

FINCHINGFIELD PARISH COUNCIL

REPRESENTING FINCHINGFIELD AND CORNISH HALL END



Minutes of the Parish Council meeting held at Cornish Hall End Village Hall on Tuesday 28th November 2023 at 7.30pm

Present: Cllr Strange (Chairman) Cllrs Martin-Smith, Cllr A. Stanger, Cllr R. Stanger, Cllr Duffin, Cllr Braithwaite, Cllr Warner, Cllr Heirs, Cllr Staines (BDC) K. Raymond (Parish Clerk) and Kevin B. Money (RFO). There were also 6 members of the public present.

- 144/2023 Vice Chairman's welcome.** The Vice Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting.
- 145/2023 To accept the resignation of Cllr Johnny Martin Smith as Chairman of Finchingfield Parish Council with immediate effect but to remain as Councillor on Finchingfield Parish Council.** Councillors accept the resignation of Cllr Martin Smith as Chairman. **All agreed.**
- 146/2023 To elect a new Chairman for the remainder of the year until the next AGM in May 2024.** Councillors discuss & agree Cllr Strange to take the position of Chairman. **Proposed Cllr Martin Smith Seconded Cllr J Braithwaite. All agreed.**
- 147/2023 To elect a Vice Chairman (if appropriate) for the remainder of the year until the next AGM in May 2024.** Councillors discuss & agree Cllr Johnny Martin Smith to take the position of Vice Chairman. **Proposed Cllr Strange Seconded Cllr A Stanger. All agreed.**
- 148/2023 Apologies for Absence** were received from Cllr Hammond & Cllr Ault.
- 149/2023 Co-option: To consider co-opting a candidate onto Finchingfield Parish Council to fill the vacancy in the Cornish Hall End Ward.** Councillors Co-opt Ashleigh Heirs. **Proposed Cllr Martin Smith Seconded Cllr A Stanger. All agreed.**
- 150/2023 To receive Members Declaration of Interest and dispensations in items on the agenda.** None received.
- 151/2023 Minutes of the previous meeting.** To confirm and sign the Minutes of the Parish Council meetings held on 31st October 2023. Cllr Duffin stated there was a small amendment to make, Clerk agrees to make the amendment, minutes to be signed after the amendment is made.
- 152/2023 Public Participation Session**
Member of the public stated they have two points to raise, firstly they would like more information on the pump track, asking if there is any local support & also to understand what the investment costs of the project are. Cllr Strange stated he would like to defer this until point 160/23 on the agenda where further discussions will be had and an update will be given from the pump track working group. Member of the public also asks for further information on what version of Tulip Tree that is going to be planted, states they have concerns on the height of the tree. Cllr Strange asks to defer this discussion until point 163/23 on the agenda where it can be discussed in more detail. Peter Dacey (Chairman of CHE Village Hall) stated he would like to confirm that the CHE Village Hall insurance is included in the Parish Council's budget, Cllr Strange & RFO confirm the insurance is included in the budget for next year.
- 153/2023 Report from the District / County Councillor**
Cllr Staines provides a report which can be found at <https://www.finchingfield-pc.gov.uk/agendas-and-minutes/>
- 154//2023 Finance**
- a. To receive the Bank reconciliations as at 22nd November 2023
Councillors noted the Bank reconciliations as at 22nd November 2023
 - b. To receive the comparison of Actual to Budgeted for 2023/24
Councillors noted the comparison of Actual to Budgeted for 2023/24

Signed

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- c. To approve the payment of Accounts for November & Subsequent payments for December 2023 and to agree a transfer of funds to meet the Parish Council financial requirements.

Proposed Cllr A Stanger Seconded Cllr Martin Smith. All Agreed.

155/2023 Budget for 2024/2025

RFO stated further to the last Parish Council meeting on 31st October, the Chairman asked for five Councillors to form a sub committee to discuss the budget, this has been looked at in depth.

