

Stanford Rivers PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES

Meeting: EXTRAORDINARY PARISH
COUNCIL

Date: 15th June 2023

Time: 5.30pm

Toot Hill Village Hall, Toot Hill Road, Toot Hill, Essex

PRESENT:

Councillors (6) Cllr Glover (Chairman), Cllr Adams, Cllr Jackson, Cllr Mrs Jackman MBE, Cllr Tallon, Cllr Saridja

Also in Attendance (1) - Adriana Jones – Clerk

Members of the Public (0)

Members of the Press (1) Everything Epping Forest

QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

None.

P14.1051 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

None.

P14.1052 OTHER ABSENCES

Cllr Hollington (received too late to be reported to the meeting).

P14.1053 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

P14.1054 MINUTES

Councillors **APPROVED** the minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on 11th May 2023 as attached to the agenda.

P14.1055 INTERNAL AUDIT

Councillors noted that the final internal audit for 2022/2023 was completed on 25th May 2023, and formally **NOTED** a copy of the audit report which was attached to the agenda.

P14.1056 EXTERNAL AUDIT (AGAR) 2022/2023

Each year the Councils Accounts and Practices (known as the Annual Governance and Accountability Return - AGAR) are reviewed by an external auditor appointed by the Smaller Authorities' Audit Appointments Ltd. The following dates apply for this Council:

- The requirement for the public inspection period (to include the first 10 working days of July) will start 19th June and will end 28th July.
- The AGAR must be approved by 30th June 2023 and submitted to PKF Littlejohn by 3rd July 2023.

This year, the Council does not fulfil the criteria for exemption, and must undertake a limited assurance review. The Council therefore:

- a) Reviewed the effectiveness of the system of internal control of this Council
- b) Considered the findings of this review
- c) Prepared the Annual Governance Statement (Section 1)
- d) Approved the Annual Governance Statement by way of **RESOLUTION – PROPOSED** Cllr Adams, **SECONDED** Cllr Glover. **AGREED** unanimous vote.
- e) Considered the Accounting Statements (Section 2)
- f) Approved the Accounting Statements by way of **RESOLUTION - PROPOSED** Cllr Adams, **SECONDED** Cllr Glover. **AGREED** unanimous vote.
- g) Ensured that both the Annual Governance Statement and Accounting Statements was signed and dated by the person presiding at the meeting.

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P14.1057 PLANNING APPLICATIONS

Councillors **CONSIDERED** the following planning matters:

1. To CONSIDER any planning applications submitted to the Parish Council for comment as detailed below		
EPF/1304/23	Brook Cottage, Mutton Row, Stanford Rivers, Ongar, CM5 9QQ	<p>Prior approval for conversion of Agricultural Barn to a single dwelling house.</p> <p>The Parish Council would like to draw the following matters to the attention of the LPA:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. This structure is within the curtilage of a listed building, i.e. Brook Cottage. This is evidenced by the block plan from a previous application – EPF/0355/18. As such, the proposed conversion falls outside the scope of PD rights. 2. In order to meet PD requirements, the existing building must, in structural terms, already be “capable of functioning as a dwelling”. This means is that the building as it stands must be capable of conversion. If it requires such substantial building operations then what is proposed amounts to the construction of a new building, and if this is the case then the conversion would fall outside the scope of Class Q. The Parish Council believes this building does NOT meet this criteria, and in all reality is simply a shed and not an agricultural building, and as such PD rights do not apply in this case. 3. Historically this area had been prone to flooding – a matter which contributed to the planning permission for a ‘Replacement Dwelling’ issued in 1993. It is recognised within the supporting statement which stated that renewed cladding of 750mm is required for flood resistant construction, and that this is deemed necessary for the building to function as a dwelling (see point 2). <p>As such, the Parish Council feels the proposals fall outside the scope of permitted development rights.</p>
2. To NOTE any planning applications that have been responded to via the Clerk delegated powers.		
EPF/0994/23 & EPF/0995/23	40, Berwick Lane, Stanford Rivers, Ongar, CM5 9PY	<p>First floor extension to extend the existing flat roofed dormer to provide a first floor bathroom and ground floor alteration internal alterations and extension to existing outbuilding to create kitchen/living space with glazed roofed link to the house, plus Grade II listed building application for the same.</p> <p>The Parish Council has NO OBJECTION to this application, however it should be clarified as to whether or not the new outbuilding will be weatherboarded, as the supporting statement suggests it will be built with Soft Red Brick. It does not state that weatherboarding will be placed on the outbuilding to fit with the design of the current house, however the submitted plans suggest it would be weatherboarded. The Parish Council would support weatherboarding of this new addition.</p>
EPF/0812/23	Little Orchard, Colemans Farm, Toot Hill Road, Stanford Rivers, Ongar, CM5 9QN	<p>Outbuilding. Constructed with same materials as existing House. Barn doors for access and side window.</p> <p>The plans submitted are incomplete as they do not include two of the elevations of the proposed outbuilding, including the elevation with the proposed</p>

