

Ilketshall St. Andrew Parish Council

Minutes of the meeting of 6 February 2023, 8.00 pm, held via Zoom.

1. **Welcome.**

The Chair of the Parish Council (Gerald Godfrey) welcomed those present at the meeting, which included all 6 Parish Councillors (Jacqui Harrison (JH), Rod Apps (RA), Colin Ward (CW), Penny Ward (PW) and Lea Ingham (LI). Members of the public present included Chris Roberts, Anne Law, Philip Green, Alison Winters, Jon Gardner, Lesley Bonner, Ian Braid, Hazel Braid & Simon Wales.

2. **Apologies for absence.**

There were no apologies for absence.

3. **Minutes from the last meeting.**

The Minutes of the meeting of the meeting of 12 December 2022 were accepted and will be signed by the Chair at a later date.

4. **Matters Arising from the Minutes of the meeting of 12 December 2022, and Parish Clerk's update.**

1. [Item 4.1 of December Minutes refers] Rod Apps reported that "Wave 4" of the Quiet Lanes project had now been completed, and therefore School Road is now designated as a Quiet Lane. RA undertook to make arrangements to collect the signs for the Wave 3 completions (Clarkes Lane and Banters Lane) along with those for School Road, and then instal them. At that point, the project will then be complete.
2. [Item 4.2 of December Minutes refers] Rod Apps reported that the Thermal Imaging camera loaned to the Parish Council over the Christmas/New Year period did not work, and that the Parish Council has now been loaned a free-standing one. RA will endeavour to take images for those parishioners who have responded to the invitation, subject to weather conditions, before the camera is due to be returned.
3. [Item 4.3 of December Minutes refers] The Parish Council [Item 9 of December 2023 had agreed to revisit the issue of the vacant Methodist Chapel on Tooks Common Lane. The Chapel had apparently been sold again on 7th September, but there was no evidence of any work having been undertaken on the building. The Parish Council therefore agreed that it should refer the building again to Suffolk County Council for it to take action under its long-term empty property policy, and Rod Apps undertook to do this.
[Action: RA]
4. [Item 5 of December Minutes refers] The Parish Council agreed at its December meeting to revisit the issue of additional seating near, but outside, the Play Area, if Councillors had been able to undertake investigations into positioning, design, etc. Councillors had **not** had time to undertake these investigations, and therefore the issue was deferred until the next meeting.

5. [Item 9 of December 2023 Minutes refers] Gerald Godfrey noted that he had not had time to make a full evaluation of the 'train' at the Play Area and to investigate the possibilities, but undertook to try to report back at the next meeting.

[Action: GG]

6. [Item 12, AOB refers] Additional biodigester plant at Ellough. Rod Apps noted that the planning application appears **not** to have been approved yet, and is subject to additional investigation. Rod Apps also noted that he had spoken to the Town Clerk for Beccles about it, who had attended a meeting with Peter Aldous about it, who asked why Ringsfield & Weston, and Ilketshall St. Andrew, had not been invited. Rod Apps understood that Peter Aldous will be seeking to get involvement of the two parishes at future meetings regarding the proposal. [Post meeting information; it appears that it is for Suffolk County Council to make the planning decision (rather than East Suffolk Planning), and East Suffolk Planning made a strong objection to the planning application at the end of January 2023.]

7. [Item 12, AOB refers] Gerald Godfrey undertook to make further investigations regarding the maintenance checks on the defibrillator at the Village Hall, and also access to the code for the machine. He also noted that Suffolk Air Ambulance would be prepared to come to the village in order to provide additional training to residents in the village on the use of the defibrillator and first aid training more generally.

[Action: GG]

Rod Apps undertook to contact the Village Hall Committee to get them to discuss/clarify whether it is the Village Hall Committee that owns and is responsible for the maintenance of the defibrillator, or whether it is the Parish Council. Rod Apps noted that the defibrillator is included in the insurance policy for the *Village Hall*, and not the Parish Council.

[Action: RA]

5. Parish Clerk appointment.

Rod Apps noted that the closing date for applications for the post of Parish Clerk was 6th February, and that one application had been received, from Tina Newby, who is an experienced Parish Clerk for other parishes within the area.

It was noted that as the only applicant, there would not need to be a selection process, but that the Parish Council would need to go through the formalities. Rod Apps undertook to sort out what formalities were involved, and to try to negotiate those via email correspondence with the rest of the Parish Council.

The Parish Council agreed to leave the negotiation of a starting date with Rod Apps. Rod Apps had previously indicated that he would be standing down at the time of the local elections in May at the latest, but that an earlier starting date would make the handover smoother.

[Action: RA]

6. Village Hall

Rod Apps noted that he had not received any Minutes of the Village Hall Committee since the last meeting of the Parish Council, but presumed that there will have been some meetings, and will therefore chase up.

[Action: RA]

With respect to the skips issue, Rod Apps explained that the Village Hall Committee had a booking for a boules competition in July, and would therefore need to have the skips removed by that time. They had contacted David Pipe for a quote for removing the contents of the skips, so that B&B could then take away the empty skips, and received a figure of £3,060. That figure would represent around £1,000 less than what B&B would charge, but still represents a sizeable amount of money.

Rod Apps noted that he had managed to get in touch with an individual from Environmental Protection eventually, and reported that from an Environmental Protection perspective, the contents of the skips was a low-level hazard, and provided that there was a good tarpaulin covering it, **plus** a fence to deter people from disturbing contents, that would be sufficient. The individual from Environmental Protection also suggested that it would be worth getting a quote from Norse for the removal of the skip contents, and Rod Apps had passed that suggestion on to the Village Hall Committee. Anne Law reported that the Village Hall Committee **had** now received a quote from Norse, and that the figure was virtually the same as that from B&B.

Rod Apps noted that his understanding was that the Village Hall Committee **does** have £3,000 to pay for the removal of the asbestos – but would really like to use that money to sort out the soffits at the Village Hall, which require ventilation. Anne Law noted that it would be discussed at the next meeting of the Village Hall Committee, but thought it likely that dealing with the soffits would be the preferred alternative.

7. Speeding/HGV issue on Top Road.

Colin Ward reported that he had not managed to be in touch with the relevant individual from Ringsfield in order to be able to get information regarding the efficacy of the road paintings in that village, but would endeavour to obtain the information and to report at the next meeting of the Parish Council. Statistics from the latest positioning of the camera should also be available for that meeting.

Rod Apps undertook to contact Tony Brown regarding the possibility of installing additional “30” signs at various locations on Top Road, which would necessitate alternative fixings to those already in use on wheelie bins.

[Action: RA]

8. Condition of Banters Lane road surface.

Jon Gardner noted that as of 6th February, there were three notable areas of deterioration of the road surface on Banters Lane, particularly in relation to the side of the road disappearing into the ditch.

Rod Apps noted that there is a facility on the Suffolk Highways website to report potholes and similar problems with the road surface, and suggested that Jon Gardner use that facility in addition to reporting by the Parish Council.

Rod Apps undertook to also report the issue to Suffolk Highways

[Action: RA]

9. Condition of Becks Green Lane road surface.

Gerald Godfrey reported that a number of parishioners had expressed concern about the state of Becks Green Lane, down as far as the cottages. Use of the road by heavy vehicles has resulted in the road becoming very cambered (and inaccessible to low-slung cars). Gerald Godfrey noted that he had been told that tankers of waste from the Ellough biodigester plant had been offloading the waste into the pit on the right of the road a little way down Becks Green Lane.

Rod Apps commented that there were several related issues; the state of the road surface, the use of the road as far as the pit by a succession of heavy vehicles, and whether it was the case that effluent from the Ellough biodigester plant was now being deposited at the pit on Becks Green Lane. The first issue could be dealt with by informing Suffolk Highways, but the other two related issues was less straightforward.

Lea Ingham questioned whether planning permission was required for the use of the pit in this way.

Gerald Godfrey suggested that a site visit from Suffolk Highways was needed in order to provide an assessment of the interrelated issues.

Colin Ward noted that there may well be environmental licensing issues regarding the deposit of slurry onto land.

Rod Apps undertook to communicate with Suffolk Highways.

[Action: RA]

10. Planning Applications

1. DC/23/0245/FUL. Caldbeck, Top Road. Details of this planning application had been circulated previously to members of the Parish Council. Ian Braid outlined the features of the proposed development at the property, and the Parish Council noted that it was a small project that would not be seen at all from Top Road or by neighbours. The Parish Council concluded that it had no reason to object to the planning application, and requested Rod Apps to make the appropriate response to East Suffolk Planning.

[Action: RA]

2. DC/22/4175/FUL Parkers Poultry Farm. It was noted that it appears the planning application was retrospective, in that it was for existing propane gas storage tanks at the farm. On that basis, there was little reason for the Parish Council to object. However, the planning application suggested that the access to the site was from the A143 directly, and not via Top Road. Rod Apps noted that Andy Spinks, Cathryn Spinks and Tony Brown from Top Road had submitted objections to the planning application on the basis of the access to the farm. Rod Apps reported that he had also submitted comments, saying that the Parish Council would only support the Planning Application if the applicant confirmed that all vehicles would enter and exit the site via the route identified on the map submitted with the planning application – that is, direct from the A143 past Ilketshall Hall, and **not** via Top Road.

11. Finance

1. Rod Apps noted that the precept request for £7,400 was submitted, in line with Minute 8.1 of the meeting of 12th December 2022. Payment of the sum should be received in April 2023.
2. Rod Apps reported that the bank balances as at 27 January 2023 held by the Parish Council were:

Community account:	£2,515.54
Business Premium a/c 1	£912.00
Business Premium a/c 2	£515.48

Total: £3,943.02

Payments made by the Parish Council since the last meeting on 12 December comprise £228.78 reimbursement to Rod Apps, corresponding with Minute 8.2 of the 12th December 2022 meeting, and are reflected in the figures above.

3. Payments made on behalf of Parish Council by Rod Apps since the meeting on 12 December 2023 not included above:
Zoom subscriptions for January and February 2023 at £14.39 per month, equals £28.78.
Invoice for website maintenance for 6 months, 1/2/2023-31/7/2023; £150.00
Total: £178.78. Rod Apps undertook to sort out a cheque for reimbursement at the next meeting of the Parish Council which will include some additional payments by that time.

12. Dog Poo Bins

There was nothing to report on this issue, and it was noted that Norse was emptying the bins as per the contract. Gerald Godfrey noted that there had been suggestions for a dog poo bin at Becks Green, which the Parish Council agreed to consider at a future meeting.

Despite the provision of dog poo bins, it was noted that there had recently been an increase in dog poo being left unpicked up, and it was noted that dog walkers comprised not only people from within the village, but from further afield arriving in vehicles. A suggestion was made that **temporary** signs to encourage people to pick up could be positioned at strategic points around the Commons.

13. Commons & Land Management Company.

Rod Apps reported that there had been **four** expressions of interest for the three positions of Director of the Land Management Company to be nominated by a joint meeting of the Parish Councils of Ilketshall St. Andrew and Ilketshall St. John, to serve for the year following the AGM of the Land Management Company due to be held on 20 February 2023.

Rod Apps reported that the existing Board of the Land Management Company had met to discuss the issue, and had decided that it would ask the Parish Councils and the Commoners' Association to agree to a change in the Constitution of the Land Management Company to permit a total of 8 Directors, 4 to be nominated by the Parish Councils and 4 to be nominated by the Commoners' Association. Rod Apps explained that the rationale for doing so was to permit a more satisfactory succession of Directors of the LMC over time, and that allowing 2 further Directors would allow for a transfer of knowledge and expertise from existing Directors prior to the retirement of some of them from the Board.

It was noted that any decision by the Parish Council at this meeting would also need to be approved by Paul Birkin (the Chair of the Ilketshall St. John Parish Meeting), and by the Commoners' Association (with the latter due to meet on 13th February 2023).

[Action: RA]

After discussion, the Parish Council agreed to:

1. approve the change in the Constitution of the LMC to permit a total of 8 Directors, with 4 parishioner Directors and 4 nominated by the Commoners' Association.
2. nominate the existing three Parishioner Directors to the Board for year following the Annual General Meeting of the LMC, and to invite Jack Poulden to attend Board meeting until such time as the paperwork to expand the size of the Board had been sorted out with Companies House.

The four Directors nominated by the Parish Councils to serve from the AGM 2023 would therefore be: John Bedwell, Chris Roberts, Roo Lee and Jack Poulden.

14. Any Other Business

1. Rod Apps reported that he had received an email from the Police Community Liaison Officer for the area requesting information on any events planned for the Coronation weekend (Saturday 6, Sunday 7 and Monday 8 May) in order that they can plan policing accordingly. Rod Apps noted that he understood that the Village Hall Committee would be

discussing the issue at their AGM at the end of the month. The point was made that the Jubilee event at the Village Hall had been very successful and well-attended, and that the Coronation weekend would provide a further opportunity for a party of some description. The Parish Council agreed to leave the issue for a later meeting, pending the discussion at the Village Hall Committee AGM.