RFO stated that BDC are stopping the street cleaning grant as from 1st April 2024, so effectively the Council is losing £4,228.00 of street cleaning grant, however this may be reinstated, we await confirmation from BDC. RFO confirms the precept goes from £62,693.00 to £74,885.00 which is an increase of £12,000 which equates to approximately between a 15% to 20% increase.

Further discussions between councillors around the precept increase, expenditure & current reserves.

Councillors vote on the precept figure of £74,885.00 for 2024/2025.

Proposed Cllr Martin Smith Seconded Cllr A Stanger. All agreed.

156/2023 Parish Council Website

Clerk stated the annual renewal cost of £180 has been paid to the website host. Also informs Councillors that after speaking with the website host, the cost remains at £60 per month, the website host has asked what the Councillors need and want on their website, looking at what kind of support package is needed. Clerk stated the website host will update/upgrade and make changes to the website, along with inputting information. Councillors discuss further. Councillors agree to pay for a maintenance & support package with the website host. Cllr Strange asks the Clerk to send the contract to Cllr Heirs & Cllr Duffin for reading before signing, Clerk to liaise with the website host.

Proposed Cllr Strange Seconded Cllr A Stanger. All agreed.

157/2023 Wethersfield Asylum Centre - Councillors to discuss the recent funding sent from the Home Office to BDC (25% capacity reached- 450 Asylum Seekers x £3,500 per bed = £1,575,000.) Councillors to also discuss & consider sending a letter to the Home Secretary regarding the current use & potential use of the site.

Cllr Strange referred to Cllr Staines report earlier whereby a letter was received from Dan Gascoyne confirming BDC has received money from the Home Office, however there are criteria around this, we await to hear further. Cllr Duffin discusses the importance of sending a letter to the Home Secretary, referring to how vocal James Cleverly has been with his views on the Asylum Centre, a letter should be written asking what the Home Secretary's immediate & long term plans are now that he is in a position to help & influence. Cllr Staines agrees sending a letter is important, also stated he will look further into the criteria regarding the money BDC has received from the Home Office. Councillors discuss possible conditions that maybe part of the money received. Cllr Strange asks Cllr Duffin to start to draft wording for a letter to be sent to the Home Secretary.

158/2023 Open Spaces Plan

Councillors to review the Open Spaces plan – add & remove projects/items. Open Spaces plan sent to Councillors before the meeting.

Cllr Strange asks all councillors to liaise with each other and the Clerk to finalise & amend the Open Spaces Plan so it can be agreed at the next meeting in January. Cornish Hall End Orchard to be included on the Open Spaces plan, Councillors discuss the current plan looking at other possible projects, however Cllr A Stanger stated the Council would need to liaise with BDC to confirm what projects would come under the section 106 funding, Chairman asks Cllr A Stanger to liaise with BDC to discuss and confirm. Further discussion on the allocation of section 106 money, who determines the restrictions and what projects it can be spent on, is there a process where the Parish Council can be involved from the start looking at where best to distribute future funding.

159/2023 Section 106 Funding

Marfleet Site Brent Hall Road - Councillors to discuss open spaces projects following section 106 funding from this development, currently S106 money stands at £18,043.00.

Cllr Strange stated the Council need to liaise with BDC regarding this available funding to confirm the criteria & any restrictions so the Council can move forward with discussions on new & existing projects. Cllr R Stanger & Cllr Duffin stated the need to look further into the developer's specifics on the funding, and the importance of being involved in future developments from the start.

160/2023 Pump Track

Cllr A Stanger discussed the history of the pump track referring to and answering the two earlier questions from a member of the public. Cllr A Stanger discussed how the Finche Group (registered

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Charity) has been fundraising for the past 8 years. Stated the BMX/pump track has been on the Open Spaces plan for some years, & the importance to attend Parish Council meetings to understand current issues and projects. Stated the Parish Council voted unanimously for a BMX track 2 to 3 years ago, currently the Parish Council has a working group for the BMX/pump track project along with the Finche group, so far, the group have met with BDC planning and shown the pre application drawings, BDC were happy with the drawings, providing there was more parking available. The next stage is applying for full planning, currently arranging for tree & ecological surveys. Also stated lots of people in the village have signed a petition, if planning is granted then drawings & information will be displayed in the Village Hall for members of the public to view, we are currently not at this stage yet. Cllr Martin Smith addresses the member of the public's question regarding not enough support for the project and stated after discussions that views have changed, & how now there is an understanding of the great local support & feeling for a BMX/pump track. Cllr Duffin stated how he has heard for a while how important a BMX/pump track is amongst young people, following a social media post he realised the interest and therefore contacted various people and had conversations, one of which came along as a guest speaker to a Parish Council meeting on 31st October who has since joined the working group. Cllr Duffin stated his concern was the volume of money being discussed, referred to the Radwinter BMX track being self built for a much smaller cost than the initial quote that has been put forward for the Finchingfield BMX track, and stated that perhaps something in the middle would be more acceptable on cost, also stated the current track in Finchingfield was self built, and it is clear the enjoyment people have had from being involved in the build. A member of the public asks if the BMX/pump track is multi functional? Councillors confirm the track is to be used by all ages and abilities. Cllr Martin Smith stated the reason for having a working group was to look at all possibilities, discussing quotes, insurances, involving local people, and to continue to update the Parish Council. Cllr Warner asks if there is any idea on how many people would come to use the track in Finchingfield? Cllr Heirs asks if there is a BMX/pump track in Rayne & Braintree what is the need for a track in Finchingfield? Cllr A Stanger confirms that after speaking at length with local people, there is a need for somewhere for children to learn to ride. Member of the public raising concerns on the cost, aware Finche group can finance some of this, but concerned villagers should be asked before money is spent. Cllr Strange confirms there is also section 106 money available for this project and if planning is approved a display will be shown in the Village Hall to view. Cllr R Stanger confirms the section 106 money was allocated to the sports playing field at Stephen Marshall, Cllr Strange & Cllr R Stanger discuss the need for Terms of reference for the BMX/pump track working party. Cllr Heirs stated it is an important consideration speaking to residents to confirm that there is a need.

161/2023 Finchingfield Pond & Sluice Gates

Cllr Strange stated five Councillors had a recent meeting with the environmental agency regarding possible ideas for the future of the pond, and how currently the Sluice gates are not very operative, the cost is very high to repair them. Cllr Martin Smith stated following the meeting which involved Archie Ruggles-Brise, the Council have learnt that they monitor the levels of the river and how they have changed over the years, together with the great amount of knowledge they have regarding the pond, several options were put forward. The conclusion of the meeting was that the Environmental Agency would make a plan to show what is best for environmental purposes moving forward. Cllr Braithwaite stated they are looking at flood risks, including climate change and what they expect to happen over the next 10 to 15 years, this will be presented to the Council. Cllr Martin Smith stated there were 3 options, however the Environmental Agency have said they were not in favour of reinstating the Sluice gates as environmentally they add to the problem. Cllr Braithwaite stated that if the Council decided to keep the pond as it is and reinstate the Sluice gates, the Council would have to pay for them, the environmental agency would not fund this, however if the Council decide to agree on an option that is more healthier and forward thinking that the environmental agency agree with, they may help fund this. Cllr Strange stated the Council will wait for the report and will then discuss further. Cllr Duffin stated it is very important to share the options and report with villagers.

162/203 Finchingfield Bridge

Cllr Strange stated we have not yet received an update from Essex Highways following Cllr Martin Smith's letter in September. Stated the ETRO has been discussed earlier by Cllr Staines, this survey is over 18 months of monitoring traffic, Cllr Staines confirms the ETRO does not monitor weight. Cllr Strange discusses the environmental weight restriction proposal, who to write to, Clerk stated she has just received an e-mail from a Highways Officer that sits on the Braintree Local Highways Panel, which confirms that the Parish Council need to address the proposal to Cllr Butland. Councillors & Cllr Staines discuss further on how to move forward, Cllr Strange & Clerk to liaise with Cllr Staines.