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		window. The Parish Council would like to see these elevations before commenting, and as such asks for this to be rectified and an extension of time given to allow the Parish Council to accurately consider the complete plans. It is also unclear what the outbuilding is for, and this would be very helpful as part of the deliberations.
EPF/0942/23	37, Cedar Lodge, Berwick Lane, Stanford Rivers, Ongar, CM5 9PZ	- Extension to existing dormer roof with accompanying canopy and PV's. - Single storey extension to hold a plant room - Minor amendments to windows and Juliet balcony As per the previous application (EPF/0821/20) there appears to be anomalies with the plans. The newly submitted application seems to show that the development is 'stepped down' between half and one metre, and whilst this doesn't affect the ridge line of the development, it is unclear permission is needed for this as the build is inconsistent with the approved plans. The proposed changes to the windows / Juliet balcony would not be possible with the current approved plans (EPF/0821/20) and as such this unapproved 'stepping down' seems very relevant and should be addressed. In addition, the proposed plans are inconsistent with both the submitted block plan and the approved plans, as they seem to show a much 'shorter' development. Whilst there is no particular concern regarding the plant room, the Parish Council feels it is essential that all the plans submitted are technically correct, in order for the application to be correctly considered.
3. To NOTE any planning applications upon which EFDC do not normally accept comments		
EPF/1102/23	Widows Farm, Toot Hill Road, Ongar, CM5 9QR	Application for approval of details reserved by condition 3'Surface Water', condition 4 'EVCP', condition 7 'Hard and Soft Landscaping', condition 9 'External Finishes' and condition 10 'Contamination' on planning permission EPF/2649/22 (Variation of condition 2 plan no's on EPF/2330/21 (Proposed demolition of existing stable building and construction of single storey dwelling and associated external works)

P14.1058 PUBLIC CONSULTATION SOLAR FARM

Councillors recalled that Anglo Renewables was preparing to submit a planning application to Epping Forest District Council for a solar farm at Berwick Lane, Stanford Rivers, the claim being that the solar farm would produce enough clean, renewable electricity to power approximately 6,011 homes per year. It would also offset approximately 5,284 tonnes of CO2 per year. A public consultation of the proposal was conducted on Tuesday 16 May by the site promoters, and Councillors considered the feedback from this presentation and residents views.

Councillors were cognisant of the fact that EFDC had declared a climate emergency, and that if EFDC granted this application it would go some way to meeting their carbon reduction targets. There was concern that it may already be a done deal because of this. Cllr Jackson stated that when he visited the consultation event, he had stated that the suggested community benefit of £25,000 was ridiculous, and was advised 'this was a starting point'. In addition there was a flip chart where people could suggest ideas as to how the money could be used, to which the Chairman suggested that any monies should come to the Parish Council to manage on behalf of the community. Cllr Jackson stated that the people who were really badly affected are the two cottages nearby, and that he felt some element of the money should be front loaded for those two cottages. Cllr Adams had sent the Clerk some information, including a document created by CPRE Essex in conjunction with a number of Parish/Town Councils entitled 'The Problem with Solar Farms'. This document sets out a number of very useful points to consider. Councillors discussed the feedback received from local residents to date, all of which had been negative. Councillors did understand that need for eco friendly methods of energy supply, however they had a responsibility to represent their residents, and could only see negative effects for residents at this stage.

