

RISBY PARISH COUNCIL**Minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 4th March 2021**

Councillors present: Derrick Abrey (Chairman), Chris Sutton, Ian Turner, Steve Smith, Simon Gray, John Fairlie and Ben Ramsay

Also present: County Councillor Rebecca Hopfensperger, District Councillor Susan Glossop and five members of public.

Open Forum

The following issues were raised during the Open Forum:

- Dog fouling along School Road
- Adult gym equipment
- Possibility of a village party after the restrictions are lifted
- The possibility of planting more trees around the pond area on Lower Green
- Verge damage on Lower Green
- Possibility of signage along School Road to help delivery drivers

1. Acceptance of apologies for absence

No apologies were received.

2. Declaration of Interest in items on the agenda and dispensation requests

No councillors declared an interest in any items on the agenda and no dispensation requests were received.

1. Approval of minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 7th January 2021 and the planning meetings held on Thursday 21st January 2021 and Thursday 11th February 2021.

It was resolved that the minutes were correct. The chairman then signed them.

3. County Councillor's Report

Beccy Hopfensperger sent a written report which has been published on the Parish Council website. She spoke about the following:

- The request for a locality funding for a skip for the path clearing on Lower Green has been approved by Suffolk County Council.
- Suffolk County Council's general budget will increase by 1.99% and the ringfenced element for Adult and Social Care by 2%
- Cost of signage along School Road would be in region of £1,500 and would require the permission of the landowner.
- The Sicon tree planting project. Troston has planted trees as part of this project.
- She requested a list of drains and gully which need clearing.

The Parish Council asked her about the query from a resident about the shortage of spaces on the bus to Westley School. Beccy Hopfensperger explained that the policy changed due to COVID, the amount of people on buses had to be reduced. SCC was purchasing spare seats on a contracted bus, but the number of seats was reduced to 25% because of social distancing. The capacity will hopefully increase as the pandemic situation improves.

A resident has queried why the yellow lines along Newmarket Road have not been repainted. Beccy Hopfensperger has contacted Highways to find out when the work will be carried out.

4. District Councillor's report

Susan Glossop sent a written report prior which has been published on the Parish Council website. She also spoke about the following:

- The Census will take place on 21st March but can be completed online as well
- Suffolk County Council elections will take on 5th May along with the election of some district councillors.
- West Suffolk Council has increased its budget for a band D property by 0.9%. The Police has increased their precept request by 6.7%.
- She spoke about the SHELAA sites in Risby. Sites were put forward by landowners. These were then reviewed by West Suffolk Council and a document produced listing sites which have been deferred

sites. At the moment more sites have been put forward than are needed in West Suffolk without the need to include deferred sites and they will not be put forward in the Local Plan.

A question was asked about whether the option for remote meetings will be continued. Susan Glossop explained that this is still being considered by the Government. A possible option would be to allow hybrid meetings with some people attending and some attending remotely.

5. Police issues

There were no police issues to report.

6. Update on list of actions agreed at the last meeting

There were no outstanding councillor actions.

The bus shelter roof has now been repaired. The slates have been resited and cemented in.

7. Finance

a) Approval of payments and signing of the Schedule of Payments

It was resolved that the following payments would be approved:

- HMRC - PAYE - LGA 1972, s111 - **£99.00**
- J P Kirk - expenses - LGA 1972, s111 - **£2.45**

Chris Sutton and Steve Smith have checked and signed the invoices and Schedule of Payments. The chairman agreed to countersign it after the meeting.

b) Approval of payments authorised between meetings

No payments were authorised between meetings.

c) Statement of receipts and payments made since the last meeting.

