

# MIDDLETON CUM FORDLEY PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE VIRTUAL COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON  
TUESDAY 9<sup>th</sup> FEBRUARY 2021 AT 6:00 PM VIA ZOOM

## 1. Attendance and Apologies

### Attendees:

Cllr. Nigel Smith - Chair  
Cllr. Roy Dowding - Vice-Chair  
Cllr. Julian Cusack  
Cllr. Lynda Whitbread  
Cllr. Colin Whitbread  
Cllr. Chris Reynolds  
Cllr. Steve Thorpe  
Cllr. Lesley Taylor

### Apologies for absence:

District Cllr. Tony Cooper

### In attendance:

Sharon Smith - Clerk/RFO  
County Cllr. Richard Smith  
District Cllr. Jocelyn Bond  
District Cllr. Terry-Jill Haworth-Culf  
Two members of the public

## 2. Councillors' Declarations of Interest

None.

## 3. Public Forum

a) County Cllr. Richard Smith reported that Saxmundham surgery were rolling out the COVID vaccine programme successfully. Cllr. Nigel Smith replied that Leiston surgery's programme is also going well.

Cllr. Richard Smith said that, despite speculation, the County Council election, the Police and Crime Commissioner's election and other by-elections are still planned for 6<sup>th</sup> May but they may be delayed again. Central government has stated that no political activity, for example letter box leafleting, is permitted due to the COVID restrictions and that polling day will involve greater hygiene and social distancing measures. The purdah (silence) period commences on 25<sup>th</sup> March and he will need to be careful as all candidates should have an opportunity for an equal say.

With regard to Sizewell C, County Cllr. Smith said that the first public hearing is expected just after Easter which will present difficulties as he will be fighting an election campaign. He hopes to participate fully in the public hearings.

County Cllr. Smith concluded his report by informing the Council that the County Council budget will be considered on 11<sup>th</sup> February and a Council Tax increase of 4% is proposed. 2% is for adult social care and 2% for general expenditure. County Cllr. Smith said that inflation is currently only 0.6% therefore he argued that a 4% increase was too high but he was outvoted. Cllr. Julian Cusack said that the medium-term final projection, available online, suggests that the County Council will be bankrupt in four years' time, but the County Council are not proposing to raise the precept by the full 5%. Cllr. Cusack asked what intervention is coming to stop the County Council going insolvent. County Cllr. Smith replied that four years was a long time and he believes reserves are at a reasonable level. He ensured this when he was the Cabinet member responsible for Finance. He also believes there is further scope for efficiencies and the County Council owes it to the Suffolk public to run as lean and efficiently as possible.

b) District Cllr. T-J Haworth-Culf referred to the previously circulated monthly Ward report. Cllr. Haworth-Culf reported that more vaccination centres are opening across Suffolk and over 70s who have not yet been offered a vaccine can contact the NHS to request one. Cllr. Haworth-Culf said she had sent a letter to Leiston surgery to thank them for the roll-out of the vaccine. Cllr. Nigel Smith agreed to send a similar letter to Leiston and Saxmundham surgeries on behalf of the parish.

Cllr. Haworth-Culf reported that the District Council had agreed to freeze its share of Council Tax this year as it has healthy reserves and it was considered unfair to increase it when many families were struggling financially.

Cllr. Haworth-Culf reminded the Council about the Aldeburgh to Bawdsey coastal footpath consultation which is open for public comments until the end of March.

**ACTION: Cllr. Nigel Smith to write a letter of thanks to Leiston and Saxmundham surgeries.**

c) District Cllr. Jocelyn Bond said that she and Cllr. Haworth-Culf spoke at the planning meeting about the Sizewell B facilities application but the decision to permit was reconfirmed. Cllr. Bond said she would send the Council details about why the District Council has changed its stance on the Scottish Power Renewables offshore windfarms.

Cllr. Nigel Smith reiterated the Council's concerns about the gross negligence, or more likely fraudulent, architects who submit inaccurate or misleading planning applications and sign them off as being correct. Cllr. Smith said that the District Council take no action against applicants other than asking them to withdraw the application and there should be stronger sanctions against this type of fraud to discourage such practice.

Cllr. Roy Dowding referred to ESC's latest Planning and Building Control Newsletter, in which the Head of Planning extols the virtues of East Suffolk and why he lives and works there. Cllr. Dowding said it defied all explanation, therefore, that the planning officers could have sanctioned the approval of a scheme by EDF to destroy a century-old area of woods on the pretext of their needing to relocate parts of Sizewell B.

