

THE FRECKENHAM ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

held on Thursday 1st June 2023 at 7.00pm at Freckenham Village Hall

Present: Chairman of the Parish Councillors G Tucker and T Smith, District Cllr. D Taylor Chairman of the Neighbourhood Plan Group Nick Woolley, Secretary of the Village Hall committee Jane Leitch, District Cllr. D Taylor, clerk to the Parish Council Jadi Coe and nine members of the public.

APM/23/01 Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Cllr F McCoig, Cllr P Brooks and County Cllr L Stanbury and one resident

APM/23/02 Update on the Neighbourhood Plan by Mr Nicholas Woolley

- The Freckenham Neighbourhood Plan Group was set up by the Freckenham Parish Council in early 2018 and held its first meeting on 7 March. The Group has had a number of changes over the last five years; its members are currently Sue Cornell, Jacqui Burke, Campbell Pearson, Cllr Gary Tucker, myself as Chair and our valuable, expert planning advisor, Ian Poole.
- Sue Cornell, then Cllr, attended her first meeting as Parish Council Chair, just over a year ago; she was hugely supportive and when necessary, spoke with necessary firmness to the Council on behalf of the Parish. For that and her other regular work for our Group, whilst Council Chair, I am most grateful. I now, much look forward to our Parish Council, once again becoming quorate, with a newly elected Chair, so that all vital Parish work can be implemented, including very shortly, I hope, being able to approve the draft Freckenham Neighbourhood Plan.
- Ian Poole from Ipswich but born and raised in Mildenhall, as mentioned, is our vital mentor and specialist Planning consultant, who joined us for his first operational meeting on 14 January 2019. His company, Places4People is now advising a huge number of villages in the East of England with their Neighbourhood Plans; in West Suffolk alone he is advising seven of them; bringing with him 40 years' experience in the preparation of local plans, he has become a great expert in this work. Jadi Coe continues as our invaluable Hon Secretary.
- In order to take the plan forward, Government Funding was essential. David Wheeler, as Chair of our Parish Council, at the start, did a great job in obtaining this on many occasions from the Government's funding body, Locality. Thus far, the whole operation has not cost the Parish any material amount.
- 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 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 (WSC), again to ensure conformity with their Local Plan Process.
- Funded by Locality, firstly, a comprehensive Landscape Appraisal of the Parish was undertaken by an independent specialist consultant. Secondly, all potential development sites submitted, following a call for sites and also those previously submitted to WSC, were appraised by a specialist planning consultancy. Thirdly, 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 2020.
- However, there were real challenges as to the viability of the sites, particularly since all three were capable of being planned for more than the likely number required in the Current Local Plan period ending in around 2040. We therefore had to obtain yet further government funding and then commission the Viability Study.
- Our most recent Drop-In Event took place on 2 July 2022 to report on the final sites; these also included a fourth site, then favoured by the WSC Planners and formed part of their ongoing Consultation Draft Local Plan. It was on this last point that Cllr Sue Cornell and I spoke very firmly, as we and others in the village were perturbed that having spent now four years on this work, to reach a short-list of three sites, without any consultation with us or mention of their intent at any of our meetings, the WSC should propose an alternative site, already deemed unsuitable by both our independent consultants and the Freckenham community.
- Fortunately, at the Drop-in Event, the Freckenham Community chose their top three sites, excluding the WSC proposed site. After several more Group meetings with Ian Poole (our Planner), we were able to sign off Representations from both the Parish Council and our Neighbourhood Plan Group (NPG) requesting that WSC remove their proposed site (in fact no longer available for development in the foreseeable future). All this

and without submitting a chosen site. In the light of the extensive evidence on suitability from the many reports undertaken for the NPG, we set out the pros and cons of the top two sites chosen respectively by WSC and the Freckenham Community. We will not know until later in the year what the next draft of the Local Plan will include for Freckenham and if the Parish Council or residents do not like what is in their Plan then objections must be made to WSC not the Parish Council or the Neighbourhood Pan Group.