Receipts

Refund of pension costs - clerk's other councils	£140.00
Refund of shredding costs - clerk's other councils	£33.35

Payments

Vodafone - Phone costs	£10.81
Leon Brown Arb-Agri Contracting - Tree works	£1,692.00
Community Heartbeat Trust - Defibrillator battery	£282.00
Wave (Anglian Water Business) - Water costs for the allotments	£13.36
The Cartridge People - Print cartridge (to be split between clerk's councils)	£51.90
Vodafone - Phone costs (to be split between clerk's councils)	£11.80
Staff costs (as per confidential cash book)	

It was resolved that the statement of receipts and payments would be approved.

d) Bank balances and confirmation of bank reconciliation as of 28th February 2021

Nat West Current Account	£637.86
Nat West Reserve Account	£10,940.18
Total in Banks	£11,578.04

It was resolved that the statement of receipts and payments would be approved.

e) Checklist of Internal Controls

Chris Sutton completed the checklist of internal controls.

f) Review of all regular payments including the clerk's salary and approval of payments relating to these services for 2021-22

It was resolved the following regular payments would continue to be paid in 2021 – 22:

Admin costs		
Community Action Suffolk - Insurance	£377	£377
Village hall rental - amount may vary depending on number of meetings	£100	£100

Internal audit fee	£65	£65
Scribe accounting software	£58	£129
Phone costs (shared)	£48	£44
Stationery (print cartridges - shared cost)	£20	£20
CAS Ltd - website hosting fee	£50	£50
ICO - data protection fee	£35	£35
Maintenance costs		
Grass cutting	£1,800	£1,800
Hedge cutting	£100	£100
Bus shelter cleaning	£250	£250
Annual tree survey	£561	£600
Defibrillator consumables (amount may vary)	£235	£100
Other payments		
Water bills for the allotments	£380	£200
Staff costs		
Staff costs as per confidential cash book (salary costs, PAYE and pension costs)		

g) PAYE details and tax code for the clerk's salary

Chris Sutton reviewed the clerk's Confidential Cashbook and confirmed that the PAYE details and tax code were correct.

h) Review of the income and expenditure for 2020/21 against the budget and the level of reserves for general and earmarked expenditure

Councillors reviewed the income and expenditure for 2020/21 against the budget. At year-end Risby Parish Council will have a budget deficit of -£563

Budget Summary 2020 - 2021

Receipts	
Budgeted	£12,416
Actual	£12,763
Difference	£347
Payments	
Budget	£10,830
Actual	£15,898
Difference	-£5,068
Less money from earmarked funds	
War memorial	£2,887.00
Tree works and tree survey	£1,271.00
Predicted over (+) /underspend (-)	-£563
Expenditure not included in the budget	
Larger than expected water bill for the allotments	£180.00
Cost of clearing the allotments and removal of wasps nest	£290.00
Drainage channel for Lower Green	£375.00
Defibrillator maintenance - replacement battery and pads	£235.00
	£1,080.00

Reserves

Risby Parish Council - Reserves Balance 2020-2021			
<u>Reserve</u>	<u>Opening Balance</u>	<u>Transfers</u>	<u>Current Balance</u>
Earmarked			
Election costs	£1,178.00	£0.00	£1,178.00
Pond maintenance	£2,500.00	£0.00	£2,500.00
Emptying of bins	£657.00	£0.00	£657.00
Village project - war memorial	£4,650.00	-£2,887.00	£1,763.00
Tree survey and tree works	£1,400.00	-£1,271.00	£129.00
Clerk and councillor training	£40.00	£0.00	£40.00
Total Earmarked	£10,425.00	-£4,158.00	£6,267.00
TOTAL RESERVE	£10,425.00	-£4,158.00	£6,267.00
GENERAL FUND			£5,139.11
TOTAL FUNDS			£11,406.11

Estimated reserve as of 31/03/21 £11,406 which includes earmarked funds of £6,267. The general reserve is within the recommended guidelines of no more than one year's annual precept.

i) **Review the register of fixed assets and insurance values**

Councillors reviewed the assets register. No new assets were added in 2020 – 21: The Parish Council's current asset value is £55,938 which is within the current insurance band of £50,001 - £75,000

j) **Review of the Council's Risk Assessment**

It was resolved that no amendments were necessary. The Chairman then signed it.

k) **Review of adequacy of insurance liability cover**

Public Liability (See 2 Below)	Officers Indemnity (See 3 Below)	Fidelity Guarantee (Dishonesty)	Business Interruption (See 5 Below)	Personal Accident (See 6 Below)	Employers' Liability	Commercial Legal Liability
£10m	£1m	£25k	£5k	£25k	£10m	£100k

It was resolved that the levels of liability cover were adequate.

l) **Appointment of an internal auditor to complete the Internal Audit Report in the Annual Governance and Accountability Return 2020/21 and review of the effectiveness of the internal audit**

It was resolved that Cathy Whitaker, clerk to Exning Parish Council, would be appointed as internal auditor this year and that a fee of £65 would be paid. The Council reviewed the effectiveness of the internal audit. It was resolved that the internal audit was effective and that audit regulations would be met for the following reasons:

- Does the internal audit sufficiently cover all aspects of the financial controls relevant to the council (for example risk management, detection of fraud, internal controls) and are terms of reference in place and approved? Yes. New Financial Regulations were adopted on 1st May 2014 to introduce procedures to detect fraud when using electronic banking. A checklist of internal controls is completed by a councillor at every meeting to verify payments on bank statements against actual payments as listed in the accounts to ensure that there are no discrepancies.
- Is the internal auditor independent (i.e. does not have any role within the Council)? Yes. The internal auditor does not have a role within the Council.
- Is the internal auditor competent to carry out their work ethically, with integrity and objectivity? Is there any evidence to suggest that this may not be the case? Yes, she is a parish council clerk

and RFO for Newmarket Town Council. There is no evidence to suggest that she will not carry out the work ethically, with integrity and objectivity.

- Is the Responsible Officer consulted in the internal audit plan? Yes.
- Are the responsibilities of members of the Council understood and has the necessary training been undertaken? Yes
- Is there a plan in place for when the internal audit will be undertaken and does the plan properly take account of corporate risk? The internal audit will take place in April 2021 prior to the accounts being approved at the Annual Meeting on 6th May 2021. The internal auditor's report will be presented to the Parish Council at this meeting and any issues raised by the internal auditor will be discussed at the next meeting and an action plan produced.

m) To review the effectiveness of the Council's internal controls

The following internal controls are in place:

- At each meeting a councillor checks bank statements against the Parish Council's accounts to ensure that transactions correspond and that the bank reconciliation agrees with the bank statement
- Where possible payments are approved at meetings and a Schedule of Payments is prepared which is checked by two councillors. Corresponding invoices are checked and signed by two councillors at the same time.
- Regular payments are approved at the March meeting and the invoices paid when they are received. These invoices are checked and signed by two councillors at the next meeting after they have been paid.
- The chairman rules off and signs the Schedule of Payments so that no amendments can be made after the meeting.
- Cheques must be signed by two signatories along with the corresponding invoice.
- A record of online payments is kept and checked at each meeting.
- If a supplier changes their bank details, the supplier must supply a written hard copy notifying the change.

It was resolved that these controls are adequate and are working well.

n) Appointment of a councillor to inspect the Council's property for damage or defects by 30th April 2021 and complete the inspection checklist.

It was resolved that Steve Smith would inspect the Council's property.

9. Planning

a) DC/21/0376/TCA - Holly Cottage, The Green, Risby - Fell one cherry tree.

The Parish Council was notified of this application after the agenda been published. The tree works were discussed at the January meeting when the tree owner contacted the Parish Council to explain why the tree had been felled.

b) Email from NALC about a new Government consultation on changes to the National Planning Policy Framework and the creation of a National Model Design code

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/national-planning-policy-framework-and-national-model-design-code-consultation-proposals/national-planning-policy-framework-and-national-model-design-code-consultation-proposals> (for information only)

Details of this consultation were received after the agenda had been published. John Fairlie explained that the Government is planning to update the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) to incorporate some of the Government's housing white paper from last year aimed at creating beautiful places. This is more relevant at a national rather than parish level.

10. Highways/Rights of Way issues/tree/transport issues

a) Quote from Hayden's for a tree survey

It was resolved that the Council would accept the following quote from Hayden's of £372.50 + VAT for a site visit and inspection of trees and £217.25 + VAT for the preparation of the tree survey report and other documents. The total cost will be £589.75 + VAT.

It was resolved that the clerk would be authorised to make the payment once the tree survey has been completed.

b) Suffolk County Council's purchase of ten Vehicle Activated Sign with Automatic Numberplate Recognition.

Beccy Hopfensperger has registered Risby Parish Council's interest. The Parish Council needs to send some information to Suffolk Roadsafe about which areas in Risby currently have a speeding problem.

It was resolved that the clerk would forward the request for information on to the resident who takes responsibility for the Vehicle Activated Sign (VAS).

c) Email from a resident about the ditch in Welham Lane.

A resident has asked if the ditch along his boundary in Welham Lane could be cleared as it has become overgrown with Brambles. He would be happy to maintain the area once it has been cleared

Sophie Flux from the Wildlife Working Group confirmed that they would be happy to help clear the area and plant some wildflower seed. It was resolved that the Parish Council would accept their offer of help once the current COVID restrictions have ended.

The ditch on the other side of Welham Lane becomes blocked quickly. The clerk explained that this is normally the responsibility of the landowner in the property adjacent to the ditch. The clerk agreed to email guidance about responsibility for ditches from Suffolk County Council's website to councillors.

d) Update on the Quiet Lanes Project

There is no update as yet. The clerk agreed to work with John Fairlie to help move the project forward.

e) Path clearing on Lower Green

Work to clear the path on Lower Green will take place once the current COVID restrictions have ended. The clerk will need to request the locality funding for the skip hire once a date has been set.

f) Remote meeting with Highways England about work which is due to take place on J41 westbound of the A14 (for information only)

The clerk updated councillors about a meeting which she had been invited to attend at short notice about planned work on junction 41 westbound. Highways England will be undertaking work to improve the signage and road markings on the slip road. The work will take place overnight between 8pm – 6am and is currently scheduled to start towards the end of April. Residents will be notified by letter. The clerk agreed to include information in the newsletter and on the Parish Council website.

11. Emergency planning

a) To appoint a councillor to be responsible for Emergency Planning

Ben Ramsay agreed to take on the role. An Emergency Planning Team will be set up. Trevor Kemp and Sophie Flux have offered to be part of the Emergency Planning Team. It was resolved that the clerk would email the draft Emergency Plan to Ben Ramsay and work with the clerk to finalise the draft. Once the final draft has been prepared, it will be shared with the Emergency Planning Team.

12. To discuss the following draft documents

a) Draft Scheme of Delegation

The National Association of Local Councils (NALC) has advised parish councils to have a Scheme of Delegation in place to mitigate the impact on meetings having to be cancelled in future due to COVID or any other reason to ensure that parish councils can continue to function. It was resolved that the Scheme of Delegation would be approved and uploaded onto the Parish Council website.

b) Draft volunteer policy

It was resolved that the Volunteer Policy would be approved and uploaded onto the website. Details of an emergency contact will be included on the consent form for volunteers. Volunteers would be covered by the Parish Council's liability insurance provided a risk assessment has been completed prior to an activity taking place. The clerk agreed to check the age lower age limit for volunteers covered by the Parish Council's insurance and also whether any personal accident cover is included for volunteers.

c) Draft risk assessments for volunteer activities including path maintenance and litter picking

It was resolved that:

- The draft risk assessment of volunteer activities such as path maintenance and work by the Wildlife Working Group would be approved.
- Volunteer litter pickers would be included under the Parish Council's insurance subject to completion of a volunteer consent form. A draft risk assessment will be prepared for the next meeting.

