

# MIDDLETON CUM FORDLEY PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE VIRTUAL COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON  
TUESDAY 9<sup>th</sup> MARCH 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  
9 members of the public

## 2. Councillors' Declarations of Interest

None.

## 3. Public Forum

a) Cllr. Nigel Smith informed the Council that a resident had sent two objections arising from the minutes of the last meeting.

The first objection was about the Council's stance on the legacy of the Sizewell Link Road after the construction period should Sizewell C go ahead. Cllr. Smith said the Council had reserved its position to EDF until it had heard the views of residents. Cllr. Smith said there were three different points of view: (1) people most affected, where the road cuts through their land or runs past their front door are keen to see the road removed, (2) those living along or near to the B1122, which will have become a quiet country lane wish to see the road remain, especially given the increased traffic to the Sizewell complex, and (3) those who are less directly affected who wish to see the countryside and the cross-country lanes and paths restored. Cllr. Smith said that given the divergence of opinions, he proposed the Council holds an Extraordinary meeting where residents can give their views, so that the Council can take an informed decision as to the line to take with EDF at the next meeting in early April. It was agreed to convene this meeting for 30<sup>th</sup> March at 6:00 pm.

**ACTION: Clerk to convene an Extraordinary meeting.**

The second objection was about the words 'met with residents' regarding the proposal to commission Suffolk Wildlife Trust to update the Moor management plan. Cllr. Julian Cusack apologised for the error in the minutes and said he may have misspoken at the meeting when he reported on the Moor. Cllr. Cusack said that what should have been reported was that he had consulted with the three Parish Councillors who live on the Moor. Cllr. Cusack acknowledged that there should be a meeting with the residents to discuss the management proposals for the Moor and proposed that this take place as soon as COVID restrictions allow. Cllr. Cusack will prepare a cost/benefit analysis and share it with interested Moor residents and with the Summer Wine Group. Cllr. Cusack said that Natural England no longer produce or revise management plans. Our previous Natural England adviser, Matthew Ginn, has moved on, but Cllr. Cusack has spoken to his successor. The current management plan was produced by the District Council in 2003. Cllr. Cusack has been advised that the best we can expect from Natural England is a site visit. In 2013, following such a visit, Matthew Ginn himself commissioned a report on the ponds from SWT. The first stage of the SWT work is planned for April/May to review the ponds and assess the Great Crested Newt population as this is by far the best time of year to do this. This phase of the work will be free of charge. The proposed work on preparing an updated plan does not need to start until the Council has had time to consult all interested parties.

The resident said the minutes implied that a convivial meeting was held and that all the residents were in agreement. The resident said this was untrue. The resident said he thought the Moor Management Group were in charge of the Moor but acknowledged that this may not be the case and a new committee may have been appointed with Cllr. Cusack as Chairman. He said the MMG have not been consulted and they have not met recently due to COVID restrictions. The resident added that Natural England regularly inspect the Moor. Cllr. Cusack said he was sorry this impression had been given. He said the MMG last met in June 2019. When Jane Etheridge left the Council she asked Cllr. Cusack to take over dealing with the financial matters related to the Moor agreement.

The resident asked whether the MMG or the Council controls the ring-fenced funds. Cllr. Cusack explained that the receipts from the Rural Payments Agency are taken to a ring-fenced fund in the Council's books. The current balance is £2,726. Three more annual payments of £810 are due, with the last payment due in December 2023 when the agreement with Natural England comes to an end. The major expenditure from the fund over the years have been £250 to the B1122 Action Group in 2014, £2,219 for speed detection equipment in 2017 and £1,032 for machinery in 2019. Cllr. Cusack said it has been the usual practice for the MMG to take the lead on, or be consulted about, payments from the fund but all payments are approved by the Council. Cllr. Cusack said the intention was to continue with this practice and he was not suggesting any change. Cllr. Nigel Smith said the Council reserves the right to change this decision.

b) Two residents informed the Council that they had created and distributed a survey asking for views about the legacy of the Sizewell Link Road. The residents said they had been campaigning to have the road removed after the construction period. The underlying principles are to undermine EDF as they have not properly consulted on this matter and to push them to reconsider alternative routes as removing the Link Road will double its costs. This may dovetail into our MPs aspirations to streamline industrial and legacy benefits. If responses received are in favour of removal, then the Planning Inspectorate may require EDF to consider alternative routes such as the D2. The residents welcomed participation in the survey as they are keen to understand local views. They are concerned with the way the Link Road cuts through Middleton, Westleton and Theberton and the difficulties presented with access. County Cllr. Richard Smith said the County Council did not wish to adopt the road and agreed with the residents' position and the Link Road should be removed after construction. He said EDF do not wish to do this due to cost. The District Council have an opposite view, but as the County are the Highways authority they will have a greater say. He said it was a pity there was not cross-council agreement. Cllr. Richard Smith said the County will stand firm on this position and insist upon it to the Planning Inspectorate. Another resident raised concerns about the volume of traffic the B1122 will have to take if the Link Road is removed. He said the area surrounding the new station will have become a major industrial site which a major traffic load placed on roads leading to the site.