[Action: RA]

2. Town Trust and the allotments. Rod Apps reported that the charges for allotments would rise to £20 per year from January 2024, and that the Town Trust would investigate the possibility of installing a water supply to the allotments. The possibility of a water supply would not happen particularly quickly, since the Town Trust did not have the funds available at the current time in any event.
3. 3 Great Common. Rod Apps noted that Suffolk County Council had been informed about this property, as a long-term empty property. That action appeared to have had some effect, in that the owner arranged for the front garden to be cleared in the summer of 2022. The owner informed Rod Apps that she was going to arrange for the rear garden to also be cleared, and in particular of the very large conifer tree that is very close to the electricity supply cables for the row of houses on the south side of Great Common, and is causing problems for the occupants for No. 2. No work on the rear garden or the tree has been undertaken. Rod Apps reported that he had emailed the owner in the autumn of 2002 and again at the end of 2022 regarding the issue, but had received no response on both occasions. After discussion, the Parish Council decided to not take any further action at the current time, but to return to the issue at a later meeting.
4. Jacqui Harrison provided an update the church roof. The architect has been asked to consult with a quantity surveyor to do a survey of all the high-level work (i.e. roof and tower) and the Parochial Church Council will need to make a decision as to the way forward at that point.
5. Rod Apps provided a summary of the meeting (held immediately before the meeting with the Parish Council, at 7.00pm on 6th February) with RES, the company behind the possibility of the Shipmeadow solar farm. RES had asked for the meeting with Councillors in order to provide an update on the progress of their investigations into the possibility, changes to the project design, etc. Rod Apps had, prior to the meeting, provided RES with a series of issues and concerns that residents (both within Ilketshall St. Andrew and other villages) had raised in emails to the Parish Council email inbox.

Rod Apps noted that RES were still intending to proceed with the project, and would be further refining the details of the project over the next few months prior to submitting the formal planning application, with the date of such an application some months off. RES would be putting together an Information Sheet that they would make available for circulation within the villages in order to provide an update on the progress of the project and to address some, at least, of the concerns and issues expressed.

The Parish Council was asked to facilitate a meeting for all people in the villages affected to be able to discuss the possible solar farm, to discuss their concerns, etc. Rod Apps expressed concern that it was unclear what the purpose of such a meeting would be, given that – at this point – there was no formal planning application, the details of the possible solar farm were still emergent, and an Information Sheet from RES was forthcoming. Jacqui Harrison noted that until RES had published the Information Sheet, it would not be known whether particular issues and concerns had been addressed or not, and therefore at the minimum it would be best to wait until that Information Sheet was available. In addition – particularly given the intention to make such a meeting open to people from other villages potentially affected – it did not seem appropriate for Ilketshall St. Andrew Parish Council to initiate such a meeting. If people or groups within the community wished to initiate such a

meeting, that would appear to be a more appropriate way forward. Jacqui Harrison further pointed out that all of the meetings and the public exhibition that RES had held hitherto had all been non-statutory, and that if the company decided to proceed with a formal planning application, there would have to be statutory meetings with residents in any event.

The Parish Council reiterated their view that, at the current time, it was not appropriate for the Parish Council to take a stance with respect to the possibility of a solar farm. In the first place, there had not, as at the time of the meeting, been a planning application submitted. Secondly, members of the Parish Council were aware that there were parishioners who were supportive of the possibility of a solar farm along the lines of that being considered at Shipmeadow, in addition to parishioners who were against the possibility and those who were ambivalent. Thirdly, the village had voted with an overwhelming majority in 2019 to **not** participate in a Neighbourhood Plan, and had thereby given the clear message that they did not want to form a view regarding the future development of the village. It would therefore be inappropriate for the Parish Council to attempt to create a view as to how the village should develop, in this particular example, in the form of a solar farm.

A number of people present at the meeting expressed concern at the lack of clarity regarding the details of the proposals from RES regarding the solar farm. Although it was clearly not the role of Councillors to answer on behalf of RES, it was pointed out that much of the detail of the possible solar farm would **not** be clear at this stage, and much would only become clearer nearer the time of the submission of a planning application, if not actually at that point.

Jacqui Harrison made the point that the groups opposed to the possibility of a solar farm could usefully devote time and effort to researching issues of particular concern to residents of the villages affected, with a view to being able to articulate robust arguments if, and when, a planning application was submitted.

14. Date of next meeting

Monday 3 April 2023, 7.30 pm, Village Hall.

The meeting closed at 22.23.