

BARHAM PARISH COUNCIL

DRAFT MINUTES OF THE EXTRA PARISH COUNCIL MEETING HELD IN BARHAM CHURCH HALL ON THURSDAY 2ND SEPTEMBER 2021, 7.00PM

PRESENT: Chairman Darren Milward, Vice Chairman Frances Milward, Cllr Jeremy Lea, Cllr Neil Cooper, Cllr Brenda Mitchell, Cllr Andrew Akhurst & Cllr Cassey Wooltorton

Also present: BMSDC Cllr John Whitehead & Tim Passmore, SCC Cllr Chris Chambers, 26 members of the public 3 representatives from Highway Assurance and the Clerk.

OPEN FORUM

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting and advised that the meeting would be recorded. He introduced the 3 representatives from Highway Assurance Kevin Hadley Director, Robert Watton Managing Director & Dale Chenery Business Development Director. They gave a 20 minute presentation of their proposals for the future of the picnic site.

Robert Watton outlined that Highway Assurance was formed in 2015 and since then has been working out of a

yard space at Plummers Dell Great Blakenham. From 2015 -2021 Highway Assurance has expanded to 168 employees all living in the local area working within our traffic management and civil engineering divisions. While we are creating more jobs and livelihoods for our community there are problems around this which we are aware of in Plummers Dell and that is parking space and traffic. Highway Assurance use of the land will be to develop the area for us to be able to move our operations out of Plummers Dell and relieving the pressure from that area. Moving to Pest House Lane will also keep the base of Highway Assurance close to its place of origin so not to impact our locally based staffs travel and still giving our local community the opportunity for employment also allowing us to continue to support the local businesses. We have Suffolk Heritage and Suffolk values at heart. We would like the acceptance of the proposal from the wider public.

Kevin Hadley continued with the proposal;

Highway Assurance are proposing to refurbish the abandoned Picnic / Playground area on Pesthouse Lane Barham. At present it is unsafe and requires considerable investment to bring it up to the safe standards that it needs to be for young children to be able to enjoy it. The toilet block is derelict and will need to be gutted and reinstated to be able to service the requirements of visitors. At present the picnic area is overgrown and unusable and has several unsafe areas including an open sewer access that will need to be made safe. All footpaths are unusable due to tree roots growing through them and will have to be replaced.

Highway Assurance are proposing the following for the play area:

- The Play area is to have the installation of new safety surface around the play area and close board fencing around the perimeter to make the area secure and safe for children.
- The installation of new play equipment will be installed by a reputable specialist working to all British Standards and Health and Safety Legislation that would be agreed with the Parish Council on approval.
- New Seating area to be installed for the public to be able to relax.
- Refurbishment of the toilet block to include disable toilets and baby changing facilities.
- The access road will be assessed, and any repairs required will be completed.
- Parking for the Picnic area will be identified and agreed to allow people to drive to the park.
- Highway Assurance will arranged annual inspections and maintenance of the equipment and play area.

Highway Assurance to use the Remaining Land.

Chairman's initials.....

Kevin then explained the diagram/plan for the land and highlighted that a different entrance would be used for the commercial part of the site.

Cllr Woollorton asked how they proposed to install the fencing, as the picnic area is enclosed by 30ft of mature trees and bushes. Robert advised that the picnic site will not be reduced in size and the fence will be put in front of the trees.

Member of the public pointed out that the covenant states that the picnic site must remain as recreation use only.

SCC Cllr Chris Chambers reported that he has sought guidance and spoken to the local MP, SCC does not support any change of use. Therefore, no change of use will be granted while he is a county councillor and has the support of the MP. The picnic site will remain as recreation use and will not allow commercial use. He is also aware that a proposal has been put forward from the local people of Barham for the future of the picnic site and that this is worth considering.

BMSDC Tim Passmore advised that he understands the concerns of the public, now he has listened to the proposals for the future something must be workable for all to enjoy. Anything will cost a lot of money to take forward!! With all the local housing developments which are going ahead facilities will be needed.

Cllr Mitchell asked Highway Assurance what they will do about the graves at the site? Highway Assurance are not aware of the graves, so will have to take them into consideration.

Member of the public asked how big the area they propose to use for commercial. Robert advised that out of the 7 acre site, 4.2 acres will be used and the rest recreational.

The Chairman then introduced the 20 minute Open Forum for the public. He also added that after the many years of the picnic site standing derelict, finally now there is so much interest from the residents of the village to help and support the future of the site.

OPEN FORUM

Spokesman for the newly formed Picnic Site Action Group stood to speak and reported that the action group has been formed to represent a charity and to run the picnic site the same way that a similar group runs the Claydon recreation ground. The picnic site has laid dormant for many years and in fact many local people especially those new to the area do not even know that the land exists. The new group intends to return the space for the residents under the covenant that exists. They would expect the support from the Parish Council, District and County Councillors. A public consultation will be carried out with the residents to get a better understanding for the needs.

BMSDC Cllr Passmore advised that the suggestion from the Action Group is a very good idea, so lets now look positively at this way forward and not dwell on the past.

BMSDC Cllr Whitehead advised that there is an excellent Blue Print with the Claydon and Barham Recreation Ground Charity. This is well established with a lot of volunteers and could be followed.

Both the district councillors along with SCC Cllr Chambers, fully support the this way forward.

Cllr Woollorton advised that it would be useful if some volunteers could spend a bit of time clearing the play area in order to inspect the equipment to see what repair work is needed. Also other areas such as where the graves are located for the same reason. Cllr Passmore advised that the Community Payback (Probation Service) will be willing and able to help with the tidy up.

Member of the public also advised that in the past there had been a nature reserve at the site, which could be reinstated. Other suggestions to consider a proper picnic site again, make space for dog walkers, allotments/communal gardens, a large "green space" just for recreation. These are just a few ideas to take forward and now need the support of the Parish Council

The Vice Chairman welcomed that everyone is now showing so much passion and that everyone is on the same page, lets now move forward.

The Chairman expressed the excitement at the positivity and asked that a formal proposal from the Action Group is presented to the Parish at a meeting on Tuesday 9th November, 6.30pm in Barham Church Hall.

The Open Forum ended at 8.05pm

Chairman's initials.....

1.9 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

- a. **To Receive Apologies for Absence.** Cllr Wayne Allan due to work commitments.
- b. **Parish Council to give Consent/Non Consent to Absence.** The Parish Council approved the absence.

2.9 COUNCILLORS DECLARATION OF INTERESTS - Declaration of any pecuniary or other interests with regards to any item on the agenda. Cllr Mitchell & Cllr Woollorton relating to the Picnic Site.

3.9 TO CONSIDER PROPOSALS RECEIVED SINCE THE LAST EXTRA ORDINARY MEETING ON 2ND AUGUST 2021, FOR THE FUTURE OF BARHAM PICNIC SITE.

The Chairman asked the Parish Council if it was in agreement not to put the picnic site up for sale, having received the positivity of the community to take on the picnic site themselves for the benefit of the village. To give the Action Group a chance to come back on 9th November with its formal proposal. It was agreed by all not to put the picnic site up for sale.

The date of the next full Parish Council meeting will take place on Tuesday 5th October, 7pm in Barham Church Hall. This replaces the previously planned meeting on 6th September 2021.

The meeting ended at 8.10pm

Chairman

Date