c) County Cllr. Richard Smith asked for an invitation to the Extraordinary meeting about Sizewell C. He has been advised by his Officers that he does not need to speak at the first preliminary meeting as it is only a technical/procedural meeting and, at all stages, a barrister will represent the County Council and ensure that its views are put across forcibly and properly.

Cllr. Smith said the vaccination roll out was going very well, particularly from Saxmundham surgery who were offering spare vaccines to police officers. In the NHS England data tables, Saxmundham came first as the most vaccinated area in England.

The purdah period for the County Council elections begins on 25<sup>th</sup> March therefore he will not attend next month's meeting as it is important that all candidates are treated equally. Cllr. Smith said he has enjoyed his time with Middleton cum Fordley and he has been proud to serve as its County Councillor. He remains in his position until 6<sup>th</sup> May therefore he can be contacted by email or telephone if there are any issues or concerns.

d) District Cllr. T-J Haworth-Culf summarised the monthly Ward report. She reported that unregistered carers are now being invited to contact their surgery to request a vaccine. A testing site has opened in Aldeburgh and lateral flow tests can be ordered for school-age children from the County Council website.

e) District Cllr. Jocelyn Bond said she is aware of continuing concerns about inaccuracies in planning applications. Other Parish Councils have similar concerns and this was raised at a planning referral meeting. Cllr. Bond said she forwarded the latest planning application for Sizewell A as it may be of interest. She said she had asked the District Council to consult with the community about all the Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects in the area. This request was declined as there is insufficient time between the consultations. Cllr. Bond and Cllr. Haworth-Culf continue to encourage residents to engage in the consultations.

Cllr. Bond said the District Councillors must also comply with the purdah period therefore they will not attend the Council's next meeting.

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

There was one amendment to the minutes of the meeting held on 9<sup>th</sup> February 2021. It was agreed to change item 7 to read 'discussed a proposal with three Parish Councillors who reside on the Moor' instead of 'met with residents'. The minutes were then approved as a true and accurate record. There were no matters arising.

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

The Clerk confirmed there were no requests for an election received within the casual vacancy notice period and the Council may therefore fill the vacancy by co-option. It was agreed to contact previous applicants in the first instance.

**ACTION: Cllr. Nigel Smith to contact previous applicants.**

#### **6. Planning and Hastoe Housing**

a) Cllr. Nigel Smith reported that the Hastoe development for affordable and accessible housing has begun on Back Road. He noted that the road is not being widened but a 60 metre visibility splay is being put in. Cllr. Smith said this was not warranted on a 20 mph lane. Cllr. Smith asked the District Councillors to take this back to the Planners and ask them to interrogate Highways about the need for this. District Cllr. T-J Haworth-Culf asked Cllr. Smith to contact the County Councillor or the Cabinet Member responsible for Highways to ask for their reasoning. Cllr. Haworth-Culf asked to be copied in and she would share it with the Planners. Cllr. Smith accepted that the decision has already been taken for the Hastoe site and it is too late to change but the principle needs to be raised.

**ACTION: Cllr. Nigel Smith to write to ESC Planners.**

b) Cllr. Steve Thorpe referred to his previously circulated note which was published in the newsletter. The contractors are aware of the environmental sensitivity attributed to the removal of an old field hedgerow and, where possible, they will limit the removal of trees, shrubs and the bank itself. A power line pole will also have to be re-sited. The contractors will undertake replanting and Cllr. Steve Thorpe has asked to be involved with this.

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

a) Cllr. Chris Reynolds reported that the Quiet Lanes consultation period ends on 14<sup>th</sup> March and if no objections are received by this date then the nominated lanes will be put forward for Highways approval. Cllr. Reynolds will review the existing sign poles on the lanes and confirm which are eligible for a Quiet Lanes sign. Cllr. Reynolds is confident that the Highways budget will cover the signage costs.

b) The Clerk reported that the Council is eligible to apply to the Suffolk Coasts and Heaths AONB Fund however the application for swift nesting boxes was unsuccessful. The Clerk was subsequently contacted by the Nature Recovery Officer for the Dedham Vale AONB and Stour Valley Project who was also applying for swift nesting boxes and he said he was willing to include Middleton's requirements in his bid. SOS Swifts and Suffolk Wildlife Trust will provide one free community package of 6 boxes and a call system. A representative advised that the primary school and the church are the only community buildings

suitable for the nesting boxes as they need to be sited 4.5 metres high with a clear line of flight. The Church Warden indicated that the Diocese will be in favour of swift boxes as part of their wildlife policy.

