

STURMER PARISH COUNCIL

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Minutes of the **COUNCIL MEETING OF STURMER PARISH COUNCIL** held at **STURMER VILLAGE HALL** on **02 APRIL 2024 AT 6:45 PM**

COUNCILLOR	IN ATTENDANCE
Cllr Diana Garrod (Chairman)	YES
Cllr Alan Carter	YES
Cllr Terrie Jones	YES
Cllr David Porth	YES
VACANCY	
VACANCY	
Cnty Cllr Peter Schwier	NO – BDC Planning meeting

Locum CLERK – Cllr Diana Garrod

0 Member(s) of the public

23/134	NOTE AND APPROVE APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE
	<i>County Councillor Peter Schwier</i>
23/135	WITH REFERENCE TO THIS AGENDA MEMBERS ARE INVITED TO DECLARE ANY DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS, NON-REGISTRABLE INTERESTS AND OTHER REGISTRABLE INTERESTS
	<i>Cllr. Garrod – Footpath 3, Sturmer</i>
23/136	APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE MEETINGS HELD ON TUESDAY 20 FEBRUARY – 2024
	<i>Proposed Cllr. Jones, Seconded Cllr. Carter. Unanimous approval.</i>
23/136A	PRESENTATION FROM CANDIDATE(S) STANDING FOR CO-OPTION
	<i>Mrs Coral Fordham presented and will attend the next meeting for a decision by the parish council.</i>
23/137	PUBLIC PARTICIPATION SESSION <i>This provides an opportunity for members of the public to raise questions and comment on items on the agenda or of import. Time for this session is limited to 15 minutes (03 minutes per person)</i> <i>No members of the public.</i>
23/138	RECEIVE COUNTY & DISTRICT COUNCILLORS REPORTS <i>County Councillor, Cllr Schwier sends emails to advise of matters of interest. District Councillor, Cllr. Garrod sent a monthly report and added that Water Lane in Steeple Bumpstead will be closed for 4 days for gas connection. Finkle Green road closure on 5th April for power networks works and the B1057 is scheduled to be closed from 10th May to 13th September whilst Anglian Water undertakes works.</i>
23/139	RECEIVE CLERK'S REPORT & NOTE CORRESPONDENCE <i>Received and noted. VAT claim submitted.</i>
23/140	FINANCE – RECEIVE FINANCIAL STATEMENT - AGREE PAYMENTS Finance statement to be attached at APPENDIX A 23/140(i) - APPOINT AUTHORISER: <i>Cllr Carter (Proposed Cllr. Porth, Seconded Cllr. Jones. All approved).</i> 23/140(ii) – CONFIRM CLLRs NOTED RECONCILED BANK STATEMENT: <i>Proposed Cllr. Jones, seconded Cllr Carter. Unanimous approval.</i> 23/140(iii) – CONSIDER GRANT REQUEST FROM DEDHAM VALE NATIONAL LANDSCAPE: <i>Regrettably, the council cannot offer a grant at this time due to budget constraints. Request Clerk to write.</i> 23/140(iv) – RECEIVE UPDATE ON STREET LIGHTING ENERGY SUPPLIER OPTIONS: <i>Drax, Tomato and West Mercia were discussed. Stay with Drax and review monthly. Cllr. Porth to discuss with village hall committee the possibility of obtaining a metered supply through the village hall.</i>