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163/2023 Community Planting Working Group

Cllr Strange discusses the Tulip tree that has been purchased, a member of the public is concerned with the height that the tree will grow to, Cllr Strange confirms it does not reach a height of 120ft/200ft, however will seek confirmation from Barcham Trees where the Tulip tree was purchased. Further discussions on the positioning of the tree, where is the most sensible place. Member of the public also stated the centre of the village is a conservation area, Clerk to speak to BDC to confirm.

164/2023 Finchingfield Christmas Tree

Cllr Strange & Cllr Braithwaite confirm a new tree has been chosen, Cllr Strange gives thanks to Mary Turley & all team members for their efforts in digging the hole on the village green for the Christmas tree.

165/2023 CHE Specific

Cllr Strange confirms Active Gardens Ltd will install the new play equipment on 23rd & 24th January 2024. Also stated the funding for the Community Orchard will arrive very soon, then the committee can progress to the next stage. Cllr Strange also confirms work should start in February 2024 on the playing field gate.

166/2023 Neighbourhood Plan

Cllr Duffin stated the Neighbourhood plan surveys were distributed around 2 weeks ago throughout Wethersfield & Finchingfield and asks everyone to contribute to the responses, the deadline for responses is 8th December. Stated so far 167 returns have been received, which equates to 7.6% of adults in the area, there seems to be a much higher response from Wethersfield. Attendance of the meetings has been good, also stated further to a recent meeting they have now been introduced to buffer zones between the villages and what is involved, constraints etc. The response to the surveys will be analysed after 8th December and more community engagement sessions will take place. Cllr Heirs stated she has been helping CHE residents that need help completing the survey and will continue to do so. Cllr Strange confirms he is resigning as Chairman from the Neighbourhood plan but will remain on the committee.

167/2023 Finchingfield Village Hall/Community Centre

Cllr Strange confirms a working group has been set up for a new Community Centre, and the Terms of reference need to be finalised. Stated the working group is made up of Councillors, residents that used to be Parish Councillors, a Village Hall Committee member & a local resident from a planning consultancy business. Stated an Architect is currently putting together drawings & a survey, stated this is going to need to be financed. RFO stated this has not been budgeted for next year, further discussions between Councillors. Cllr Martin Smith stated this is at a very early stage, with only one meeting had so far. Further discussion on where the New Community Hall should be, proposing it will be situated near the playing fields, funding has also been discussed, some areas with the Trust's agreement may need to be sold to raise enough money. Cllr Strange stated it is at an early stage but will need funding of £2,000 for initial costs, also stated looking further into grants available, RFO stated £2,000 will be transferred into the earmarked reserve account to cover initial costs. A huge amount of funding will be needed, as the overall building project could reach 1.5 million including fitting. This building will accommodate many local groups, with excellent facilities. Cllr Strange confirms he has sent a Business plan to all Councillors, also the RCCE & the National Lottery Fund has been contacted.

168/2023 Planning – To agree a response to the following applications.

Reference: 23/02583/OHL - Proposal: Installation of GRP substation, LV and HV underground and overground cables, poles & stays. Location: Street Record, Spain's Hall Road, Finchingfield
Councillors discussed the planning application & agreed a constructive comment could not be submitted due to not having enough information available.

169/2023 Closure of the meeting

The next meeting of Finchingfield Parish Council will take place at Finchingfield Village Hall on Tuesday 30th January 2023 commencing at 7.30pm. The Chairman then closed the meeting having considered and determined all items of business at 9.24pm.

Signed

JStrange
John Strange - Chairman

30th January 2024