches along the River Lark. He is also going to make sure that all the gullies are jetted through. It was agreed that the Environment Agency, Will Cranstoun from Suffolk Wildlife Trust, and David Husdon from Bury Trout Club would be invited to the meeting with Paul Gibbs.

Stan Green explained that the EA has plans to improve the water flow along the Lark. The Lark is obstructed further downstream and needs to be cleared. The suggestion was made to send a report to the EA after the meeting with Paul Gibbs with a formal request for a meeting on site. The EA should also be encouraged to follow up with landowners and if necessary enforce if they do not keep the river clear.

Additional note – information received after the meeting.

Since the meeting Suffolk Wildlife Trust (SWT) have confirmed that they will be undertaking scrub control works within the fenced enclosure this winter. This will be the start of suite of works that will see SWT open vehicle/machine access to the ditch network, the reed area and open sightlines across the wet area.

SWT would ideally like to control the reeds through grazing but this will not be possible until the land dries out. SWT is hopeful that the EA project on the Icklingham flood plain will go a long way to resolving the flooding issues through the Bury Trout Club land to the nature reserve and village.

SWT have not been part of any conversations as yet to any proposed projects however they are in touch with Bury Trout Club and will be looking at other options they can undertake on their respective properties.

5. County Councillor's report.

Cllr Hopfensperger updated the Parish Council on the following local issues prior to the meeting:

- Breckland Edge. Suffolk County Council has cut back the trees as far as they can. She will try and arrange a meeting with the Gough Estate to arrange to cut the trees back further.
- Hard standing for the bus stop in Old Bury Road. Lackford Parish Council would need to apply for a Street Furniture Licence which will cost £150 and use a Highways approved contractor.

- She has extra money for replacement signs.
- Suffolk County Council is currently consulting on its budget.

The following issues were raised with Cllr Hopfensperger:

- The potholes along Mildenhall Road and Station Hill in Bury St Edmunds. Cllr Hopfensperger said the potholes have been reported and both roads are scheduled to be resurfaced but she doesn't have a date yet.

6. District Councillor's report.

District Councillor Susan Glossop spoke about:

- West Suffolk Council's consultation on grass cutting.
- The West Suffolk Council updates which she circulates to parish councils.
- The Local Plan which is going to full council on 15th December 2023.

7. Community safety

a) Matters for the Safer Neighbourhood Team.

No issues were raised.

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

There were no outstanding councillor actions.

9. Finance

a) Approval of any payments and signing of Schedule of Payments .

It was resolved that the following payments would be approved:

- Starboard Systems - Scribe accounting software – LGA 1972 s111 - **£165.60**
- J P Kirk – expenses - LGA 1972 s111 – **£54.31**
- Community Action Suffolk – website hosting fee - LGA 1972 s111 - **£52.87** (until 1st November 2024).
- HMRC – PAYE - LGA 1972 s111 - **£155.60**.

Stan Green and Harry Lidster signed the Schedule of Payments. The Chairman countersigned 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.

Payments

02/10/2023	302/9h	Footpath licence	M Macintosh	£2.50
02/10/2023	302/9h	Footpath licence	Mrs FE Rigby	£2.50
10/10/2023	302/9m and 308/9m	Grass cutting	West Suffolk Council	£289.74
10/10/2023	314/10a	PAYE	HMRC	£155.60
10/10/2023	314/10a	Clerk's expenses	J Kirk	£38.48
10/10/2023	314/10a	Phone costs	Risby Parish Council	£14.00
10/10/2023	314/10a	Print cartridge 1/5	Risby Parish Council	£5.33
11/10/2023		Insurance	Business Services at CAS Ltd	£445.94
11/10/2023	314/10a	Battery for VAS	Stan Green	£97.72
11/10/2023	314/10a	Leaving gifts for outgoing councillors	Stan Green	£80.00
11/10/2023	314/10a	Repair to noticeboard doors	Stan Green	£118.76
Staff costs as per confidential cashbook				

d) Bank balances as of 29th November 2023.

Barclays current account	£1,989.01
Monmouthshire Reserve Account	£10,693.78
Total in Banks	£12,682.79

Stan Green and Harry Lidster verified and signed the bank statements.

e) Budget 2024/25 and reserves balance

With the budget allocations, the earmarked reserves balance in 2024/25 will be:

Earmarked reserves	2023/24 balance	2024/25 budget allocation	2024/25 Balance
Village project	£6,665	£0	£6,665
Maintenance of VAS	£166	£50	£216
Clerk and councillor training	£94	£0	£94
Other admin costs	£100	£0	£100
Maintenance of fixed assets	£256	50	£306
Election costs	£2,500	£0	£2,500
Total earmarked reserves	£9,781	£100	£9,881

It was resolved that:

- The 2024/25 budget would be approved.
- The precept request would be £5,947. The parish council element for a band D household will be £57.45 per annum an increase from £54.85 which equates to £2.60 per annum per band D household, an increase of 4.74%.