	<p>23/140(v) – AGREE ANY REDUCTION IN CLERK’S HOURS FOR TEMPORARY LOCUM SERVICES: <i>Clerk to advise hours required to undertake work remotely only. The Parish Council would like to retain his services until a replacement is found. Proposed Cllr. Carter, seconded Cllr. Jones. Unanimous approval.</i></p>
23/141	<p>REVIEW & COMMENT ON CURRENT PLANNING APPLICATIONS/APPEALS <i>Former Woodlands Hotel: 23/01994/FUL. No Objections. Unanimous agreement.</i></p>
23/142	<p>CONSIDER TREE SURVEY REPORT AND HOW IT MIGHT INFORM A TREE POLICY – DEFERRED FROM PREVIOUS MEETING: <i>Cllr. Porth has viewed a number of Tree Maintenance Policies. The Policy should just include trees owned by the parish council. The recent tree survey report should form the base of a new policy, although may include a list of trees in the village with a TPO (Tree Preservation Order) as the parish council and residents would benefit from this knowledge. Cllr. Porth to provide a draft in due course.</i></p> <p>23/142(i) – UPDATE ON REQUEST TO MEET ON SITE REFERENCE ITEM FROM PREVIOUS AGENDA - CONSIDER RESPONSE TO EMAIL FROM PARTNER IN ARCHITECT FIRM ADVISING TREE WORKS TO LAND REAR OF ROWLEY COTTAGES TO REMOVE 60 – 70 DEAD ELM TREES, THE FIRM HAVE OFFERED TO ATTEND A PC MEETING TO DISCUSS THEIR PLANS: <i>Owners not responded to suggested dates. The parish council would like a meeting to discuss the boundary and proposals from the new owners. A tree has fallen and is hanging precariously near to the railway amenity walk (although no immediate danger) – this needs to be discussed.</i></p>
23/143	<p>RECEIVE REPRESENTATIVES REPORT: a) Footpaths: <i>Footpath 3 – 2 x ECC Highway blue barriers with ‘footpath closed’ notices have been in position since 2021. These were exchanged for new like-for-like barriers 28 February 2024 and tied to the fence of Pope Mill and gateway (as were previous barriers). New Temporary Prohibition of use Order notice pinned to a tree to close footpath 3 (again). Closure commences 4th March 2024 “... and may continue in force for six months or until the works have been completed. Whichever is the earlier”. Dated 29 February 2024. Proposed Cllr. Jones, seconded Cllr. Porth.</i> b) Flood Action Group <i>Cllr. Carter read the report for Sturmer Flood Action Group. Station bridge works are pushed back to 2025/26. No sluice gate at Haverhill.</i> c) Play Area – Approve play area inspection offer from RospaPlaysafety: <i>Cllr. Carter provided an update. ROSPA to undertake safety inspection. Proposed Cllr Porth, seconded Cllr. Carter. Unanimous approval.</i> d) Parish Maintenance: <i>2 new signs No Motorcycles now in place, one on Railway Amenity Walk at Pope Mill bridge and the other at the gate of the Pocket Park. Only one ‘Deep Water’ sign; replacement to be considered pending ROSPA inspection suggestions. Darren has cut an area at the Railway Amenity Walk and opposite the Garden Centre.</i> e) War Memorial: <i>Nothing remarkable to report.</i> f) Village Hall: <i>Easter egg hunt was a huge success. Next event; to celebrate D-day 80th anniversary.</i> [f](i) – Defibrillator function: <i>An intermittent fault. Self-diagnostic test sometimes fails but next test 10 minutes later is successful. Cllr. Jones will email. Still functioning.</i> g) Highways: <i>Pot holes throughout the village and collapsed bank at Water Lane with barriers on a blind bend are of concern. ECC seemingly taking no action. Residents have reported concerns of dangers to parish councillors.</i></p>
23/144	<p>RECEIVE UPDATE ON ST MARY’S CHURCHYARD CLOSURE: <i>No update supplied. Awaiting response from Braintree District Council.</i></p>
23/145	<p>DISCUSS PROPOSED TREE WORKS ALONG AMENITY WALK REQUIRED FOR PUBLIC SAFETY <i>Cllr. Carter provided update. 13 trees either felled or received maintenance as suggested by the recent tree survey report. 3 more need attention – Mr Bryce to undertake works.</i></p>
23/146	<p>CONSIDER FREE OFFER TO RECEIVE PORTRAIT OF KING CHARLES III</p>

	<i>Cllr. Porth applied for a portrait on behalf of Sturmer Parish Council, we await delivery. Size is unknown. Agreed by the Village Hall Committee that it can be hung in the village hall.</i>
23/147	ITEMS OF REPORT TO BE NOTED OR ADDED TO NEXT COUNCIL AGENDA
	<p><i>Motion to debate the potential co-option of candidate who presented at the meeting this evening. The candidate will attend the next meeting May 14th 2024. The registration book will be required.</i></p> <p><i>Cllr. Porth spoke of Pope Mill Bridge and advised that other bridges are owned by the parish council, including the Iron Platform Bridge near the sluice gate on the Railway Amenity Walk. Cllr. Porth to supply a list of bridges. All bridges to be noted at the next meeting and entered into the Parish Council Asset Register.</i></p> <p><i>Clerk applications. Parish Council will conduct interviews.</i></p> <p><i>Chairman; Cllr. Diana Garrod announced that she is resigning from the parish council after 21 years of service, on 3rd May 2024. Cllr. Garrod was elected Chairman in September in 2016 and has attended every meeting of the Parish Council since that time. Cllr. Garrod advised that she will support the Parish Council through her activities at the Braintree District Councillor for the Bumpstead Ward.</i></p>
23/148	DATE OF NEXT MEETING - 14 May – Annual Council Meeting – CLOSE: <i>19:33 meeting closed.</i>

Signed.....Date.....

