

MIDDLETON CUM FORDLEY PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 14th SEPTEMBER 2021
AT 7:00 PM AT THE VILLAGE HALL

1. Attendance and Apologies

Attendees:

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

Apologies for absence:

Cllr. Dennis Peel
District Cllr. Tom Daly
District Cllr. Tony Cooper

In attendance:

County Cllr. Richard Smith
District Cllr. Russ Rainger
Sharon Smith - Clerk/RFO
7 members of the public

2. Councillors' Declarations of Interest

None.

3. Public Forum

- a) The Chairman invited the members of the public present at the meeting to make representations to the Council during the discussion of specific agenda items.
- b) County Cllr. Richard Smith said he has attended many of the Sizewell C hearings online and he has been struck by how well prepared the Examining Authority is. They have read reports and are asking incisive questions of the applicant. During the previous round of hearings, EDF were not well prepared and they gave insufficient answers but they now appear better prepared and are heavily represented by legal advisers and experts. Cllr. Smith said the examination period ends on 14th October and there is all still to be fought for. Cllr. Smith praised the efforts of Stop Sizewell C and said they have raised the concerns of the community in a considered way. Cllr. Smith said that if Middleton cum Fordley Parish Council and Kelsale Parish Council wish Fordley Road to be closed then this will be hard to achieve as it will be a Highways decision. The Chairman replied that the Council had voted in favour of keeping Fordley Road open and it was Kelsale Parish Council's position to seek to close the road to prevent rat-running through its parish.
- c) District Cllr. Russ Rainger said he completed his induction and training only last week. He is now a member of the Licensing Committee.

4. Minutes

- a) The Council approved the minutes of the meeting held on 13th July 2021.
- b) The Council approved the minutes of the extraordinary meeting held on 30th July 2021.

5. Casual Vacancy

The Chairman explained that the Council has the power to co-opt a new member to fill a vacancy until the next election in 2023. The Chairman said that the vacancy was advertised on the noticeboards and that the Council had written to all residents, listed on the electoral roll, who live south of the B1122 (later confirmed as covering residents for Hawthorn Road, Trust Farm and Fordley Road only) and specifically invited them to apply. One resident, Graham Lacey, applied and was interviewed by the working group who were impressed by his skills and experience. Following the working group's recommendation, Cllr. Julian Cusack proposed that the Council co-opts Mr Lacey. Seconded by Cllr. Lynda Whitbread. All in favour. The Declaration of Acceptance of Office form was signed by Mr Lacey and witnessed by the Clerk

and Mr Lacey joined the Council with immediate effect. Two members of the public, present at the meeting, complained that they had not received a letter inviting them to apply. Mr Lacey graciously stood down and the Council invited other members of the public to communicate their interest in being co-opted to the Chairman before the next meeting.

ACTION: Clerk to add the Casual Vacancy to next month's agenda.

6. Sizewell C

Hawthorn Road - the Chairman said he had raised concerns with EDF as they had not directly engaged with residents and landowners in Hawthorn Road who will be severely impacted by the Sizewell Link Road. EDF said they would contact these residents but, to date, they have not done so. The Chairman said he would reiterate the applicant's lack of engagement with significantly affected parties along the Sizewell Link Road if called to speak at the next Issue Specific Hearings on September 15th and 16th.

Fordley Road - the Chairman said the most contentious issue for the Parish continues to be Fordley Road. The Council has received representations from residents who would like the road to be closed and from residents who would like it to be kept open. The Council took the decision to support keeping the road open but when the Chairman raised this during a meeting with EDF on July 5th, they were adamant that they had examined the proposal and considered it a non-starter. The Chairman said that this remains EDF's stated position and it is exceedingly unlikely that they will put forward any further changes to the Development Consent Order (DCO) application at this late stage. If the DCO is approved by the Secretary of State, EDF will have an obligation to build the Sizewell Link Road as set out in the DCO, subject to variations agreed with Suffolk County Council (SCC), which is the Highways authority. There may still be some room for EDF and SCC to agree changes to the design of the SLR therefore any lobbying now needs to be directed to SCC. The Chairman said he understood there is a group of residents who strongly want Fordley Road kept open but there is also another group who are concerned about rat-running, especially during a road traffic incident on the A12. One particular concern is that this could block access by emergency vehicles for considerable periods of time on many days during the construction period. Under the current road configuration (pre-Sizewell C) the Parish could possibly live with this existing problem (on a few days per year and for limited periods), but with Sizewell C traffic there is a greater likelihood of a road traffic incident and an increased risk of rat-running causing access problems to residents of Fordley Road. EDF say they will manage their own traffic to prevent diversions through Kelsale and Fordley, but other traffic will not be controlled by EDF and sat-navs may direct drivers along Fordley Road in large numbers. The Chairman said he understood the desire for connectivity in the Parish but that this must be balanced with the increased risk of rat-running and its impact on residents' health and security. In reply to a question from a member of the public, the Chairman replied that, if the DCO is approved as currently drafted, there will still be a southern access from the SLR to Fordley Road. The consensus in the Parish is that this is the worst scenario. EDF have been asked to reconsider this and their reply was to suggest that the Parish Council take it up with Highways. A member of the public said that he does not believe EDF will do anything not prescribed in the DCO therefore he asked if the Council should seek to have a Statement of Common Ground with EDF or was it the Council's intention to direct the community's lobbying to SCC. The Chairman replied that it depends on the stance that Highways will take post-DCO and whether they are empowered and funded to make changes. He said EDF are not expected to make any further changes to the SLR in the DCO and therefore the community's best hope is to engage with SCC about the design and layout of the route.