- The Wildlife Working Group would be covered by the Parish Council's liability insurance when carrying out activities on behalf of the Parish Council, subject to the completion of a risk assessment and volunteer consent forms.

d) Water costs for the allotments

It was resolved that the decision about covering the water costs for the allotments would be postponed until the next meeting. The clerk agreed to check whether sheds are allowed under the original allotment agreement when the allotments were purchased. Derrick Abrey and Chris Sutton agreed to investigate the possibility of providing some 1000lt containers which could be placed along the bottom hedge line and filled either by rainfall or hose so that watering by hand would be feasible.

13. To discuss any village issues:

a) Update on the Housing Needs Survey.

The Parish Council has been contacted by a resident in urgent need of affordable housing due the property they rent in Risby being put up for sale and is aware of another tenant in the same situation.

Due to staff absence at Community Action Suffolk (CAS), no further action has been taken to date however CAS has suggested a short meeting with the working group to discuss publicity ahead of the survey being delivered to residents, possibly in April.

b) Request from the Wildlife Working Group about the possibility of producing a Wildlife Policy and Suffolk County Council's Wildlife Verge Project.

It was resolved that the Wildlife Policy would be approved.

The Parish Council has been contacted by Suffolk County Council's Ecology Team about work they are undertaking with Suffolk Highways to consider changes to the way verges are managed and asking if the Parish Council would be interested.

Councillors agreed that they would like more information before making a decision. They agreed that they would be happy for a small section of the verge on the Cavenham Road near the entrance to Woodland Close to be proposed as a Roadside Nature Reserve.

c) Project to purchase adult gym equipment

It was resolved that a donation of £1,700 would be made to help fund the project.

d) Request for artwork to be kept on the Greens for an additional two months

Councillors confirmed that they were happy with this.

e) Appointment of a trustee for the Risby Charities

It was resolved that Stephen Spencer would be appointed as a trustee.

14. Dates of meetings (dates may change depending on Coronavirus restrictions)

- Thursday 6th May 2021 - Annual Meeting of the Parish Council followed by the Annual Parish Meeting
- Thursday 1st July 2021
- Thursday 2nd September 2021
- Thursday 4th November 2021
- Thursday 6th January 2022
- Thursday 3rd March 2022

Remote meetings are only allowed until 7th May. After that face-to-face meetings will have to take place which follow COVID guidelines. Councillors will need to sit 2m apart as will any members of the public and everyone will have to wear masks. The Government is being lobbied to allow parish councils to continue to hold remote meetings.

15. Correspondence

a) Two emails from a resident about the HNS and costs.

It was resolved that the Parish Council's response would restate that the costs of the Housing Needs Survey and report would be covered by West Suffolk Council and locality funding from Suffolk Council. If all 300+ surveys are completed by hand and posted there could be a small cost to the Parish Council but not exceeding £100. The decision to carry out a Housing Needs Survey was made at a meeting and this decision was minuted. The Housing Needs Survey will be an opportunity for all residents to give their views about future housing and will establish whether there is a housing need in Risby. The Parish

Council would like to draw a line under this and will not respond to any further queries about the decision to carry out a HNS and the cost.

b) Email from a resident about the SHELAA sites in Risby.

It was resolved that the Parish Council would pass on the information about SHELAA sites to the resident along with Susan Glossop’s email address as she is the best person to respond to any further queries.

c) Email from CAB requesting a donation

It was resolved that no donation would be made.

d) Email from Arthritis Action giving information about support which is available for people with arthritis

It resolved that this information would be uploaded onto the website and included in the next newsletter.

e) Email from a resident about Lower Green.

It was resolved that this item would be carried over to the next meeting as the meeting had extended beyond the 2 hours (+ 15 mins) allowed for meetings in the Council’s standing orders. The Chairman asked that this item be moved up the agenda to ensure that it is discussed at the next meeting.

16. Any other business for noting or including on the next agenda

The following items were for noting

- Emails from a resident about ground being cleared in School Road and concern about trees being felled without permission.
- Email from a resident about a 'dog waste bags hanging attachment' and new signage on the telegraph pole in front of the Church and about speeding in School Road.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 9.20pm

Signed (Chairman) Dated