

# **Swilland and Witnesham grouped Parish Council**

Clerk: Alison Burrows

Email: [clerk@swillandandwitnesham-pc.gov.uk](mailto:clerk@swillandandwitnesham-pc.gov.uk) Phone: 07719 176917

## **Parish Council Meeting**

**Wednesday 23rd July 2025 at Witnesham Village Hall 7:30 p.m.**

### **Minutes**

**Cllrs Present** – Paul Sharples (Chair), Andy Dungey, Tim Burrows, David Roots, Richard Nicol, Susan Ross, Kim Shaw, Faye Ellis, Jo Pratt SC Cllr Elaine Bryce, one member of public

**59. Chair's welcome and Introduction** – Paul Sharples opened meeting and welcomed everyone.

**60. To receive apologies from Councillors not attending** - Apologies received from Jerry Hindle and Chris Collings.

**61. To Receive Councillors Declarations of Interest:** None received.

**62. To Co-opt new Councillor** – Chair welcomed Jo Pratt to the meeting, her co-option to the Parish Council was proposed by Paul Sharples and seconded by Andy Dungey and unanimously agreed - Jo fills a vacancy as a Councillor for Witnesham.

**63. To approve Minutes from the Annual General Meeting held on 21st May 2025 and the Extraordinary Parish Council meeting held on 25<sup>th</sup> June 2025** – all agreed with minutes from both meetings – signed by Chair.

**64. Questions or comments on Reports from SC Cllr Elaine Bryce & ESC Cllr Dan Clery** – Both reports circulated prior to the meeting. SC Cllr Bryce spoke about devolution, that SCC recommends 'one Suffolk' unitary council. Public Consultation on the matter is open until 4<sup>th</sup> August – Clerk to circulate link. She also advised that Otley college has put in application for HGV Training facilities at the college, max 6 movements each day, 3 vehicles. Any breach of this would lead to enforcement action.

**Northern bypass** – SC Cllr Bryce advised that she is still heavily opposing a Northern Bypass. The latest 'news articles' are raising the expectations of those in favour of a Northern Bypass and crushing local morale. This will be reviewed as part of a suite of changes. Currently there is no known route and no funding – she advised to be ready to reinvigorate the campaign if needed.

Both Richard Nicol and Paul Sharples commended SC Cllr Bryce for standing up to her party, a Northern Bypass would only appease the

situation for 2 to 3 years. A second Orwell Bridge should be considered as an alternative.

**65. The current Financial Situation – Clerk's report** – report circulated prior to the meeting.

Account balances:

**Unity Trust Bank** account balance as at 30/06/2025 £21,237.82

**Suffolk B/Soc** account balance as at 01/07/2025 £88,449.24, this represents our CIL funds plus B/Soc interest of £322.23

**Bank statement and B/Soc book to be signed by a Councillor**

Bank Statement and Suffolk Building Society passbook signed by Andy Dungey to confirm balances reported.

Since then £2,107.84 has been received from UKPN for the Lower Rec disposal of land, which was the balance outstanding and the funds for the newspaper public notice which James Hall was able to claim back for us, his fees have been paid for by UKPN.

We have also transferred £8,923.40 from our account with Suffolk B/Soc to Unity Trust Bank which is the remainder of our reserve funds.

I have received confirmation that the grant/funds £2,000 from SC Cllr Elaine Bryce towards the new Bus Shelter should be received into the PC account in the next 5-10 days.

**66. To approve the following payments (including VAT if applicable):**

Ref		amount
a	Admin AJB May 2025	459.60
b	HMRC Employer contributions	133.42
c	Admin AJB June 2025	459.80
d	HMRC Employer contributions	415.52
e	Heelis & Lodge (auditors)	260.00
f	SAVID Donation 2024	£50.00
g	Bank Charges June 2025	£6.00
h	Bank Charges July 2025	£6.00
I	Information Commissioners Office	£47.00
J	SCC Bus Shelter Burwash	£5,552.00

Approval proposed by Richard Nicol and seconded by Andy Dungey. Proposal unanimously agreed.

**67. S19 Flood investigation Report Update** – Susan Ross reported that Parish Council disappointed that no dedicated person to work with has been allocated. SC Cllr Bryce will see if a resource is available, however currently there is a backlog of 50 S19 reports. Funds have been requested from the Government for additional resources to deal with S19 reports.

**68. Parking problems at the School** – Reported parking problems at the school whilst WASPS event, parents evening, also pub parking causing local residents problems. David Roots suggested we could look at the field opposite to the school for extra parking. Maybe rent or purchase? Kim Shaw agreed to assist David Roots in confirming the owner's contact

details – Clerk to write to owner enquiring of the possibility that the field be available for acquisition for permanent parking or loan for temporary parking if required.

**69. Village Hall update** – Richard Nicol attended the last VH Management meeting as PC representative; he reported that the current situation is:

**Financials** - The loss in the last financial year was £2.9k, largely accounted for by a 40% rise in electricity costs. The projected loss this year is £2.2k despite renegotiation of the electricity supply contract - draft budget prepared with VH treasurer and circulated prior to PC meeting. Balance in the bank account is £3.8k

**Conclusion** - Without corrective action the VH could be insolvent within 18 months.

**Car Park** - No substantial plans for the Car Park, enquiries underway for further gravel/chippings replacement. Complaints continue about its current state and by some residents regarding overflow parking along Church Lane

**Floor issues** - A report was obtained from Maljon in January 2025, identifying a possible water ingress from outside, this resulted in part of the area (gulleys, drains, vegetation etc) around the outside wall being cleared. The insurers advised they would not cover the floor repair as due to damp in January No progress since. They had hoped to take advantage of current ESC Village Hall Repair fund for floor repair, but the closing date is mid-September, lack of progress on quotes etc. makes this now ambitious. The current maple floor cannot be sanded again; it was installed for 'dancing' and is probably becoming no longer fit for purpose.

**General Maintenance & Management** - There's currently no caretaker, despite advertising twice. The expectations on the current dedicated management team are unreasonable, more involvement of the major users and the community is needed.

**Actions - Priority has to be –**

Bringing finances into balance and ensuring long term viability of the Hall. A review of hall hires fees. Examine power consumption, Heating System in particular to identify energy reduction opportunities both short and long term. Clarify options for the floor and costs - repair or replace? Identify longer term plan for the Car Park.

**Proposal to PC for July 25 meeting** - Several of the above will need significant Capital expenditure some of which may be urgent - plus there are a number of grant opportunities, but all require a degree of matched funding and significant effort in the application process.

**Richard Nicol Proposed –**

- Firstly, in line with agreed CIL strategy, up to £10,000 from CIL funds be made available immediately for Village Hall capital expenditure to enable urgent work and matched funding commitments to any grant applications. Its application and sign-off are delegated to Finance

Committee. An update on progress will be provided and proposals for further action will be presented to the September PC meeting.

- Where possible grant applications and orders should be placed by the PC as the VH is not VAT registered.
- Secondly, the PC clarifies its responsibilities in the event of the Village Hall Charity becoming insolvent.
- More members needed for the VHMC, possibly other hall users to assist plus PC, plan to bring in a professional for a long-term plan. Funding to be available.

Seconded by Andy Dungey – the two-part proposal was unanimously agreed.

## **70. Westerfield Road Closure –**

SC Cllr Bryce advised that Highways have no power to stop roadworks, but they have negotiated a shorter time period - 17 weeks disruption with working longer hours. The Ipswich Borough Council approved the Bellway planning application; Highways cannot stop them connecting to utilities and services.

## **71. Witnesham WASPS proposed sign and Site –** Details circulated prior to the meeting. All Cllrs agreed, no objections to the proposed sign and its site.

## **72. Stop the Quarry update -** The formal planning application has now been submitted and expected to be open for comment this week. The PC will be responding through the Planning & Property Committee, although it has not been formally invited to comment. There will also be a call for public donations for the campaign, but donations from PCs may still be required. Fynn Valley Golf Club to hold public meeting for all villages, in addition to the press launch this week. 'Stop the Quarry' are arranging to employ a planning consultant.

It is planned to hold a meeting during the week before August bank holiday at the Village Hall for our PC and members of the public.

**Proposal by Richard Nicol -** In line with earlier agreement in principle and in accordance with the allocation in the 2025-2026 budget, if requested by the 'Stop the Quarry project' that PC authorises the Clerk to transfer £1000 after approval from Chair of Finance agreement and in accordance with Sec 137 of The Local Government Act.

Seconded by Tim Burrows – unanimously agreed.

**SCCllr Bryce** reported that the planning application is in and now validated, she has raised her concerns, also around timing of the application – school holidays, fewer residents around. Cllrs Matt Hicks and Chris Chambers both support her opposition proposal as inappropriate. There is an extension to the consultation period – extra two weeks, a total of 45 days. She advised that the key way to oppose is the weight of objections, everyone to submit one, each one different, STQ campaign Victoria and Anwar have excellent guidance on website. Cllr Bryce will be attending the press launch on 24<sup>th</sup> July Fynn Valley Golf Club. The best way to comment/oppose the application is by way of highways and impact on villages. Apart from TRU group HGVs there will also be 3<sup>rd</sup> party HGVs

collecting product, they will probably be traveling any route causing disruption to villages. SCC Key decision is expected to probably be made in Feb 2026.

### **73. Parish Council Matters:**

- **Gov.UK email addresses** – Clerk to arrange for new email address for Jo Pratt. All other Cllrs to start using gov.uk emails, Andy Dungey and Paul Sharples offered to assist with set up.

- **Bus shelters ownership** – The installation of the three new bus shelters is now complete, apart from clearance of remaining brick pile at the Recreation Ground (by PC) and installation of revised 'Bus Stop' signs with names of the location (by SCC).

As previously agreed, SCC funded two shelters and the PC the third using grants from ESC and SCC councillors. The second grant of £1500 from ESC may not be formally agreed. If all agreed, the cost to the PC will be completely covered, if not the shortfall will be covered by the CIL budget. Currently two of the new bus shelters are the property of SCC, one the PC (Burwash). SCC have offered to take on ownership and maintenance responsibility for PC one. This is logical and removes any PC liability for repairs in the future. Thanks to Tim, David and Richard for removal of existing bus shelters.

**Proposal by Richard Nicol** - PC agrees to transfer ownership of the new Burwash Bus Shelter to SCC.

Seconded by Tim Burrows. Unanimously agreed. Clerk to contact SCC to arrange transfer of ownership.

- **Parish Council Website** - Clerk reported costings for a new PC website. **Suffolk Cloud** - £300 set up fee, £120 annual hosting fee, £70 1 hr training for 2 people.

**Cuttlefish** - £600 set up fee, £400 annual hosting fee

**Existing provider** - £50 annual hosting fee

All agreed to move forward with a new updated website hosted by Suffolk Cloud.

Proposed by Andy Dungey, Seconded by Richard Nicol. Clerk to contact Suffolk Cloud.

- **Parish Noticeboards** – agreed to remove the one at Weyland Rd for Health and Safety, wooden posts are rotten and glass panes drop from door. Clerk to arrange removal and investigate replacement costs.

- **Community Emergency Plan** – Susan Ross reported that the issue is if we create one it takes commitment and people available to assist. Could be best to centralise community effort. Jo Pratt to assist with drawing up an approach and draft plan. Cautious with regard to GDPR if personal details are shared. Add to next meeting agenda.

- **Allotments Complaint** - Apart from 3 allotments (1,7 & 8) the remainder are in a poor condition, another allotment holder (3 & 4) is struggling with weeds overgrowing from the neighbouring plots. The growth of some of brambles is such that it is unlikely anybody would take them on. Also the trees along one boundary overhang too far.

Before enacting the proposal below we could send it to all allotment holders and invite them to a meeting to discuss.

**Proposal by Richard Nicol** - Allotment holders (2,5,6,7,10,12,13) should have their holder's agreement terminated with 3 months' notice due to lack of adherence to conditions. No refunds should be made.

- The owner of the overhanging trees should be formally requested to cut them back, if not undertaken a contractor employed and the owner invoiced accordingly.
- Quotes from a contractor to be obtained to clear and turn-over the remaining plots, apart from the established fruit trees present on one allotment
- Re-advertise after clearing.
- If there is no demand PC should re-visit and consider other uses for the site
- (There may be grant support available for the PC costs)

All agreed with proposal - Clerk to get quotes, write to allotment holders. Review at next meeting.

#### **74. Councillor issues to be brought to the attention of the Parish Council**

Each Councillor is requested to use this opportunity to report minor matters of information not included elsewhere on the agenda and to raise items for future agendas. **Councillors are respectfully reminded that this is not an opportunity for debate or decision-making.**

Parish Council wishes to formally thank Elaine Bryce and Dan Clary for their donations to fund the new Bus Shelter at Burwash.

Paul Sharples and David Roots suggested forming a working party to clear the footpath up Juby's Hill, as Highways have not helped in response to reporting the overgrown vegetation and soil on the footpath.

Andy Dungey and Tim Burrows have met with an architect for a scoping exercise regarding the playing field and will report back at the September PC meeting.

**Meeting closed at 9.15pm**