The clerk and Chairman signed the Parish Estimates form.

f) Approval of regular payments for 2024/25

It was resolved that the following regular payments would be approved for 2024/25:

Payment	2023/24 - ex VAT	2024/25 - ex VAT (Amounts may vary slightly)
Admin costs		
Rental of church for meetings	£250	£250
Business Services at CAS Ltd - insurance	£446	£500
SALC membership subscription	£152	£165
Internal audit fee	£70	£75
Scribe accounting software	£138	£150
Risby Parish Council (phone costs - shared cost)	£14	£20
Stationery (print cartridges - shared cost)	£25	£25
CAS Ltd - website hosting fee	£50	£50
ICO - data protection fee	£35	£35
Maintenance costs		
West Suffolk Council - grass cutting	£290	£300
Other payments		
Lackford Community Council - for village services	£400	£400
Footpath licences (standing order)	£5	£5
Lackford PCC churchyard maintenance	£300	£300
Staff costs		
Salary costs, HMRC PAYE and pension costs as per confidential cash book		
Ongoing authorisations (as and when required)		
VAS consumables	£98	£300

g) To approve the Internal Control Statement for the year ended 31st March 2024.

It was resolved that the Internal Control Statement would be approved.

h) Appointment of an internal auditor.

It was resolved that Mrs C Whitaker would be appointed as internal auditor again this year.

i) To appoint a councillor to carry out internal control checks and complete the Internal Control Report

Andrew Ramsay agreed to check the Council's accounts.

j) **To approve the document 'Review the Effectiveness of the Internal Audit'**

It was resolved that the document would be approved.

k) **To review any contracts**

Lackford Parish Council has one contract for grass cutting with West Suffolk Council. The quote for 2024/25 has not been received yet. It was resolved that Lackford Parish Council would authorise Stan Green and the clerk to review the contract once it has been received and make the decision whether or not to accept the quote.

l) **Update on the Parish Council's insurance renewal in October 2023.**

The clerk tried to renew the Parish Council's insurance with Gallagher after the October meeting but their response time for emails was 5 days which was after the insurance ran out. The clerk tried to ring Gallagher but kept getting an automated message saying that all their advisers were busy and to email or leave a message. As the insurance was due to run out on 11th October, the clerk arranged alternative insurance with Community Action Suffolk at a cost of £445.94. (compared to the Gallagher quote of £444.43). The payment was authorised by Stan Green and the clerk under section 4.5 of the Council's Financial Regulations. It was resolved that the payment of **£445.94** would be approved (LGA 1972, s111).

m) **Update on the bank mandate change and the change of legal entity from a community account to a local government account.**

This is ongoing as Barclays would not action the mandate change while the legal entity status was being updated. This has now been completed and the account is registered as a local authority account. A new mandate form will need to be completed. Lackford Parish Council has made a formal complaint to Barclays as the whole process of updating the legal status has been time consuming and stressful.

As the service provided by Barclays falls well below the standard expected by Lackford Parish Council, it was resolved that the Council's current account would be moved to Lloyds Bank.

10. Planning

No issues were raised.

11. Highways/rights of way matters/tree or transport issues:

a) **Possible installation of a hard standing at the bus stop in Bury Road.**

Lackford Parish Council is still waiting for Suffolk County Council's specifications for a hard standing. The hedge near the bus stop needs cutting back before any work can be undertaken. Roland van Wijk agreed to speak to the owner to ask him to cut back the hedge.

b) **Reporting flooding to properties.**

Suffolk County Council is asking residents to report significant flooding to individual properties using the Highways Reporting Tool. If they do not have access to the internet they should call the SCC customer service number: 0345 606 6171.

Once a report has been submitted, officers will contact the resident to gather further information and prioritise those locations that meet the criteria for an official investigation (known as a Section 19 Investigation). It is anticipated that this initial contact will be made during the next week. The investigations will follow, but until the scale of the challenge is determined it is difficult to estimate how long it will take to complete this task. It is expected to take at least several weeks but could take months before all of the investigation reports are published.

12. To discuss the following village issues.

a) **Quote from TOP Garden Services for grass cutting.**

It was resolved that the quote would not be accepted as it was too expensive.

13. Correspondence.

a) **Email from the Voluntary Network requesting a donation.**

It was resolved that no donation would be made.

b) **Email from One Suffolk offering a gov.uk domain name and email addresses at a cost of £138 every two years.**

It was resolved that the offer would not be accepted due to the cost.

14. Any other business for noting or including on the next agenda on Monday 13th March 2023.

No issues were raised.

- 15. To resolve to exclude press and public under the Public Bodies (Admissions to Meetings) Act 1960: the public and press be excluded for the remainder of the meeting because of the likely disclosure of private and confidential information**
- a) To discuss staffing matters.**
- It was resolved that members of the press and public would be excluded to allow confidential staffing matters to be discussed.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 8.50pm.

Signed: Dated: