

MIDDLETON CUM FORDLEY PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE VIRTUAL COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON
TUESDAY 13th APRIL 2021 AT 6:00 PM VIA ZOOM

1. Chairman

The Council noted the resignation of the Chairman and appointed Cllr. Roy Dowding as Acting Chairman until the Annual Meeting which is scheduled for 4th May 2021. Cllr. Dowding said it was sad that the Chairman felt it necessary to resign and that he will be a hard act to follow.

2. HRH Prince Philip, The Duke of Edinburgh

The Council paid its respects to His Royal Highness, Prince Philip, the Duke of Edinburgh who recently passed away.

3. Attendance and Apologies

Attendees:

Cllr. Roy Dowding – Acting Chair
Cllr. Julian Cusack
Cllr. Lynda Whitbread
Cllr. Colin Whitbread
Cllr. Chris Reynolds
Cllr. Steve Thorpe
Cllr. Lesley Taylor

Apologies for absence:

County Cllr. Richard Smith
District Cllr. Jocelyn Bond
District Cllr. Terry-Jill Haworth-Culf
District Cllr. Tony Cooper

In attendance:

Sharon Smith - Clerk/RFO
4 members of the public

4. Councillors' Declarations of Interest

Cllr. Lynda Whitbread, Cllr. Lesley Taylor and Cllr. Colin Whitbread declared a pecuniary interest in item 7. The Clerk advised that all three Councillors had requested a dispensation under Section 33 of the Localism Act 2011. The Council agreed to grant the dispensation as it was considered to be in the interests of persons living in the area.

With the agreement of the Council, the Acting Chairman varied the Order of Business.

5. Minutes and Matters Arising

- a) The Council approved as accurate the minutes of the meeting held on 9th March 2021.
- b) The Council approved as accurate the minutes of the Extraordinary meeting held on 30th March 2021.
- c) There were no matters arising from both meetings.
- d) The Council accepted a request from Cllr. Lynda Whitbread and Cllr. Colin Whitbread to amend item 9 in the minutes from the meeting held on 9th February 2021. It was agreed that only a brief discussion was held about whether the Council agreed with two local landowners that the Sizewell Link Road should be taken up after the construction period and no formal vote was taken.

6. Public Forum

- a) A resident informed the Council of the results of his Sizewell Link Road survey. He said he had received 212 responses from three parishes of which 58 responses were from Middleton postcodes: 55 in favour of removing the road after the construction period and 3 in favour of it remaining. It was not made clear whether these responses were from households or individual residents. The resident said the 55 did

not attend the Council's extraordinary meeting and that he is concerned that a vociferous minority who attended and gave their opinion to retain the road should not undermine the purpose of his survey, which was to show the results to the Planning Inspectorate so it could force EDF to remove the road. This will increase the build costs and will cause EDF to consider alternative routes. The resident said it was the job of the Council to represent the community and to make a decision on this matter, having taken the opinion of the local people, and not to sit on the fence. He asked how the Council reaches a decision whether it was on a majority of Councillors or through the Chair.

Cllr. Roy Dowding said he had received a professional opinion from a resident who is a Fellow of the Market Research Society on the veracity and legality of the survey and the likelihood of it having any standing with the Planning Inspectorate. She said categorically that there are some strong in-built biases in the survey and the Examining Authority should quite rightly, in her professional opinion, refuse to accept it as evidence due to bias. It is entitled 'The SLR Removal Vote' whereas it should be a vote on the future of the Link Road once Sizewell C is built. The explanations are also biased as it only gives reasons for its removal and no potential benefits for keeping it. She said the parish might be glad of the road in 15 years' time when the level of traffic going to Sizewell for outages and other energy projects is still heavy. Cllr. Dowding said he had asked the Council whether it was appropriate to make a decision on behalf of the parish when it does not have the whole of the parish's opinions, and the opinions it has received in writing and at the extraordinary meeting have been mixed.

Cllr. Julian Cusack explained the Council's decision making process which is founded in its Standing Orders. The process under which the Council reaches decisions on matters set before it on its agenda is by voting by members of the Council in accordance with their views, which are informed by residents. The members have a duty to vote in accordance with their best belief as to the right future for the parish. If the parish electorate do not like the decisions the Council takes then the remedy is to remove them at the next election. Cllr. Cusack said the next practical step was for the Council to decide whether it should make a representation to EDF at its next meeting scheduled for the end of April about whether it is in favour of the Link Road being removed or retained. An alternative, perfectly legitimate decision is for the Council to say to EDF at the meeting that, in its opinion, a decision about the Link Road cannot be made at this time and any decision should be reserved for the Council and other relevant authorities at the time that the road is no longer deemed necessary for the construction of Sizewell C. A decision can be taken in the future at which point the facts pertaining to traffic flows can be reasonably taken into account and a rationale decision made. Cllr. Cusack said he did not think this was 'fence sitting' and that it was a reaction to an uncertainty that is built into the circumstances. Cllr. Cusack said he was not interested in playing games with EDF nor with the Planning Inspectorate and they will not take any notice of what Parish Councils say. The decisions about Sizewell C will taken on the basis of national policy and national planning matters. His view and vote, in the best interests of the parish, is for the Council to reserve its decision about the Link Road until it is no longer required for the purposes for which it may be built. Cllr. Cusack said that if the road is built it is inconceivable that it will be taken up.

Cllr. Roy Dowding agreed and said, in his opinion, the Council should reserve judgement until it has more information from other people including the County Council and whether it will harden or weaken its stance to adopt the road.

- b) A resident supported the third option of the Council reserving its judgement at this time as there is no information about the traffic burden in the future and any decision by the Council should be deferred until it can be taken on valid evidence which no-one has at present.
- c) A resident agreed that the Council should not make a decision at this time as the information about potential traffic volumes is still fluid and unknown. She opined that the Council reserving its decision would be the wisest and strongest choice.
- d) A resident opined that it was naïve to make a decision after the Link Road was built and this was effectively a vote for it to remain. He said EDF need to be pinned down in advance. He urged the Council to make a decision either way.

7. Sizewell Link Road

The Council considered whether to make a representation to EDF about whether the Link Road should be removed following the construction period to restore farmland and countryside or it should remain to alleviate traffic volumes on the B1122.

Cllr. Colin Whitbread said, that while he has sympathy with the landowners, he would like the road to remain. He said the arrangements between EDF and the landowners were not known, whether they were lease agreements or compulsory purchase orders with an option to repurchase the land at a favourable price if the road is taken up. He said these arrangements should be made clear to all concerned parishes. He said there was danger in the argument to press for the road to be taken up as EDF may decide not to build it and all the construction traffic will pass through the Moor. He said he does not want Sizewell C built but if it is then the Link Road needs to be constructed to a high engineering standard and become the new arterial route from the A12 to the Sizewell site.

Cllr. Lesley Taylor said she was disappointed that the Council has reached this difficult position and a vote either way has the potential to upset half the residents. She said she was concerned that the Council was considering its options in an insular way and suggested that the neighbouring parishes should be consulted for their views and these should be considered by the Council, as presenting a united front may put all parishes in a stronger position. She also had concerns that the Council was considering this matter for the wrong outcome and if the outcome was to force EDF to reconsider the D2 route then this is unrealistic as the D2 and alternative routes do not form part of EDF's proposals to the Planning Inspectorate. She said if the Council makes the Link Road difficult for EDF then they may delay building it, use the B1122 during the peak construction phase and deem it capable of taking the construction traffic for the remainder of the build.

Cllr. Roy Dowding confirmed that the D2 option was not in EDF's DCO application. The only way to have this route reconsidered is for the Planning Inspectorate to ask EDF why it did not give it more consideration as it will be mentioned in many Relevant Representations.

Cllr. Steve Thorpe said his initial vote was to remove the Link Road but after listening to Cllr. Taylor he agreed that the Council should not make a snap decision at this meeting and it should consult with neighbouring Parish Councils, and listen to the views of more residents, before forming its opinion.

Cllr. Chris Reynolds agreed with Cllr. Taylor and Cllr. Thorpe and said that whichever decision the Council makes it will split the parish. He sees that there are pros and cons to both sides but the Council should obtain further information and carefully consider its position.

Cllr. Roy Dowding proposed that the Council should reserve its judgement at this meeting until it has all the information it desires. All were in favour.

8. Casual Vacancy

The Clerk reported that one application has been received for the Councillor vacancy. The Council agreed the following process for co-opting applicants. Vacancies will be advertised on the website and noticeboards. A small working group will then meet all applicants informally and report back to the Council. Cllr. Julian Cusack, Cllr. Lynda Whitbread and Cllr. Lesley Taylor agreed to form this working group. The Clerk said she had reported the outgoing Chairman's resignation to the District Council.

ACTION Clerk to arrange a meeting with the applicant online or outdoors.

9. Trustees of the Middleton Recreation Ground

a) The Council noted the receipt of a Local Restrictions Support Grant arising from the closure of the pavilion during the second lockdown. The Council agreed to contact East Suffolk Council to confirm the Trust's eligibility to receive the grant and to hold the funds in abeyance until the position is clarified.

ACTION: Cllr. Julian Cusack to progress.

b) The Council agreed not to replace sections of the boundary fencing at this time to allow the neighbouring owner to carry out improvements to his property as he may require access from the Recreation Ground.

c) The Council considered a quotation from Eastern Play Services to affix a spring to the gate as a self-closing mechanism. Cllr. Julian Cusack said they were contractors for playgrounds and this was their recommendation. Cllr. Steve Thorpe opined that it was not particularly safe for small children and that a hydraulic, soft-closing mechanism would be preferable. Cllr. Thorpe offered to fit an identical spring he has in stock for free and to monitor its use. If it is considered to be unsafe, Cllr. Thorpe said he would research alternative methods.

ACTION: Cllr. Steve Thorpe to progress.

d) The Council considered grass protection methods and a barrier for the overflow car parking area but agreed not to proceed at this time. It was decided to erect a seasonal sign politely asking users not to park on the grass from October to May.

ACTION: Cllr. Lesley Taylor and Cllr. Steve Thorpe to progress.

e) The Council agreed to accept a quotation from Eastern Play Services to replace areas of safety surfacing and to repair and clean items of play equipment for £1,475 excluding VAT.

ACTION: Cllr. Julian Cusack to progress.

10. Highways

a) The Council agreed to apply for ANPR cameras from SCC Highways to monitor speeding on the B roads.

ACTION: Council to speak to the County Councillor at the next meeting.

b) Cllr. Lynda Whitbread agreed to speak to the village volunteer about downloading the data from the Speed Indicator Device on the B1122. Cllr. Steve Thorpe said he would progress the request for permission to site the Speed Indicator Device on the B1125.

ACTION: Cllr. Lynda Whitbread and Cllr. Steve Thorpe to progress.

11. Footpaths, Trees and Green Issues

a) Cllr. Julian Cusack reported that he and Cllr. Steve Thorpe will attend a virtual meeting with Suffolk County Council later this month about the Ecology team's response to the management of wildlife verges in the parish.

b) Cllr. Chris Reynolds reported that a footpath in the parish is blocked.

ACTION: Cllr. Chris Reynolds to report to Suffolk County Council via its online reporting tool.

c) Cllr. Lesley Taylor reported that EDF have commissioned an ecologist to survey the Moor ponds for great crested newts. Cllr. Lynda Whitbread said the survey included bats and other wildlife and that they are happy to share their results. It was agreed to ask EDF to share the report.

ACTION: Cllr. Roy Dowding to ask EDF.

c) The Clerk informed the Council that SOS Swifts had decided to site the free community package of six swift nesting boxes and call system on the east gable of the primary school. The school had been looking into this last year but the project was postponed due to lockdown. If the grant application to the AONB fund is successful then the Church can be reconsidered as a potential site for further nesting boxes.

12. Planning and Hastoe Housing

a) Cllr. Steve Thorpe updated the Council about the housing development on Back Road. Cllr. Thorpe said UK Power Networks will contact residents of Back Road to advise them of power and telecoms

outages arising from resiting the telecoms pole. Back Road will also need to be closed for a period of perhaps two weeks when all the necessary groundworks will be undertaken. Cllr. Thorpe raised a concern with Hastoe about workers on site on Saturdays. Hastoe confirmed the operational hours for the site are Monday to Friday from 8 am to 5 pm. They apologised for the groundworkers who attended without permission on Saturday and assured Cllr. Thorpe that this will not recur. The Council acknowledged that East Suffolk Council have finally agreed to allow under-occupancy of the homes by one bedroom.

b) The Council agreed to inform ESC of the derelict house at Annesons Corner.

ACTION: Clerk to progress.

c) The Council agreed to send the outgoing Chairman's response to a report and survey from Theberton and Eastbridge Parish Council regarding ESC's Planning Protocol.

ACTION: Clerk to progress.

13. Middleton Moor

The Council discussed whether to arrange a virtual meeting with the Middleton Moor Management Group but decided this may disenfranchise members who are not conversant with Zoom. An outdoor meeting was considered but the current COVID guidelines of rule of six or two households are too restrictive. It was agreed to arrange a meeting from 17th May 2021 when outdoor gatherings of up to 30 people are permitted.

ACTION: Cllr. Julian Cusack and Cllr. Lesley Taylor to arrange a leaflet drop to all Moor households.

14. Village Hall

a) Cllr. Lynda Whitbread reported that the Village Hall AGM was scheduled for 26th May 2021.

b) Cllr. Lesley Taylor said the outdoor drop-in coffee mornings had commenced and were well received.

c) Cllr. Julian Cusack referred to the report received from the Management Committee regarding the condition of the roof and that the outgoing Chairman had agreed to contact a roofing contractor to undertake an exploratory inspection. Cllr. Chris Reynolds agreed to take this forward.

Cllr. Chris Reynolds to speak to the Management Committee.

15. Police

The Council noted the latest crime report from Suffolk Constabulary.

16. Finance

a) The Council noted the latest financial position, including the receipt of a wayleave for £162.85 from UK Power Networks and a Community Infrastructure Levy receipt of £450.00 from the District Council.

b) The Council authorised the payments below:

Details	Payee	Amount	Power
Clerk's Salary	Sharon Smith	£115.30	LGA 1972 s.112
Clerk's Expenses	Sharon Smith	£15.00	LGA 1972 s.111
Pavilion Electricity	British Gas	£35.62	LGA (MP) 1976 s.19
Pavilion Cleaning	Iulia Gutunoiu	£20.00	LGA (MP) 1976 s.19
Annual Subscription	Suffolk Association of Local Councils	£189.07	LGA 1972 s.111

17. Correspondence

The Council noted the correspondence received between 4th March 2021 and 7th April 2021.

18. Energy Projects

a) The Council agreed to discuss the following matters with EDF Energy at the meeting scheduled for 29th April 2021:

- keeping Fordley Road, and all pedestrian and vehicle access to Kelsale parish, open;
- speeding enforcement measures on the B1122 and B1125; and
- removing the junction between the B1125 and the Sizewell Link Road.

It was agreed to consider improvements to footpaths and cycleways in the parish and Village Hall roof repairs as Council matters. Cllr. Steve Thorpe agreed to attend the EDF meeting with Cllr. Roy Dowding.

ACTION: Clerk to add improvements to footpaths and cycleways to a future agenda.

b) Cllr. Lesley Taylor agreed to monitor potential property blight in the parish arising from the numerous energy projects.

19. Next Meetings

The Council confirmed the date and time of the virtual Annual Parish Meeting and the virtual Annual Meeting of the Council which are scheduled for Tuesday 4th May 2021 at 6:00 pm and 7:00 pm respectively.

Public and press are welcome to attend all meetings. The details to join via Zoom are:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/6512941956?pwd=K29wbDZtUnhuaHRUTkxIWtZRQW1YQT09>

Meeting ID: 651 294 1956 Password: 3cwRhj

The meeting closed at 8:25 pm.