**ACTION: Cllr. Roy Dowding to draft a letter of complaint to the ESC Cabinet Member for Planning and Coastal Management and the ESC Head of Planning.**

#### **4. Minutes and Matters Arising**

The minutes of the meeting held on 12<sup>th</sup> January 2021 and the Quiet Lanes public meeting held on 19<sup>th</sup> January 2021 were approved as true and accurate records. There were no matters arising.

#### **5. Casual Vacancy**

The Council noted the resignation of Cllr. Graham Ingham. Cllr. Nigel Smith asked the Council to record a vote of thanks to Cllr. Ingham for his service to the Council and his moderating influence. The Clerk said the period for a by-election to fill the vacancy runs until 25<sup>th</sup> February 2021.

**ACTION: Clerk to add vacancy to next month's agenda for further consideration.**

#### **6. Highways, Footpaths, Trees and Green Issues**

a) Cllr. Julian Cusack led a discussion on options for the better management of roadside verges in the parish. Cllr. Cusack explained that the Suffolk County Council Ecology Team and Highways have been working to support parishes who are keen to see changes in the management of verges in their area. Cllr. Cusack showed a map of stretches of verge along Littlemoor Road, Moor Road and Title Road and suggested that delaying the mowing of these verges until September will allow a greater diversity of flowers and wildlife to flourish. Cllr. Cusack said that the verges on Littlemoor Road had quite wide verges with a good variety of flowering plants which are currently cut at the end of May/early June therefore the later summer flowering plants do not have a chance to show. Cllr. Cusack acknowledged that visibility, especially at junctions, will need to be maintained so as not to compromise safety. Title Road and Moor Road are more complex with verges varying in width and quality and/or restricted by ditches and embankments but are still good candidates.

Cllr. Cusack outlined the SCC options for managing these verges – that the parish undertakes verge management themselves, that Highways cut the verge in September only, or that the verges are not cut at all. All were in favour of asking Highways to delay cutting the verges on all three sites until September. District Cllr. T-J Haworth-Culf and County Cllr. Richard Smith offered to send a letter of support for this scheme.

**ACTION: Cllr. Julian Cusack to draft a letter to SCC Highways. Clerk to send and copy to the County and District Councillors.**

b) Cllr. Chris Reynolds updated the Council about the Quiet Lanes Scheme. The next steps are to deliver a letter and the SCC Notification Order Schedule to every household on each of the seven lanes, to publish these on the village website and display them on each lane.

**ACTION: Clerk to print documents and Cllr. Chris Reynolds to arrange distribution.**

## **7. Middleton Moor**

Cllr. Julian Cusack reported that he discussed a proposal with three Parish Councillors, who reside on the Moor. They were all in agreement to commission Suffolk Wildlife Trust to produce proposals for an updated management plan with the intention of using it as a basis for consulting with Moor residents on the future management of the Moor. The Council approved expenditure of £1,150, chargeable to the Middleton Moor ring-fenced fund, for this purpose.

**ACTION: Cllr. Julian Cusack to progress.**

## **8. Recreation Ground**

a) The Council further considered whether to install new flooring cover in the pavilion. It was agreed to obtain quotations for different options for flooring. Cllr. Julian Cusack reminded the Council of the requirement to provide proper, safe conditions and that the current flooring is difficult to clean therefore a solution is necessary.

**ACTION: Cllr. Julian Cusack, Cllr. Chris Reynolds and Cllr. Nigel Smith to progress.**

b) Cllr. Julian Cusack reported that the fencing along the northern boundary from the pavilion towards the end of the field is in poor condition. At their last meeting, the Recreation Ground Working Group identified that the posts were rotten and the fence needs attention as it is a poor rabbit defence and it is unsightly. Cllr. Cusack asked the Councillors to inspect the fence before the next meeting to inform their view on whether to replace the fencing at this time.

**ACTION: Councillors to inspect the fence and Clerk to add to next month's agenda.**

## **9. Energy Projects**

Cllr. Roy Dowding reported that a virtual meeting has been scheduled with EDF to discuss the Council's Relevant Representation and response to the proposed changes to the DCO application.

Cllr. Dowding said that EDF met with members of Stop Sizewell C, the B1122 Action Group and two principal, local landowners residing near the proposed Sizewell Link Road with a view to finding a common approach. If the Sizewell Link Road is built, they are proposing that it should be taken up after the construction period and restored to its former condition and they would like the Council's agreement.