APPENDIX A

Sturmer Parish Council Finance Statement - March 2024							PRECEPT 13,131.00	BUDGET	ACTUAL	BALANCE	
Date	Supplier	Description	Invoice	BACS/DD	Minute Ref	Rec	Credit	Debit	VAT	NETT	Cost Cnt
Month Closing Balance							13602.73				
04-Mar	WeDoSigns	Amenity walk signs	Inv14789	FPO		Y		210.00	35.00	175.00	Admin
04-Mar	Electric Websites	Annual email provision	280224	FPO		Y		18.00		18.00	Admin
06-Mar	DH Maintenance	Parish maintenance	Inv 050324	FPO		Y		100.00		100.00	PM
15-Mar	A&J Lighting	Lighting maintenance	Inv38107	DD		Y		27.00	4.50	22.50	Lighting
18-Mar	D Bryce	Tree maintenance	Inv 22	FPO		Y		200.00		200.00	Trees
18-Mar	HP Inc/IB	Printer Ink	Inv 95019	FPO		Y		6.72	1.12	5.60	Admin
19-Mar	DRAX	Electricity lighting	06013/00776	DD		Y		24.19	1.16	23.03	Utility
25-Mar	Employee	WFH Allowance	N/A	FPO		Y		26.00		26.00	Admin
25-Mar	Employee	Salary	PAYE	FPO		Y		498.75		498.75	Clerk
MARCH							0.00	1110.66	41.78	1068.88	
Month Closing Balance							12,492.07				
S106	Source - Exp 30-04-27	Open - Spend to date	Description	Balance							
	Wheel Chase	20,103.56		20,103.56							
Oct-20		5,664.00	Play equipment	14,439.56							
Jun-23		1,410.00	WM & Bench	13,029.56							

District Councillor's Report to Parish Councils April 2024

Cllr. Diana Garrod - Bumpstead Ward

Scheduled Temporary Traffic Regulation Orders & Roadworks

Intended closure of Wiggins Green, Helions Bumpstead on 3rd May 2024 for one day. The closure is required whilst Openreach undertakes pole testing. <https://one.network/?tm=137394156>

[** I continue to pursue a response from Essex Highways concerning the proposed closure of the B1057 from 10th May to 13th September.](#)

Launch of Community Infrastructure Grant Fund

Braintree District Council is launching a £100,000 fund to provide grants to community groups wishing to reduce their carbon output. This is part of a three-year investment plan funded from central government's UK Shared Prosperity Fund. The fund will support the council's delivery of a key outcome of its Climate Change Action Plan 2023/24, to help local community groups to reduce their carbon emissions and energy costs. Applications that feed into other Climate Change Action Plan outcomes are welcomed. The capital funding is available to existing constituted groups such as charities, associations, parish councils, voluntary and community groups, to make changes to physical structures such as:

- Installing sources of renewable energy to buildings or their surroundings
- Installing energy efficiency measures such as insulation or LED lighting to buildings or their surroundings
- Installing or embedding other capital projects which reduce carbon emissions to buildings or their surroundings.

Support will be given to a minimum of ten projects with funding of approximately £10k per project; however, applications for larger and smaller amounts will be considered. The grant is discretionary and projects may not receive the full funding requested if it enables Braintree District Council to support a greater number of projects. The project should be accessible to the community and should demonstrate a carbon reduction from existing infrastructure of at least 5%, which should be effective for at least five years. Groups will need to demonstrate how they will achieve this in their applications, and report annually following an initial six month evaluation.

Exciting news from Citizens Advice

Starting 8th April 2024, drop-in advice sessions will be each Monday from 9.30am to 1.00pm at Braintree District Council offices; Causeway House, Bocking End, Braintree CM7 9HB. Residents can drop in for advice on income maximisation, benefits, debt, employment, housing and much more. Alternatively ring 0808 278 7852.

Wethersfield – Asylum Accommodation and Prison Proposals

At the full council meeting held 18th March, Leader; Cllr. Graham Butland provided an update. It was reported that earlier today, the Home Office confirmed they had made a decision to cap the maximum number of people residing at Wethersfield at any one time to 800. The Council was aware that the capacity of the site was currently 1,245 and it was understood that the Home Office would therefore use the remaining 445 bed spaces for short periods of time. This was a reduction from the 1,700 originally intended, and in response to lessons learned and concerns of the local community.

