

MINUTES OF THE IKEN ANNUAL PARISH COUNCIL MEETING
held on Thursday 21st May 2020 online via Zoom commencing at 7pm

Declarations of interests

All have interest in the River Wall project.

Loulou Cooke and Neville Howe have interests in the Coastal Path project.

Minutes of the previous meeting held in February

The Clerk had previously circulated the Minutes and all agreed they were a correct record and were duly signed and dated by the Chairman as such.

Election of Chairperson and Vice Chairperson

It is proposed Neville Howe to stay in post for the next six months to complete his term with Sir Thomas Hughes Hallett remaining as Vice Chairman. Sir Thomas Hughes-Hallett will then complete the next six months as Chair from November 2020 with Neville Howe completing his term as Vice Chairman. All agreed. Colin Chamberlain pointed out that according to the Standing Orders we should at this meeting be appointing the Vice Chairman who will carry on as Chairman the following year. As Kate Kilburn will not be standing as Vice Chair then Colin Chamberlain would be Chairman next year. Sir Thomas Hughes-Hallett added that we do have one person who has lived in the village for quite a long time and who is keen to become a councillor. They might even consider becoming the next Vice Chair. All support.

Annabel Chamberlain stated what she considered the usual rotation of Vice Chair and Chair. Loulou Cooke pointed out that election of Vice Chair can be carried out at the AGM meeting and consideration given to anyone who wants to stand.

ELECTION RESPONSIBLE FINANCIAL OFFICER

1. Clerk to be appointed as Responsible Financial Officer as agreed at the Parish Council Meeting 15th November 2019.
2. Approval of Lorraine being added as cheque signatory. *CC*

ELECTION REPRESENTATIVE ON ESTUARY PARTNERSHIP

Colin Chamberlain was agreeable to continuing on as IPC representative on the Partnership. He stated that now is not the time to report on what is happening.

Business raised by Councillors

1. Village Hall - Neville summarised where we had got to on the village hall. He suggested that the key priority for the coming year should be the potential sale of the village hall. Linked to this we should also consider a potential partnership with another parish, including use of another village hall. He pointed out that we had struggled as a council to get the right number of councillors on board because we are a very small population. Colin Chamberlain pointed out that the maximum number of councillors required is seven but there is no reason why we have to have seven and he thought that most councils exist on about four or five anyhow. There was a discussion about parish councils in general. Neville pointed out that there are small councils that work together and pool resources.

Bringing the discussion back to the village hall Neville went over what we had talked about at the last meeting – refurbishment and leaving it etc and pointed out that clearly we are going to have to “grasp the nettle” on the matter. A builder had priced the cost of making it good for the next ten years or so and Loulou Cooke had obtained a free informal valuation from Christopher Clarke. From this Neville and Loulou had explored the possibility of a sale. Neville pointed out that he hadn’t taken this any further as yet because he wanted to speak to Richard Mann and the Covid lock-down had prevented any further action. Lynette Morton had indicated at the last meeting that she is interested in purchasing some of the land and had followed this up with a text to Neville. He would be speaking to Lynette in the near future.

Loulou Cooke also had not been able to progress on the matter and added that Jonathan and Audrey Rutherford had also expressed an interest in purchasing a piece of the land. Loulou will speak to them later. Colin Chamberlain asked if the discussions with the neighbouring parties were for the whole site or just a bit of it. Neville responded that there hadn’t been an opportunity to go into too much detail. Christopher Clarke had given Loulou an indication as to how it might be split, to suit both the cottages and the Parish Council in terms of value. Sir Thomas referred the discussion back to the previous meeting where it was stated that we should obtain the opinion of the villagers and the Mann family. Neville pointed out that he wanted to include the Mann family in conversations regarding the village hall and grounds is because our duty is to do the best thing by the village. Loulou pointed out that we cannot take the matter forward until we can see all the parties concerned in a friendly and informal way as a sort of kick-off.

Neville and Loulou will speak to Lynette, Jonathan and Audrey. The need to include the Mann family was so that it did not come as a surprise since it was originally a gift from them, not that they were seeking permission to sell or anything. Colin Chamberlain stated that the village hall had been a subject of discussion for the past 40 years. There was a discussion around how much of the land would be sold and if there was an opportunity for a little bit being left for village recreation if required. Norman Johnson said that he felt slightly awkward about going into preliminary discussions and perhaps raising unnecessary hope when we have an obligation to get the best price. In order to get the best price we need to put it into the hands of an agent and open to anybody who wants to buy it. That isn't necessarily to stop people who are living right next door wanting to buy it and buying it through the agent through a bidding process. He thought going to individuals may raise hopes that might be dashed.

Loulou pointed out that Christopher Clarke had definitely said that it would maximise value if it were split between two interested parties and that the value would not be as high if it were sold as a plot to an outsider. Colin Chamberlain pointed out that if it is sold on the open market then prospective buyers need to be aware of the asbestos content of the village hall and the cost of dealing with that.

Neville pointed out that all we were doing is seeing if there is an interest somewhere and once that is established we will need to have an agent formally appointed. We must be very careful that we get the correct advice so that we are doing the right thing for the village. There are endless permutations – sell two pieces and keep a small piece for village recreation for example. Sir Tom stated that we should establish what is in the best interest of the village and the community and what the village wants rather than simply maximising price.

Action NH/LC

2. River defences

There had been no further meetings of partnership or any subcommittee. Everything has been put on the back burner because of Covid 19. We are hoping that the government is going to give over £10M towards river defences. Colin thought it was very much an open question as to how much money will be raised essentially from the government and whether it is even going to be viable. He awaits resumption of the meetings on the river defences to see what the situation is currently. There has been nothing in last three months. The business plan has gone in and the business plan may well be accepted by the Environmental Agency but whether the government is going to agree to stump the £10M-£12M is another matter.

3. Broadband

There was no more information to report other than Openreach were trying to do their best to connect the village.

There had been promises of having Broadband connected within a month and others saying BT weren't clear. Loulou reported that the diocese given permission for a dish on top of the church subject to responses from the public notices placed just before the lock-down. Loulou was concerned that placing the notices on the church door and noticeboard that people might not have seen them. Annabel Chamberlain stated that the fact that the notices had been displayed was all that mattered, not whether people had seen them or not. The law had been complied with, that was the thing. Lorraine asked whether it could be put on the website, Annabel said that it is not required to be on a website, just the place where it is to be installed, even if the church is closed because of the pandemic, and a place in the village.

Robert Gillespie asked on the assumption that it is coming if we needed a signal on the church. Loulou responded that she was told that Superfast would not reach everyone in the village and that the church would still be required for a few households. Whether that is still the case Loulou couldn't be sure because she hadn't heard from Fram Broadband again. It was pointed out that not everyone will be using BT and that Fram Broadband is sufficient for some people's needs. Loulou pointed out that the whole thing would be surface mounted and easily removed and only allowed to be there for a year at a time so if people are unhappy with it and it is deemed to be redundant in the future they will have to come and take it away. Robert Gillespie went on to say that what they are putting in will provide very fast Broadband but the real magic of it is to get fibres to the house which is what they are talking about. He thought it might be sensible to think of a village wide scheme rather than everybody doing their own individual things and went on to explain how it works. If the plan was genuinely carried out then we would have exceptionally fast Broadband. He was certain that if we all clubbed together getting one contractor to do all the cabling to the houses it would be a lot quicker, cheaper and more sensible than 14 or 15 different events. Loulou considered that there are some people that are quite a long way from where the fibre cable will be going and others almost on top of it. Neville spoke of nodes in various positions around the village and the various problems encountered by the contractors. Loulou asked if cabling had been laid around Sandy Lane. Robert responded that not in terms of laying cable but they are alleged to have strung fibres onto power cables with the posts that going around Sandy Lane. Fram Broadband had advised Loulou that it might not reach Sandy Lane and that was another reason for having the dish on top of the church. Colin Chamberlain considered that having "all our eggs in one basket" sounded very sensible at the moment. He thought we should be able to find a way into BT to see who we should approach and what sort of offers can be made in terms of handling the cables to the houses. Robert advised that Suffolk Broadband/Better Broadband for Suffolk have quite a good website and they do actually respond to emails.

Neville thanked everyone for this information and said that Outreach vans had been out in the last few days doing things. He will be phoning them in the near future to see if there is anything for Iken Barns so we will just keep an eye on it and see how much of the village is going to get covered and whether we can do more things jointly. It was thought Robert's suggestion is a good one and that we should all work together. All agreed.

4. Village Party

Neville spoke of plans for a social gathering planned for August and the current situation regarding social distancing. It was thought that we would just have to wait and see and make plans nearer the time.

5. Coastal Path

Neville said that he had no further news other than he had emailed Jonathan Clarke a couple of times to come along to one of our meetings. Jonathan had been reluctant to come to the last one because he hadn't finished his plans and he wasn't invited to this meeting because it was not thought things would have progressed any further. Loulou reported that there had been an effort with people on the other side of the estuary, the Hailes and the Skeppers, to research a possibility of a ferry from Orford to Aldeburgh so that the Coastal Path could run along the coast. It wouldn't affect any of the existing footpaths but would take perhaps the bulk of the traffic on along the coast which is where most people want to go when they are walking the coastal path. Loulou personally doesn't think it is going to run. There had been lots of chats with Jonathan about nesting birds and all the rest of it and Loulou thought that he was under pressure to get out his plan for this bit of the estuary. The idea of a ferry had been mooted but not costed properly and it is all pushing it forward. Loulou explained that he is probably going to come out with a plan now and she had said that she will not disagree with a plan but she felt the need to negotiate with Jonathan on their land if the ferry is not a starter. Loulou had made a couple of calls to James Skepper but she was not quite sure of the very latest state of affairs. She asked if anyone had a view about the Coastal Path running along the coast or going around the estuary. It is quite complicated. Colin Chamberlain thought the Alde & Ore Association right at the start put forward a proposal that what we need is a ferry that goes across from Orford Quay to Orford Ness which was rejected outright. Loulou pointed out that the plan for a boat from Orford to Aldeburgh was not rejected outright as long as it was a fast boat and that the costs could be kept down and all these things. Loulou has not been involved in getting the costings and thinks it may be getting a bit late and slows down the momentum. Colin said that what was said was that the ferry had to be open and a seamless path and that it wasn't subject to interruptions. Loulou thought that Jonathan was going to come out with his plan in the next week or two subject to any more input on the ferry plan. It will then be up to the individual land owners to object if they are not happy with the plans put forward. Colin then asked if it would then go to the Secretary of State. Loulou responded if there are serious objections it will then they pass it on to the planning office. Colin thought the timetable was slipping because of the Covid 19 situation, Loulou stated that this is one job they can do under the circumstances. It has been a difficult year for farmers, a dreadful winter and incredibly dry summer. Loulou said they had noticed an incredible increase in walkers and cyclists which had given them an insight into how things would be in the future, which is okay. Indeed they would welcome people on the footpath, taking down styles and things but think it is tricky in a number of respects, especially people parking for the coastal paths. There had been a number of complaints of people parking on the way to the Coastal path areas and it was feared it may become heavier in the future if the plans go ahead. Neville had spoken to Jonathan and got a similar overview to that expressed by Loulou. He thought that Jonathan was keen to get his proposal out there for people to look at and make comments. Loulou said that they had got the Suffolk Wildlife Trust to talk to Jonathan about the really material considerations in terms of wildlife on the estuary. So they have come to some sort of agreement on that basis.