- All in all, since the inception of your Neighbourhood Plan Group, we have met some thirty-eight times, initially face-to-face, but since the 2020 March lockdown, usually on Zoom.
- Looking ahead with our specialist planner, Ian Poole, the Plan will follow the following stages:
 - Complete Plan and obtain Parish Council Approval for at least a six week Public Consultation, starting hopefully in the summer. Then final review of comments, and revision to finalise our Plan.
 - After further Parish Council Approval, formal submission of our Plan to West Suffolk Council in Autumn 2023.
 - WSC will consult on the Plan for at least six weeks - Autumn 2023.
 - Our Plan will then go for examination by an Independent Examiner. This usually takes around six weeks Winter 2023/24.
 - Assuming the Examination is successful, the Final Freckenham Neighbourhood Plan will potentially go to the Freckenham Parish Referendum in March/April 2024.
- It must be emphasised that it is impossible to pin down exact dates due to the nature of the process. Once the Plan has been submitted to West Suffolk it will typically take 5-6 months to get to the Parish Referendum.

A resident asked whether there was any update in regard to the village classification, the village currently being a type B village but should be a type A. There has been no update from West Suffolk Council however a resident has got Matt Hancock to help resolve the issue by making contact and asking him to contact West Suffolk Council.

APM/23/03 Reports from County and District Councillors

County Cllr L Stanbury gave his apologies.

District Cllr D Taylor gave the following report:

- Most of my time since the last meeting has been getting to grips with how the council operates and making contact with officers. In addition, I have taken on the role of Portfolio holder for WSC and I will be working with officers of the council to oversee Car Parking, CCTV, Cemeteries, Fleet Management, Grounds Maintenance, Land Drainage, Markets, Operations, Public Conveniences, Refuse & Recycling, Street Scene and Tourism Operations. I met with Mark Walsh, the Director responsible for Operations on 1st June.
- Planning Development - I attended training for this on 31st May and following on from this, I have a better placed to comment on the planning issues within the village.
- Sunnica - I have nothing to report on Sunnica from a District level at present, but I intend to become more involved with this over the next few months.
- Council Make Up - as an Independent, it is my intension to work with anyone to achieve the best outcomes for my parishes with this as a consideration, there have been some areas we feel we can make a difference, working with Liberal, Green and Labour councillors'.
- Speeding & Traffic Congestion - this has been registered with me from residents of Worlington & Barton Mills and the number of vehicles going through Worlington each month together with the speeds, are staggering. It is my hope and intension to form a working group throughout the ward to put pressure on the county to introduce traffic calming
- Mildenhall Hub - if you've not visited it yet, I really do recommend taking a look.
- Western Way Project - this has been highlighted as a project that warrants a review as to the cost benefit of building a £130 million complex there.
- It is my aim to provide the Parish with a working report and to conclude, relevant information. I will welcome any feedback as to layout content or presentation and distribution.
- In conclusion, please accept my apology for a brief report and I hope to be able to grow the content over the coming weeks and months

APM/23/04 Update on Community Speedwatch

The speed watch teams have not been out recently due to volunteers having other commitments. The issues of speeding and prevention measures was discussed. It was clarified that data must be collected as evidence of speeding issues to help gain backing for vehicle calming measures. Calming measures discussed included 40mph buffer zones and Speed Indicator Devices. It was agreed the clerk would forward results of the traffic survey carried out last year to all councillors.

APM/23/05 Report covering the Recreation field

A resident has kindly cut the field as the lawn mower was out of action. Cllr T Smith has agreed to take on all the works going forward. Storage of the mower to be agreed at the next parish council meeting. Cllr G Tucker confirmed he requires a generator in order to install the memorial bench.

APM/23/06 Report on Sunnica proposal

John Leitch gave the following report:

The Sunnica Examination closed on the 28th March 2023 and the Examining Authority now has a period of three months to write its report and make a recommendation which must be completed by 28th June 2023.

The completed document will be submitted to The Secretary of State who will in turn have three months to make a decision on the Sunnica Proposal.

It is interesting to note that during the preliminary stages of the Sunnica Proposal both the Examining Authority and The Secretary of State were allowed 6 months to make their respective Reports and decision.

I think it is important at this Annual Parish Council Meeting to acknowledge the work done by the Parish Councils, Say No To Sunnica Action Group and the Volunteers and their Representatives.

The Parish Councils who acted with due diligence on behalf of their villagers formed an Alliance of Parish Councils affected by the Sunnica proposal. This Alliance working alongside District and County Councils was pivotal in co ordinating information and Specialists to investigate the risks posed from this poorly presented consultation.

The formation of the Say No To Sunnica Action Group was the backbone to the opposition of the Sunnica proposal. The Action Group provided the platform whereby information was gathered and distributed about changes at every level to the Development Consent Order, Open Floor Meetings, Specific Issue Hearings, Notification and recording of hearings, Site Inspections their listings of events was endless.

Finally, the objection to the Sunnica Proposal could not have happened without the Volunteers and the appointed Representatives who have worked tirelessly to protect the affected communities from the real threat of harm that this scheme presented. Every Parish Council, every volunteer and every individual has delivered or been represented when called upon to deliver their presentation, the support has been phenomenal.

In Conclusion, whatever the outcome, the principal at stake was the acknowledgement that future generations need to be protected from such a potentially destructive project which does not have its roots in Green Energy.

APM/23/07 Update on Village Hall by Mrs Jane Leitch

Jane Leitch gave the following report:

2022 was a more positive year with new volunteers, and film nights restarting, proving as popular as they were pre-covid. Many thanks to the Film Night Group of Mel Neal, Shelby Ford (Barleycorn Deli), Diana Patrick (Coffee Caravan), Carol & Darrel Cooper. We had a touring theatre group book the hall so we had no financial risk and benefitted from the bar and raffle takings. They must have been happy as they have booked to return on 9th September 2023 with a new show. Mildenhall Museum talk was well attended and they were happy with some new photos of old Freckenham to add to their collection. The bingo organised by Simon & Amanda Cock with caller Gary Tucker have been very popular as we are finding out as the most frequent question is when is the next bingo session. Quiz Nights with a professional quiz master again organised by Simon & Amanda are proving popular and both are good income and footfall events for the hall. They also organised and co-ordinated a villager questionnaire the result of which we have been working on, just a Christmas Fayre team of organisers to find!

The monthly Farmers Market with some Crafts carries on 8 years since it started, some stallholders are still with us from those early days. Sometimes there are hiccups with stalls not attending but most people say it is actually the community social aspect which is appreciated and a very important part of the market, along with the donated amazing cakes on the refreshments.

Tricia Audus still continues with book-keeping, cleaning and now sorts out the refreshment team volunteers for the Farmers Market.

Very pleased that Ali Mansfield having joined the VHC is now a trustee and treasurer, along with being involved with the farmers markets.

We are still very light on committee members and trustees. But again, I see glimmers of perhaps some people joining. Jenny Garnett has joined the committee at the VH AGM in Ma. The helpers on the day/evening are stalwarts but it would be good to have people prepared to be more involved with the sourcing and running of the extra events.

Weekly events have been our bread & butter for funds, as well as a vital weekly community activity. We did get the Under 5's up and running last August with an ex-villager Christine (Tina) Langley, along with a new Mum and her own Mum but she's back at work. Then later a new villager and Mum to be Megan Montgomery but at present they are unable to commit to help and I am still trying to get some new regular volunteers for this. Karate is down to one session a week due to work commitments. Circuits tutor Michelle, due to an epileptic seizure, has been told to stop driving immediately. We picked her up so she could take her class and then explain her transport problem. It is a work in progress but we are finding volunteers to enable Michelle to continue the classes albeit 30 minutes earlier. Michelle has been overwhelmed with the support and determination of the group wanting the weekly class to continue. We have a new activity Pound Unplugged as the tutor wanted another venue to go with her other villages of Red Lodge & Beck Row.

Fit Villages has confirmed there is funding if anyone has an activity they would like at the hall and know of 10 + people potentially interested too. We even have some carpet bowls mats that have been sitting in the cupboard for a long time, again it needs people willing to be involved as the mats are heavy so it needs some younger, stronger folk to help out. We will get a mat out on Sunday 3rd September whilst attendees do the walk at Cavenham Heath as they then come back to the VH for refreshments and perhaps try their hand at bowls.

This goes with the planned talk on Friday 14th July by Natural England on Cavenham Heath, the details and posters are hot off the press.

Live theatre and music events, are still not at pre-covid levels though we are hopeful. We had a taster of a new show by Beverley Bishop with discussion afterwards. Winter Wilson, a live folk band, are booked for Friday 13th October with the hall receiving a percentage ticket sales arrangement.

I am very grateful for the support I still get from Rodney Gillington for still doing the village hall pages on the village website as it will be 8 years since they moved out the village. A new volunteer is needed.

Parties for private bookings are picking up but mainly just for children. We had two big birthday parties but no wedding anniversary celebration booked at the hall during 2022/23.

The gardener that should have started didn't so our new gardener Samantha Jayne has an uphill struggle with this and our decision on No Mow May with the grass.

Finally, I am extremely grateful to those I have not personally mentioned who continue to help with the village hall but I really am so grateful that husband John puts up and helps with VH duties

Jane gave her thanks to Sue Cornell for being Parish Council Chairman and all the hard work she done, and to her sons who have kindly cut the recreational field at no charge for many years.

APM/23/08 Report from Shores Charity

Sue Cornell, trustee for the charity reported the following (read by the clerk):

It is another successful year of renting the allotments with only 1 currently vacant.

Mr John Hadley has been instrumental in getting the water pump correctly installed and hopefully it will not be too long before we will all be able to use it. The company who originally installed it, is no longer in business, it has now been discovered that it was not drilled down as far as it should have been.

The charity are looking for two more trustees.

The trustees usually meet twice a year unless any immediate problems need to be discussed.

APM/23/09 Approve minutes of the last Annual Parish Meeting held on 16th May 2022

It was resolved to approve the minutes of the meeting held on 16th May 2022, the minutes were signed by Cllr G Tucker.

APM/23/10 Matters arising from the last meeting

None

APM/23/11 Report from the Parish Council

Cllr G Tucker gave the following report:

Thank you to the councillors who served throughout the year but have since left office: Christina, Mick and Sue. Thank you to Fergus who joined during the year and to the new members that come forward at the recent elections

Thank you to Brian Harvey who served as District Councillor for many years and welcome to Cllr David Taylor. The clerk now posts updates and important news on Facebook as agreed by the council.

The memorial bench for David is ready to be installed, thank you to Brian Harvey and Cllr Lance Stanbury who helped fund this from their locality budgets.

The repairs to Chippenham Road wall has been carried out but it is to a poor standard. The council are still looking at getting resolved.

In 2022 the Parish Council along with volunteers held a successful event celebrating the Queens Jubilee. Children of the village received a commemorative mug, there was dancing, and a fun day on the field with a BBQ.

Thank you to John Leitch who continues to carry out the monthly checks on the defibrillator.

I want more residents to attend Parish Council meetings going forward even if it is just once or twice a year.

APM/23/12 Parish Council Accounts

The Parish Council clerk gave a report on the Parish Councils accounts:

Income in the year totalled £16,006, the majority of this being the precept. £150 was received from advertising in the Parish Pump and £846 from grants. Locality rants were received to help fund the costs of the Queens Jubilee celebrations and the memorial bench for David Wheeler.

Expenditure in the year totalled £18,138. The largest expenses being Groundworks grant repayment (unspent grant money received in regard to the Neighbourhood Plan), clerks' salary, insurance, Sunnica (to help towards the cost of a landscape consultant) and maintenance work in the play park which took place April 2022.

The accounts and Annual Governance Annual Return were approved at the last Parish Council meeting and have been audited by auditor Anthony Preece. As the income and expenditure does not exceed £25,000 no external audit is required but all relevant documents have been passed onto the external auditors to confirm exemption.

APM/23/13 Any Other Business

A resident reported that a poster has been put on lampposts in the village detailing a car rally is to come through the village.

A resident reported that poisonous hemlock was growing on the footpath at Elms Road and this has now been cut down.

A resident reported that the narrow strip on the circular walk is very overgrown. This is too narrow for a ride on and residents in the past have cut this although it is SCC's responsibility.

The meeting closed at 8:00pm

G Tucker, Vice-Chairman of Freckenham Parish Council