

STOW BEDON AND BRECKLES PARISH COUNCIL

*Chairman: Jonathan P White
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Minutes of Stow Bedon and Breckles Parish Council Meeting held on 30th March 2023 at Caston Village Hall.

1. Present: Councillors J White, (Chairman) P Childs, L Pilkington, H Reed, J Morfoot. County Councillor F Eagle, District Councillor P Cowen, District Councillor S Suggitt. Simon Wood, Director of Planning and Business Control, Breckland Council, Robert Walker Deputy Chief Executive Breckland Council. Twenty-two members of the public and Jean Williams, Parish Clerk.

2. Apologies for Absence: Apologies for absence were received from Councillor D Jessett. The apology was accepted by those present.

3. Declarations of Interest: No declarations of interest were made.

4. Cherry Tree Pig Farm (Item 8 on the Agenda)

The Chairman stated that he would re order the agenda due to the interest in items 8, 9 & 10

Cherry Tree Pig Farm owned by Cranswick Farms have applied for planning permission to erect chimneys to the buildings where the pigs are housed in order reduce the pollution and odours.

The Chairman informed the meeting that the Parish Council had taken four strands of action about the problems caused by the Pig Farm, which he described as industrial farming in a very rural area. There are in excess of 7000 pigs on the site.

The problems relate to pollution of the area, when residents who live in the village are unable to use their outside areas because of the overpowering smells of pig odours. The company are not adhering to conditions placed on them by the planners or the Environment Agency.

The strands of action taken by the Chairman, on behalf of the Parish Council are:

He has written objections to the District Council.

Informed the Member of Parliament, Liz Truss of the difficulties.

Written to the Environmental Agency

Written to the Health Security Agency

The Parish Council have been against the expansion of the pig farm because of access problems, the nature of the narrow roads and routes to the farm.

The impact of such a large concern on the village re: the pollution and aromas.

The company not building to approved plans, leading to unauthorised buildings, which are then approved by applying for retrospective planning permission

The current application to erect 70 chimneys to deal with the pollution will be unsightly and will spread the pollution and aromas further.

Other local parish councils have also objected to this application.

The Parish Council will continue to object but fear that the variation will be legitimised.

The Chairman informed the meeting that he had written a letter of complaint to the Environment Agency asking why they were not being more proactive, when dealing with this company, who are in breach of their licence and are therefore not compliant.

The response the Chairman received from the Environment Agency was that they are legally obliged to work with the company to resolve issues and are not able to close the place down. During a telephone conversation, the Chairman was informed by the Environmental Agency that the pig farm is allowed to bring in measures that they

think would solve the problems, hence the chimneys. The officer stated that he has to allow the company to try the measures to see if they will work before any other action is taken.

The Chairman informed the officer that the Parish Council would object to the erection of 70 chimneys.

The Health Security Agency were informed of the problems as stated above.

When the Chairman followed up the communication, because he had not received a reply from the Health Security Agency, he was informed that the department are aware that there are issues, but the case officer had other priorities. The Chairman has requested a full response to his questions and has given the department a month to reply. To date there has been no answer to his queries.

The Chairman wrote to Liz Truss MP stating the concerns caused by Cranswick.

Ms Truss responded stating that she has written to the Secretary of State about the concerns.

The Chairman voiced his dismay, that Ms Truss has written to the Secretary who oversees the Environmental Agency, who currently appear to be doing nothing about the concerns raised.

The meeting was opened to Simon Ward and Mike Walker.

Simon explained that this is a complicated and important case, which is difficult to deal with. There are many agencies involved. It is difficult for the planning department to refuse planning permission because the company are allowed to operate as they have a permit from the Environment Agency.

Simon also commented that it is difficult to refuse planning applications on the grounds of noise and pollution. There are strict procedures and regulations that must be followed. Even if the application were to be refused by planning agencies, the company are still able to operate because of their permit from the Environment Agency. Simon acknowledged that the Environment Agency know that the development has not been built in accordance with the approved plans.

The company will apply for retrospective planning to ensure they are compliant with the planning department. Simon stated that he has spoken with the Environment Agency who do not think the chimneys will solve the problem because they have not worked elsewhere. The company, however, has stated that they will attempt to resolve the issues by installing chimneys.

When questioned by a member of the public, Simon stated that he believed the chimneys would not look unsightly. Residents did not agree.

Residents thought that work to erect the chimneys had already begun.

Simon informed the meeting, that it is not a crime to build prior to planning applications being granted.

Discussion took place re: the efficiency of scrubbers which are reputed to be more efficient, Simon stated that Planning Agencies are not at liberty to make suggestions of ways to resolve problems such as this, to the Environment Agency.

Residents stated that they did not agree with this approach and said it is time the District Council were more proactive and make suggestions.

Simon said that regulations state that Planning Departments cannot overrule other agency regulations.

Councillors commented that the company involved are worth vast amounts of money, and can afford the investment of scrubbers, yet Breckland Council are not being more forceful. Statements by Councillors were also made concerning health issues to the residents which could be improved using scrubbers. Comments were also made re: possible pollution to the chalk stream that runs underground the land where the farm is situated.

There was much discussion from the residents, all complaining that Planning do not appear to be taking this issue seriously and it is time something happened to improve the situation.

The Chairman asked why are we going through this process when nothing appears to be happening?

The effects of this industrial operation is having a serious effect on the lives of the residents.

The Planners say that the landscape is not material.

Yet the effects are being felt by the residents, not only are there the health and pollution effects, but the footpath has been closed because it is too near the chimneys and the farm.

What will be the result?

Simon's response was that if the chimneys are not successful then the planning application would be revoked.

The Breckland Officers agreed to be more insistent with the agencies involved in this case, to deal with the problems associated with the farm.