The Chairman proposed that the Council agrees to work with Kelsale Parish Council and to take expert and local advice to come up with a proposal to present to Highways which deals with the twin problems of connectivity and rat-running. Seconded by Cllr. Roy Dowding. All in favour.

It was therefore agreed that the Council resolves to seek agreement with Kelsale Parish Council to work on a joint proposal to SCC for a design change which would:

(a) Keep Fordley Road open for local non-SZC related journeys

(b) Remove or limit the impact of any use of Fordley Road as a diversion to avoid congestion on the A12 ('rat-running').

Cllr. Lynda Whitbread asked County Cllr. Richard Smith if SCC would accept a shared working group. County Cllr. Smith replied that the DCO has not yet been approved but we need to plan ahead. However, any plan would need to be legal and evidence-based to make changes. A legal order typically takes 18 months but there may be special circumstances set out in the DCO. Cllr. Smith suggested that we invite Steven Merry, the Sizewell C Highways representative, to a meeting with both Councils.

A member of the public asked if EDF deem that Fordley Road is capable of taking the traffic if there is an incident on the A12. The Chairman replied that EDF have not acknowledged that there will be any increased risk because, they say, they will manage their own traffic so that it does not add to the existing risk. A member of the public confirmed that there is an existing problem with rat-running in Fordley Road and if the proposed junction from the SLR remains then traffic will stop at the junction and back-up along Fordley Road. He said there are very few passing places and, as a resident of Fordley Road, he has experienced backlogs due to blockages on the A12. He said he considers this a severe and unacceptable risk to his life and property in an emergency.

B1125 – a member of the public asked if the Council had contacted Westleton Parish Council about the B1125 junction with the SLR and the potential for rat-running there. The Chairman replied that he had made contact with Westleton and suggested that the Council seek to work with Blythburgh, Walberswick and Westleton Parish Councils about the wider network of roads from the north leading to the SLR/B1122. The Chairman said EDF's position is still that the B1125 junction to the SLR should remain.

B1122 – Cllr. Roy Dowding presented the Council with proposals to improve pedestrian safety and vehicle access for the houses that front the B1122. The proposals, which include improved footpaths, a pedestrian crossing, gates at the approaches with a 20 mph limit applicable within them, permanent speed cameras and a realignment of the B1122, were drawn up by the B1122 Action Group following meetings with EDF. The Council agreed they needed more time to properly consider the proposals.

ACTION: Cllr. Roy Dowding to circulate the proposals and plans for further discussion at next month's meeting.

7. Recreation Ground

a) The Council noted the annual play equipment safety inspection report and agreed to replace the posts supporting the cradle swings which are rotten. The Chairman said he had put in an order to Eastern Play Services Ltd to replace all four posts with steel ground fixings to prevent rot. The Council agreed that the other matters raised during the inspection did not require any urgent action at this time.

b) The Council agreed to consider the purchase of an awning to attach to the front of the pavilion.
ACTION: Cllr. Chris Reynolds to liaise with the Community Council and seek quotes.

c) Cllr. Chris Reynolds reported that the replacement flooring for the pavilion has been ordered.

8. Parish Assets

a) Cllr. Steve Thorpe suggested that new dog bins should be sited at the Village Hall, the Farm Shop and in Title Road. The Clerk advised that each dog bin will cost approximately £350 for supply, installation, licencing and emptying. It was agreed to further consider this when drawing up next year's budget. The Clerk said that East Suffolk Norse had advised that the broken lid to the dog bin in The Street cannot be replaced. The Council authorised expenditure of £174.65 for the purchase and installation of a new dog bin from East Suffolk Norse. The Council also agreed to instruct East Suffolk Norse to refit the dog bin at the junction of Back Road and Rectory Road for a cost of £64.

ACTION: Clerk to progress.

b) The Council postponed consideration of ideas for using the telephone box until the next meeting.
ACTION: Clerk to add to next month's agenda.

c) The Council authorised repairs to the broken bench on the Green.
ACTION: Clerk to obtain quote.