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The main points of discussion were as follows:

- Developers preference for the lowest cost options leads to clustering around sub stations (included within the CPRE document).
- Concern at the impact on the openness on the Green Belt (included within the CPRE document).
- Land would be taken out of cultivation for 40 years – loss of food producing land – previously stated that the reversibility of agricultural land after 30 years is questionable, and that 30 years would not be seen by the local community as temporary.
- The Clerk advised that according to the Natural England 2010 publication of Agricultural Land Classification, this area of land was classed as Grade 2, with Grade 1 being the best and most versatile. Councillors stated that it had previously been mentioned that this was poor grade agricultural land.
- Concern about harm to the landscape.
- The construction traffic going up Berwick Lane – a single track lane in some parts – was wholly unsuitable. This would affect more people than just the two nearby cottages.
- Suggestion that the developers should resurface the whole of Berwick Lane, as there would be damage caused by the construction vehicles.
- Concern about the siting of the solar panels being so close to the two cottages, and that even though planting is mentioned, it will take many years for this planting to actually screen the panels. Cllr Jackson stated that at the publication event it had been mentioned that these could be cut back.

It was noted that concerns regarding the disruption due to the construction was not a valid planning matter and that this could be controlled by way of a planning condition, albeit impact on traffic was a valid planning concern.

The Council had previously been advised by a local resident that the land owner had advised him in a not particularly pleasant way that this would be happening, and that he had no right to a view, albeit the Council had no firsthand knowledge to corroborate this statement. Cllr Adams advised that a local group of residents were willing to go to court to challenge this, albeit it was noted that the Parish Council was a separate body and would not get involved in any such litigation. Cllr Adams stated that it was simply a case of understanding how the residents felt and ensuring the Council was positioned correctly.

Councillors discussed the invite to meet with the site promoters, however felt that to start with a set of questions should be agreed based on the discussion and concerns raised so far, and posed to site promoters, and once the responses received a decision taken as to if a meeting should be held. Cllr Adams asked if the local residents could attend such a meeting with the site promoters, however the Clerk advised Councillors that it was of course expected that they would give heed to feelings of local residents, however expressed the importance of Councillors maintaining an open mind so that any application could be properly considered if it came to council for comment. Cllr Adams felt very strongly that the Council should represent its residents.

It was **AGREED** that the Clerk would liaise with parish and town councils in the region to ascertain if they managed to secure any monies via the developer for similar schemes, and if so what it was for / how it has been used. In addition, the Clerk should create a list of questions to be submitted to site promoter for written responses, and then based on these responses the Council will then consider if it wishes to meet further with the site promoters. These questions should reflect the Parish Council's positioning early on rather than soft questions.

P14.1059 TOOT HILL VILLAGE HALL BOILER

Councillors noted that the village hall boiler did not seem to be working, and this was after it being serviced and repaired, twice. Whilst this was not a particular urgent problem in terms of the heating during the summer, there was no hot water for hall users. The regular users had been advised of this, however this had resulted in one user being offered a reimbursement of part of their hire fee, which Councillors agreed to. The Chairman advised that he had met with the contractors onsite, and although the heating was working to a degree, the pump for the hot water was not. The contractor used was not particularly helpful. The Clerk reminded Councillors of the £15,000 award from the Governments Property Fund via EFDC, stating that the Council needed to think carefully about spending money on a boiler if an air source heat pump could be fitted. However, it was unclear at this stage if it was even possible to install an air source heat pump at the hall, and if this could be done within the specified timescale of being completed by 31st March 2024 and with the funding provided. In addition, space would be needed for the fan outside, and a tank inside, and it was unclear at this stage if the hall had space. The Clerk had so far been unsuccessful in sourcing an engineer to visit site and look at this option. Cllr Adams had forwarded the Clerk a contact, whom she had contacted.

[Cllr Mrs Jackman left]

Cllr Saridja confirmed he would ask his contact. It was agreed that this matter needed to be resolved before the

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end of the summer. Although the hall had an urn for hot water, this should not be used to provide hot water for the sink to wash up as this could be dangerous. Councillors felt this Council would be lucky to get an ASHP installed within the next three months in any case. Discussion again took place about installing a hot water heater under the sink, however it was noted this would not supply hot water to the hand wash sinks in the toilets, which would be needed for health and safety reasons.

It was agreed the Clerk would continue to try and obtain information regarding fitting an Air Source Heat Pump, and if this was not possible to get quotes for a replacement boiler. It was thought that the current boiler was between 15-20 years old.

P14.1060 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Councillors **NOTED** the date of the next meeting:

- 13th July

Signed Date