The Home Office continued to occupy Wethersfield under the emergency permitted development rights, known as Class Q, and this provision was due to expire in April 2024. It was understood that the Home Office still intended to extend the use of the site for at least a further three years by seeking planning permission through a Special Development Order (SDO). The Council understood that this was progressing and were awaiting to hear more from the Home Office. The Council would continue to keep residents updated as and when they were provided with more information on the SDO. The cap on numbers was however, separate to the ongoing considerations by the Home Office around an SDO. With the site still in operation, the Council continued to maintain an open dialogue with the Home Office, whilst holding them to account and doing their best, working alongside partner agencies, to ensure that the needs of residents, both local people and those living at the site, were met. The Leader added that following the decision taken in February, the Council had sought permission from the Home Office to provide £50,000 of the funding, received by the Council to date

and would support discretionary activity on the site. Whilst accountability for support for Asylum Seekers remained with the Home Office, it was recognised that this was an important element of ensuring a safe and self-sufficient site, mitigating the impact on the surrounding community. The Leader reminded Members that the Council was required to administer this funding in accordance with Home Office instructions, the primary aim was to reduce the pressure on statutory services resulting from the use of the site for Asylum seekers, and that this funding was a one-off and expected to cover the entirety of the time the site remains in use. Applications had been received from groups the Home Office was in conversations with and who they would authorise to work on site. The deadline for applications against this grant funding was 4th March and the Council would imminently be letting groups know the outcome of the evaluation of those applications.

Finally, the Council had received confirmation that the appeal against the decision of the High Court, within which the Council challenged the Home Office's decision to use the RAF Wethersfield site, would be heard before the Court of Appeal on 11th and 12th June 2024. This had been listed alongside other appeals brought by West Lindsey District Council for the RAF Scampton site and the appeal by a resident from Wethersfield. Following the announcements of the intention to seek an SDO, and the Court of Appeal hearing dates, the Council were currently reviewing its legal challenge, which was taking into account the costs likely to be incurred.

Any further information will be put on the web page as and when it arises:

<https://www.braintree.gov.uk/news/article/380/braintree-district-council-sets-out-its-position-over-wethersfield-prison-proposals>

Council Adopts New Long Term Strategy

A new corporate strategy, setting out the council's ambitions and priorities up to March 2028, has been adopted unanimously by councillors at Braintree District Council, at a meeting of Full Council on Monday 18 March. The feedback received through a period of public consultation last year from residents and stakeholders helped shape the new strategy, which outlines the council's longer-term vision and aspirations for the next four years. It features three key themes: communities, prosperity and environment and under each outlines a number of council priorities, which, among others, include providing affordable, high quality and safe homes to meet the needs of residents, developing safer and more resilient communities, attracting and supporting business growth as well as protecting and enhancing the environment. With this comes a key focus to ensure equal opportunities are at the heart of everything the council does and ensuring services are fit for the future. This strategy will be supported by the council's new Fit for the Future transformation programme, ensuring that council services are delivered in the most efficient and effective way to help meet long-term financial challenges. Working in collaboration with partners across Essex is recognised as being crucial in delivering these priorities to deliver better outcomes for residents and businesses.

Deer Carcasses Found Dumped in Bags

A number of small Deer body parts have been found in bags (fly-tipped) on three occasions around a village in the Bumpstead Ward. Naturally there are concerns around the risk of food poisoning regarding the consumption of meat that is not stored or handled safely.

Cllr. Diana Garrod

Braintree District Councillor - Bumpstead Ward

STURMER PARISH COUNCIL - CLERKS REPORT APRIL 2024

Council have been advised of applicants for the position of Clerk.

The Guide group wished to know why they had not been awarded a grant and what would they need to change to be successful in the future, I explained that the council considered the request and on this occasion declined to award a grant and that any grant request is considered on its merits at the time but that this council had very limited funds to award grants.

The office is still awaiting confirmation from Cardinal Energy that SSE are in a position to offer a price to adopt street lighting energy supply for this parish.

I shall make arrangements to deliver the finance documents to the Internal Auditor, this council remains exempt and thus outside the requirement to complete an external audit, although you may still be selected as part of the percentage that is randomly selected to go forward for such an audit.

BDC, Richard Bass, has confirmed his operatives will attend to the bins at the play area / amenity walk when they next visit the parish as part of their usual, regular tours around the district.

The council have received various communications from the bodies that support this sector including BDC and ECC and all other matters are covered by the agenda.