9. Highways/Footpaths

a) It was agreed to inform Westleton Parish Council of the Council's concerns for public safety for users of a permissive path in Westleton parish.

ACTION: Clerk to progress.

b) The Chairman reported that SCC, working with the Suffolk Ecology Team, had agreed to trial areas of highway verges which would remain uncut in the spring to allow wildflowers to set seed and spread. These Parish Wildlife areas include stretches of Littlemoor Road, Moor Road and Title Road in Middleton. SCC advised that these verges will be cut annually in the late summer or early autumn to manage growth and prevent encroachment into the highway and the Chairman said that Littlemoor Road has already been cut.

c) The Council postponed consideration of ANPR cameras on the B1122 until the next meeting.

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

d) Cllr. Lynda Whitbread, Cllr. Lesley Taylor and the Clerk agreed to progress downloading the data from the Speed Indicator Device.

ACTION: Cllr. Lynda Whitbread to arrange a meeting.

e) Following a discussion, the Council proposed not to object or take further action if the owner of Fern Cottage on the Village Green carried out works to define the edge between the gravel garage access route and the Village Green with a soft, wooden edge. It was noted that this was not consistent with the informal style of edging adopted elsewhere on the Green and that the Council's view is that there is no need for this work to be done. It recognised however that in this case a wooden edge of this kind had previously been permitted and therefore no objection would be made to its reinstatement by the present owner but that this was not a precedent for future owners of Fern Cottage.

10. Progress Reports

a) Village Hall – Cllr. Lesley Taylor reported that she has applied for a further grant for the Drop-In Centre which will be decided in the first week of October.

Cllr. Chris Reynolds reported that the roofing contractor has agreed to safely dispose the asbestos within his original quote of £9,000 - £11,000. The Chairman said that fundraising and grants will be needed to fund this expenditure which will require the support of the Hall Management Committee. The Chairman explained that the Council is the Custodian Trustee of the Village Hall but it was not clear who had responsibility for the roof repair. It was agreed to obtain legal advice about the terms of the Trust.

ACTION: Cllr. Julian Cusack to seek advice from Birketts.

b) Hastoe Housing – Cllr. Lesley Taylor reported that her research had shown that the development is permitted under the Suffolk Coastal Exception Policy and that Gateway to Homechoice is the letting system utilised by the District Council which allows eligible people to bid for available properties. Cllr. Taylor summarised the allocation process, as set out in the s106 agreement, which states that each affordable dwelling must firstly be offered to an eligible person who has a local connection to Middleton, secondly to an eligible person from the neighbouring parishes and if no person qualifies under the first two categories then thirdly to those where letting would result in under-occupancy. This means that Middleton residents who bid to under-occupy would only be successful if the scheme has not been filled by eligible applicants under the first two categories. Cllr. Taylor said this was challenged previously by the Council and the District Council had confirmed by email that under-occupancy was permissible, however Cllr. Taylor is concerned that this permission was not appended to the s106 agreement and it may not be taken into account when the letting system deals with the allocation. Cllr. Taylor said she had written to the District Council asking for this to be written into the s106 agreement but she has not yet received a reply.

c) Summer Wine Group – Cllr. Colin Whitbread thanked the Council for the grant to commemorate the three founding members. The Summer Winers are carrying out clearing work on the Moor.

11. Queen's Platinum Jubilee 2022

The Council agreed to postpone consideration of a joint community event to mark the Queen's Platinum Jubilee until the next meeting.

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

12. Finance

- a) The Council noted the latest financial position, including receipts of £0.14 of bank interest.
- b) The Council approved the bank reconciliation for Quarter 1 2021-2022.
- c) The Council authorised the payments below:

Details	Payee	Amount	Power
Clerk's Salary	Sharon Smith	£274.20	LGA 1972 s.112
Clerk's Expenses	Sharon Smith	£35.56	LGA 1972 s.111
Pavilion Electricity	British Gas	£22.64	LGA (MP) 1976 s.19
Pavilion Cleaning	Julian Cusack (Julia Gutunoiu)	£40.00	LGA (MP) 1976 s.19
Play Equipment Inspection Report	David Bracey	£120.00	LGA (MP) 1976 s.19
Recreation Ground Mole Control	Gary Denny	£145.00	LGA (MP) 1976 s.19
Insurance Premium	Business Services at CAS Ltd	£484.12	LGA 1972 s.111

13. Correspondence

The Council reviewed the correspondence received between 9th July 2021 and 8th September 2021.

14. Items for the Next Agenda

- a) Casual vacancy
- b) Proposals for the B1122 including ANPR cameras.
- c) Queen's Platinum Jubilee.
- d) Village bus service.
- e) Telephone box.

15. Next Meeting

The Council agreed the date and time of the next meeting of the Council which is scheduled for Tuesday 12th October 2021 at 7:00 pm.

The meeting closed at 9:10 pm.