**ACTION: Clerk to progress project to site swift nesting boxes on the Church.**

## **8. Recreation Ground**

a) The Council agreed to obtain quotations to replace sections of the fencing at the Recreation Ground to ensure it is rabbit-proof. The work will be funded by the Recreation Ground Trust.

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

b) To ensure the success of rabbit-proofing the Recreation Ground, the Council agreed to affix self-closing mechanisms to the gates. Cllr. Chris Reynolds suggested that Eastern Play Services may be able to advise on suitable devices.

**ACTION: Cllr. Julian Cusack and Cllr. Steve Thorpe to progress.**

c) The Council agreed to look into ways to prevent parking on the overflow parking area when it is not in use due to damage to the grass surface. Cllr. Steve Thorpe offered to research grass protection methods.

**ACTION: Cllr. Lesley Taylor and Cllr. Steve Thorpe to progress.**

d) Cllr. Julian Cusack reported that a cleaner has been sourced for the pavilion and a toddler group has booked for a weekly session. Cllr. Cusack plans to contact Eastern Play Services to conduct the annual operational inspection of the play equipment.

## **9. Summer Wine Group**

Cllr. Colin Whitbread reported that two socially distanced groups met recently. They cleared round the pond, the verge and the flowerpots on the Moor and the debris was removed to private land.

## **10. Energy Projects**

Cllr. Roy Dowding reported that the first preliminary Sizewell C meeting will be held on 23<sup>rd</sup> March. The Council agreed to register to speak at the meeting about the underlying principles and to report that agenda items 4 and 5 are not in the correct order. No response has been received yet to the Council's letters to the Rt Hon Anne-Marie Trevelyan MP and Philip Ridley, ESC Head of Planning.

**ACTION: Clerk to register to speak at Preliminary Meeting.**

## **11. Village Hall and Primary School**

a) Cllr. Lynda Whitbread reported that the disabled car parking space is in place and the post to protect the brick wall has been painted yellow. PAT testing of the electrics, installation of broadband and general maintenance is due to take place next month. Two residents were consulted about proposals to landscape and stabilise the bank.

Cllr. Lesley Taylor agreed to canvass support for resuming the drop-in coffee mornings outside from 1<sup>st</sup> April if the weather is fine. These will be COVID secure if the rule of 6 is adhered to.

The Council authorised further expenditure of £100 for the disabled car parking space due to a rise in the cost of materials. It was agreed to ask the Village Hall Management Committee if it is willing to reimburse this amount.

**ACTION: Clerk to contact the Village Hall Management Committee.**

b) Cllr. Lynda Whitbread said she would send a card to the primary school to thank them for supporting the children and parents through lockdown.

## **12. Finance**

- a) The Council noted the latest financial position.
- b) The Council noted the Local Government Act s.137 expenditure limit for 2020/2021 and 2021/2022.
- c) The Council agreed to donate £50 to the Coastal Accessible Transport Service.
- d) The Council authorised the payments below:

Details	Payee	Amount	Power
Clerk's Salary (7 weeks to year end)	Sharon Smith	£353.10	LGA 1972 s.112
Clerk's PAYE	HMRC	£39.60	LGA 1972 s.112
Clerk's Expenses	Sharon Smith	£48.63	LGA 1972 s.111
Pavilion Electricity	British Gas	£35.15	PHA 1936 s.87

### 13. Administration

- a) The Council conducted the annual review and approval of the Asset Register.
- b) The Council conducted the annual review and approval of the Internal Controls Statement.
- c) The Council conducted the annual review and approval of the Suffolk Local Code of Conduct.

### 14. Correspondence

The Council noted the correspondence received between 4<sup>th</sup> February 2021 and 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2021.

### 15. Next Meeting

- a) The Council confirmed the date and time of the next Ordinary meeting which is scheduled for Tuesday 13<sup>th</sup> April 2021 at 6:00 pm.
- b) The Council agreed to reschedule the Annual Parish Meeting and the Annual Meeting to Tuesday 4<sup>th</sup> May 2021 at 6:00 pm and 7:00 pm respectively.
- c) The Council agreed to convene an Extraordinary meeting for Tuesday 30<sup>th</sup> March 2021 at 6:00 pm to hear the views of residents about the Sizewell C proposals.

Public and press are welcome to attend all meetings. The details to join via Zoom are:

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

Meeting ID: 651 294 1956 Password: 3cwRhj

The meeting closed at 7:30 pm.