All were in favour. Cllr. Dowding referred to comments made by Anne-Marie Trevelyan, the Minister of State for Business, Energy and Clean Growth in the Sunday Telegraph. She intimated that government policy was to deliver Hinkley Point C, Sizewell C and one other. This is in direct conflict with the statement made by Kwasi Kwarteng, Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, who said "industry awaits the government decision on support for Sizewell C, Wylfa and Moorside." Cllr. Dowding said Stop Sizewell C have responded to Ms Trevelyan MP with an apposite letter and Cllr. Dowding asked for the Council's approval to do the same. All were in favour.

**ACTION: Cllr. Roy Dowding to send a letter to the Rt Hon Anne-Marie Trevelyan MP.**

## **10. Village Hall**

Cllr. Lynda Whitbread said that work on the disabled car parking space was due to start soon.

## **11. Planning Advisory Group and Hastoe Housing**

Cllr. Nigel Smith reported that Hastoe are planning to start building at the end of February. Clarification is still required as to whether Home Choice will allow single occupancy of the two-bedroom properties. Cllr. Smith wrote to Hastoe to say that people will feel badly let down if this is not permitted as the exception site principle was promoted as the means to secure local housing for local people and the housing needs survey identified that two-bedroom properties were required.

## 12. Finance

- a) The Council noted the latest financial position, including the receipt of the SCC grant for £266 for the disabled car parking space at the Village Hall.
- b) The Council approved the bank reconciliation for Quarter 3 2020/2021.
- c) The Council reviewed the budgeted versus actual income and expenditure for Quarter 3 2020/2021.
- d) The Council considered donating £50 to the Coastal Accessible Transport Service. The Clerk said she had contacted them in December 2020 to ask if they were still offering a service to Middleton but no response was received. It was agreed to contact CATS again and to ask for a copy of the latest annual report.

**ACTION: Clerk to contact CATS.**

- e) The Council authorised the payments below:

Details	Payee	Amount	Power
Clerk's Salary	Sharon Smith	£218.40	LGA 1972 s.112
Clerk's PAYE	HMRC	£6.00	LGA 1972 s.112
Clerk's Expenses	Sharon Smith	£29.04	LGA 1972 s.111
Art Competition Prize Vouchers	Julian Cusack	£115.00	LGA 1972 s.137
Pavilion Electricity	British Gas	£29.15	LGA 1972 s.19
Councillor Training	Suffolk Association of Local Councils	£234.00	LGA 1972 s.111

## 13. Administration

- a) The Council conducted the annual approval of the Model Standing Orders.
- b) The Council conducted the annual approval of the Model Financial Regulations.
- c) The Council adopted a Data Retention and Disposal Policy.
- d) The Council adopted a Personal Data Breaches Policy.
- e) The Council adopted a Freedom of Information Act Policy.

## 14. Correspondence

The Council noted the correspondence received between 7<sup>th</sup> January 2021 and 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2021.

## 15. Public Forum Resumed

The Chairman invited a member of the public, who had joined the meeting late, to speak. The resident asked if it was possible to site a swift nest box on the Church as it needs to be positioned at 4.5 metres with a clear line of flight for the birds to access. The Chairman replied that the resident would need to raise this with the Parochial Church Council. Cllr. Julian Cusack suggested that residents may wish to site swift nest boxes on their properties. The resident said that SOS Swifts and Suffolk Wildlife Trust will help with this and she can find out further information and costs. The Clerk suggested that the Council applies to the Suffolk Coast and Heaths AONB Fund for a grant.

**ACTION: Clerk to check eligibility of AONB Fund.**

## 16. Next Meeting

a) Cllr. Nigel Smith asked Councillors to look at the 'Next Door' community website and for an item to be added to next month's agenda to consider promoting its use.

**ACTION: Clerk to add to next month's agenda.**

b) The Council confirmed the date and time of the next virtual meeting of the Council which is scheduled for Tuesday 9<sup>th</sup> March 2021 at 6:00 pm. Public and press are welcome to attend. The details to join via Zoom Meetings are:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/6512941956?pwd=K29wbDZtUnhuaHRUTkxIWTZRQW1YQT09>

Meeting ID: 651 294 1956 Password: 3cwRhj

The meeting closed at 7:15 pm.