

Chedburgh Parish Council

MINUTES

of a Meeting held at the Erskine Centre, Chevington Road, Chedburgh on

Monday 6th December 2021 at 7.30pm

Present: Councillors: Sue Roberts (Chair), Jon Cardy, Mark Hill, Teresa Landymore and Margaret Rickard, Amy Savage.

In attendance: Maximilian Clay (Clerk to the Council);
2 Members of the public.

The Chair opened the meeting and welcomed everyone.

50. Apologies

Apologies were received from Cllr Chester and the Council resolved to approve the reason.

51. Declarations of Interest

- a. There were no declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary Interest in matters on this agenda.
- b. There were no declarations of Other Disclosable Interest in matters on this agenda.

52. Public Forum

A member of the public raised the issue of problematic run-off from the field to the immediate south of the entrance to King's Park. A significant stream of water is flowing across and along Queens Lane. There is no drainage ditch to attenuate the flow. On balance it was felt that the problem was the responsibility of the land owner and so the Clerk will establish ownership and take up the matter with the relevant party.

53. Tree Planting

Members discussed the proposal report and location maps, that had been circulated ahead of the meeting, setting out various options for tree planting.

The Council first discussed the Queen's Jubilee tree - a single Crab Apple to mark the platinum anniversary of the Queen's accession and paid for from the Jubilee fund. It was resolved to plant the tree on the small green triangle at the corner of Chevington Road and Lancaster Close as this is a central and very visible site, as well as being one of the few parts of the village with few trees. This resolution was caveated by the need to consider any adverse feedback from the public at the next meeting. Feedback would be invited by placing a notice on a stake on the proposed site of the tree, informing the public of the plan and welcoming feedback on the decision prior to the next meeting. Cllr Roberts undertook to place the sign.

Cllr Savage then introduced the proposal to plant more trees around the margins of the playing field under the Woodlands Trust initiatives for tree planting, as part of the Big Climate Fight Back and the Queen's Canopy. The trees under this scheme are saplings and come with canes and protection and in pre-determined packs of 15, 30, 105 or 420. There are deliveries in March and November. A condition of using the scheme is that the Council mounts a community planting event, which Cllr Savage pointed out would fit well with the Council's community engagement drive.

Following discussion that covered matters such as positioning, quantity and environmental impact, the Council resolved to apply for a pack of 105 saplings. It was noted that planting should avoid the area near the Erskine Centre, where it may be necessary to carry out drainage improvement works.

54. Community Engagement

The Chair introduced the item, reminding the Council that this item was aimed at finding ways of re-

connecting with the community and reminding people of the work that the Council does. A number of ideas were discussed:

Road Representatives - This is a way of engaging individuals more actively in the community, and through those individuals, disseminating information about the work of the Council and gaining feedback from residents. It was agreed that this would be discussed further, later in the year.

A Meet Your Councillors Event - possibly tied into the or the fête or to the Bacon Butty mornings and allowing people to chat, ask questions and get to know their councillors (although this would probably need to wait for a while because of Covid risks). It was agreed that engaging with all constituencies in the Parish should be a priority as soon as it is safe to do so and by the fête if it had not been possible before. This would be an opportunity for councillors to listen and also to flag up the many things that the Council has achieved.

The Chair asked for guidance and clarification on how councillors can engage, given limitations imposed by transparency rules. The Clerk explained that the limitations were only related to three main principles:

Decisions must be made only by the Council and the Council is only the Council when its members are gathered together at a formally constituted meeting. This means that that Councillors must avoid both taking decisions outside meetings or giving rise to the *perception* that they may be taking decisions outside meetings because doing either of those things would fall foul of the transparency rules contained in the Localism Act. This risk is far greater when Councillors are in discussion with each other outside meetings, rather than when they engage with the public but can become reality if a Councillor undertakes to do something or effect something when in conversation.

Councillors must not represent or be perceived to be representing the Council or its views without a specific mandate from a meeting of the Council to do so. Councillors only act as such when in formally constituted meetings.

Councillors must always be open to changing their minds in the course of debate, and must be seen to be so. Committing to support a particular decision or action before a resolution is voted on at a meeting is known as pre-determination and can give rise to legal censure. So, for example, saying "I'm minded to vote against this" is in order whereas saying "I will not support this" or "I will be voting against this" is not.

It was resolved:

- ◆ that engaging with all constituencies in the Parish should be a priority as soon as it is safe to do so and by the summer fête if it had not been possible before. This would be an opportunity for councillors to listen and also to flag up the many things that the Council has achieved;
- ◆ to hold a Spring litter-pick event on 19th March, subject to the equipment being available;
- ◆ that a formal on-line presence would not be helpful although councillors could (and do) post and disseminate information in a personal capacity;
- ◆ a regular contribution to the Suffolk Heights benefice magazine, with contact details, would be submitted and that this could be replicated on the website;
- ◆ a permanent notice on the Boards with the names of Councillors and their contact details and a pointer to the website would be posted;
- ◆ to seek to organise a WWII walking tour of the village on the 22nd February 2022;
- ◆ that councillors should ensure that people know that they are councillors when they attend events.

55. Ideas for the Future

The Annual Parish Meeting (APM) was discussed. It was noted that the APM is not a Council meeting but rather a meeting of the parish about the parish at which local organisations such as the Community Council, Little Teapots and Ickworth Primary School can report on the previous year. This

could also include a report on the Wildlife Village, a guest speaker from a related organisation and a report from the Chedburgh Marquis Community Hub. There was some enthusiasm for making the APM a free-standing event rather than, as has been the custom, a short pre-Council meeting on the same day as the Annual Meeting of the Council. The Clerk would propose dates at the next meeting.

56. Date of January 2022 Meeting

It was resolved that the meeting would now take place on 10th January 2022.

The meeting closed at 9.03 pm.

Signed as a true record by authority and on behalf of the Council:

..... Chair

..... Date