Colin Chamberlain asked if we could talk about Iken beach along the boardwalk up to Snape and what do we think is going to happen there. Neville said he had always assumed they would put the Coastal Path where it already is so to speak. It may be that there is an outside chance that the main path may be put up away from the beach for a couple of bits. He had certainly spoken about where it goes past the fields with the horses and the possibility of moving the fences back where the path is muddy. There was a discussion about path widths but there doesn't seem to be plans to upgrade any of the existing paths. Neville stated that Jonathan was "playing his cards close to his chest" and not surprisingly. It was generally agreed the beach is not walkable at high tide.

6. Planning

Neville pointed out that there had been three applications in the last year noted on his report that went through. One of these was a discharge of conditions for his property. Iken Parish Council had submitted their thoughts and suggested rearranging some of the applications dealt with over the year and had received reasonably satisfactory outcomes. Broadly we are getting our views in and believe they are being heard. Colin pointed out that the jetty application was for sailing craft, not motor craft. Neville agreed and added that the curtilage of the property would not be extended to surround the jetty.

Norman Johnson pointed out that there had been revised drawings put on the Iken Hall tool shed application online today showing the outline curtilage has gone back to the original position so basically now this would be a new shed in the field. The entrance would be through the gate that is already there on Tunstall Road and none of the trees would be removed. It was noted that it is still away from the curtilage and nothing has changed from the original application. Nevertheless the Council had put in their views so were awaiting the outcome.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

1. EDF Development Consent Order

Colin raised the matter of the letters of opposition supported by Iken Parish Council regarding the EDF Development Consent Order for Sizewell C to be postponed until after the pandemic. Colin said that there was an extremely good session about a week ago during which there was a lot of speakers talking about Sizewell C and it is actually very alarming what is proposed. William Kendal was one of the main speakers and Alison Downes another. Colin thought it was worth everyone looking at the Sizewell C project to see if they were happy about it. He pointed out that it will be the biggest building site in Europe; there will be 10,000 workers which they say will create lots of local employment but Colin said it will all actually come from outside the area and it will split Minsmere in half. There is no real guarantee that it works because of the Chinese input. There was a suggestion of 500 lorries a day because they have rejected a port of materials coming in by sea. Add this to the sub-station and Iken importing its clay and one is possibly talking about 300 lorries a day coming down off the A12. The Consent Order would be for start of construction in early 2022. We were one of 57 councils that had supported the letter requesting a halt be put on decision making until after the pandemic. If it goes ahead the public is not going to have an opportunity to go to the sessions where they can find out more about it and be in a position to criticise it or comment.

2. Newspaper delivery

Colin pointed out that there was a newspaper delivery service to Iken and that it would be good if at least one other person joined the scheme.

3. The Link

Colin pointed out that *The Link* is being published electronically and it is available on the Iken website. The next edition will be out on the 1st June. It cannot be published in paper form at the moment because of the pandemic.

4. Audrey & Jonathan Rutherford

Now able to join the meeting with a stronger signal at this point wanted to say that if the Council went down the route of selling the village hall and site, both they and Lynette are interested in the opportunity to purchase for the valuation of whatever Christopher Clarke has suggested. Neville thanked Audrey and commented that we were rather worried that we hadn't been able to discuss the matter before we disappeared off the line so to speak. He reassured them that they were absolutely going to have a conversation on the matter. He and Loulou would put their heads together to see how we would be taking this forward.

5. Church Mowing

Colin asked that we had agreed a further £400 this year for the church mowing and this was confirmed.

6. What's App

Neville pointed out that after Tom had set up the Iken Hoo What's App site it had been very quiet for quite a while but now, probably due to the Covid 19, there has been much more village engagement so well done to Tom for setting it up and for bearing with it when we thought nobody was going to use it. It is used very regularly which is very pleasing. It was asked how do people join it and Tom said all people have to do is send him an email advising of their mobile telephone number. Tom also added that, for those that do not have it yet, Fenella's granddaughter has now moved into the village which is so lovely. What's App on laptops was discussed.

The meeting closed at 7.30pm

Date of the next meeting – 13TH August 2020