The Parish Council chairman will write to the UK Health Agency requesting action now.

Footpath

There is a problem in Stow Bedon where a resident has blocked a footpath by removing a hedge and building a fence. The Norfolk County Council officer responsible for footpaths has met with the resident and informed them that they must clear the blockage and reinstate the footpath to its original state. The Chairman said from the evidence gathered, the resident appears to be trying to move the footpath.

Simon from planning informed the meeting that the resident has taken the wrong move.

It is illegal to block a footpath.

It is also illegal to move a hedge, if it is agricultural, at this time it is not known if the hedge was agricultural or residential.

At the time of the meeting, it was not known if the owner is acting illegally, the NCC officer will inform the Chairman, who will report back to the meeting.

Councillor Eagle stated that he could possibly help with funding to reinstate the hedge and footpath if needed. The funding would come from an Environmental Budget.

Pingo Trail Car Park

The Chairman explained that the Parish Council have been attempting to tidy up the Car Park to the Pingo Trail to try to make it feel safer for users. It is very overgrown and muddy. People do not use the car park because they feel it is unsafe. Years of neglect mean that it has become over grown with vegetation which is encroaching on the parking areas.

Norfolk County Council Highways were informed and they agreed to cut back the vegetation. A tree worker visited the site, he cut out one tree and trimmed some vegetation. The work has made no difference to the parking area. Because the nesting season is now upon us, nothing further can be done at this time.

The Chairman has complained, he sent photographic evidence.

The road surface on the layby is in a very poor state with deep ruts and potholes. It is not a safe place to join the A1075.

The NCC say they are short of funds to repair the lay by or to modify it. Modification is not an option at the current time because there are few records of accidents happening on this part of the road.

There are also issues because the bottle banks are sited on the layby.

To date the Chairman has not had a response from NCC.

Other Planning issues discussed: were the belief that part of a barn interior containing asbestos had been dismantled without the required licence. The material has been removed very quickly from the site. Councillors are concerned that the safety requirements appertaining to asbestos were not followed correctly, All material has been removed from the site, so it is difficult to take any further steps.

The planning application submitted to demolish the barns, prior to building the houses, stated that there was no evidence of asbestos.

District Councillor Cowen explained that the planning for two barn conversions, was for two separate dwellings.

The Parish Councillors are disappointed because it increases areas of development which could progress to small estates making the area less rural.

At this point most residents left the meeting, the Parish Council dealt with the remaining items on the agenda.

7.Reports of District and County Councillors

Report of the County Councillor: None

Report of the District Councillor: Councillor Cowen stated that, Breckland had agreed the Budget for 2023 to 2024. Currently the Council is in purdah because of the forthcoming elections. He reminded the meeting that photo ID will be needed to be able to vote.

Councillor Suggett informed the meeting that the consultation on the Breckland local plan has gone live, she described the content and reminded people to complete the consultation by 19th May 2023 .

There are ongoing difficulties with planning applications due to the problems with nitrates in the water, this is affecting local rivers such as the Wensum, Yare and the Broads. Each Planning application submitted is required to prove that they do not come within that area. In all a total of 1000 applications in Breckland are on hold.

The Parish Council were informed that as from June 2024 Breckland will cease to outsource their planning, but there will be an in house planning department again. Councillors were pleased to hear this news.

4. To agree the Minutes of the Meeting held on 13th February 2023

The minutes were agreed by all present and signed by the Chairman.

5. Matters arising from the minutes: None.

11. Meeting with Liz Truss MP:

To date there has been no further communication from Ms Truss. The information given, is that meetings take place during day time hours on a Friday. An invitation had been extended to join with a neighbouring Parish Council to meet Ms Truss. It was decided that at this time, because of the ongoing issues, Councillors would prefer to meet as just Stow Bedon and Breckles.

Items to be discussed could be, how national policy is affecting things at local level.

Discrimination re Broad Band.

12. Planning Applications

The recent planning application to build 2 Cart Lodges have both been agreed

14. Parish Noticeboards

The Noticeboards in the Parish need some maintenance as does the bench in Stow Bedon

The Parish Clerk stated that she would take responsibility for posting information.

The headings on the boards are in need for refurbishment it was agreed to look out for some strip signs

15. Litter Pick

This item will need to be deferred because the grass verges are now too long to see all the litter

16. Update on Defibrillator Training

In the absence of Councillor Jessett this item will be deferred to the next meeting

17. Finance Report

STOW BEDON AND BRECKLES FINANCE REPORT

Balance in Community Account at 31/10/2022 £2,895.99

There are no known transactions since then.

Money owing to date

Gallagher Insurance: if the Parish Council agree to a three year contract

Payment due is £ 675.17

Jean Williams Payment for Laptop £ 409.99

Clerks Salary for February & March £ 538.00

Clerk works 5 hours per week @ 13.45 per hour is £67.25

Eight weeks @ £67.25 is £538.00

Clerk will pay HMRC for two months tax liability.

TOTAL £1,623.16

BALANCE £1,272.83

Other known payments due in April

IOC Direct Debit £ 45.00

NALC Subscription £ 135.92

Clerks Mileage and expenses ie Ink for Printer amount not known at this time.

The report was received. Councillors agreed to enter a three-year contract with the Insurers.

20. To agree the Clerks temporary Contract of Employment as Locum Clerk

Councillors agreed the Clerks Contract which was signed by the Chairman and the Clerk

21. Any other relevant matters not included in this agenda

A Councillor voiced concerns that hedging was taking place during the nesting season

22 To receive items for the next agenda

Frosts Common
SAMS

23. To confirm the date of the next meeting.

It was agreed that the next meeting will take place on Thursday 17th May 2023

The meeting closed at 10.20pm

Signed.....Chairman Date.....

DRAFT