

MIDDLETON CUM FORDLEY PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 14th JUNE 2022
AT 7:00 PM AT THE VILLAGE HALL

1. Attendance and Apologies

Attendees:

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

Apologies for absence:

County Cllr. Richard Smith
District Cllr. Tony Cooper
District Cllr. Tom Daly

In attendance:

Sharon Smith - Clerk/RFO
District Cllr. Russ Rainger
2 members of the public

2. Councillors' Declarations of Interest

None.

3. Public Forum

a) The Council received a briefing from Tony Cole from County Broadband Provider. He said projects are underway to provide fibre optic cable to properties in many of the surrounding villages. Enough Middleton residents have expressed interest to make the project viable in the parish but around 50 households will need to formally sign up to a two year contract to enable the project to proceed to the next stage. Events will be organised in the village to invite residents to hear more about the project and to have their questions answered. The infrastructure costs will be funded by the government and the fibre optic cables will either be overhead or underground subject to the current infrastructure. County Broadband will provide a landline and broadband service but not a mobile telephone service. As it is a digital telephone line, they are looking to provide a battery back-up to enable telephone calls to be made in the event of a power cut. BT are also switching to digital lines therefore the facility to make telephone calls in an emergency will eventually be lost. The monthly charge for the service will be fixed until the service goes live in about a year's time and for the two year contract period. The costs will be £28 per month for the first six months rising to £45 per month thereafter for upload and download speeds of 300 mbps. There will be an option to reduce to 50 mbps for £28 per month after the six month trial period. The Chairman thanked Mr Cole for his briefing and a number of questions from the Council and the member of public present were answered. Mr Cole was unable to answer a question about whether trees chafing the overhead lines would affect the service and he offered to find out and report back.

b) District Cllr. Russ Rainger summarised his previously circulated monthly report. Highlights included the District Council self-reporting to the housing regulator about rent increase irregularities in Waveney, the resettlement of Ukrainian refugees, and the appointment of a new Environment and Climate Change Officer. Cllr. Rainger also reported that the Aldeburgh and Leiston ward members have pooled their budgets to create a fund to support residents with the cost of living crisis. There are no further details at present but the funds are likely to be awarded to organisations already supporting those in need of support.

Cllr. Roy Dowding, referring to an extract from a District Council cabinet meeting report shared by Cllr. Tony Cooper and Cllr. Russ Rainger, said he challenged everything in the report which extolled the benefits of the proposed Sizewell C development for education, businesses and the energy coast. Cllr. Dowding said there was not one mention of the impacts to local people in terms of the roads, the proximity of the construction site, the effects on tourism, etc. Cllr. Dowding opined that the District Council was heartless and they were only looking out for themselves and businesses but they may find that the benefits are not as good as they hoped. Cllr. Rainger responded that he had received similar feedback about the report from

other parishes. He said the extract was from a larger report therefore it was not a good reflection of the wider issues. The Chairman said it was an example of the ongoing propaganda from the District Council and he would appreciate a more relevant and personal monthly report to Middleton and the matters which pertain to it.

4. Minutes

The Council approved as accurate the minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting and the minutes of the Annual Meeting held on 10th May 2022.

5. Casual Vacancy

No applications were received for the Councillor vacancy.

ACTION: Clerk to invite the previous unsuccessful applicant to reapply.

6. Councillors' Reports

a) Energy Projects – Cllr. Roy Dowding said the decision on whether to approve the Sizewell C Development Consent Order is expected on 8th July. A new minister has been appointed to oversee the decision as Rt Hon Kwasi Kwarteng MP is involved with the government's new nuclear funding model.

b) Highways– Cllr. Graham Lacey reported that the recent Highways work on the B1122 has not resolved the flooding issue on Fordley Road as the ditches remain uncleared. Cllr. Lacey said he reported the issue online to Highways but he has not received a response.

ACTION: Council to raise issue with County Cllr. Richard Smith next month.

c) Footpaths – Cllr. Lesley Taylor reported that the hedges have been cut by contractors near The Causeway's junction with The Street which is not permitted during the nesting season. Cllr. Steve Thorpe replied that cutting is perhaps allowed if the hedges are observed for a time for nesting birds.

ACTION: Cllr. Steve Thorpe to draft an article for the newsletter.

d) Village Hall – Cllr. Lynda Whitbread said the Hall Management Committee were obtaining quotes for refurbishing the interior.

e) Primary School – Cllr. Lynda Whitbread said she continues to volunteer and is hoping to be involved in the year end activities. Cllr. Chris Reynolds reported that Sports Day is scheduled for 23rd June.

ACTION: Chairman to open gates for overflow parking.

f) Hastoe Housing - the Clerk said she had asked the District Council how much Community Infrastructure Levy was expected from the development but she has not yet received a reply. Cllr. Steve Thorpe said he is still waiting for a reply about the hedging.

ACTION: District Cllr. Russ Rainger to follow up CIL question.

g) Village Greens – the Chairman reported that the volunteer, who regularly cut the Village Green grass for 35 years, is no longer able to do so. The Council agreed to write a letter of thanks and to contribute £50 towards his costs for lawnmower fuel (OSA 1906 s.10). A resident reported that the grass was overgrown so the Chairman mowed that part of the green. A long term solution is required for the Green maintenance going forward therefore it was agreed to find volunteers or obtain quotes from a contractor.

ACTION: Chairman to ask for volunteers via the village newsletter.

h) Church - with regard to the disabled access to the Church from the Village Green, the Chairman spoke informally to a nearby resident. The conversation was constructive and it was agreed that a solution needs to be found.

ACTION: Chairman and Cllr. Graham Lacey to progress in conjunction with the Church. Clerk to search for funding opportunities.

i) Middleton Moor – the Council briefly discussed the draft report from the Suffolk Wildlife Trust. The Chairman said that, in essence, the report did not suggest any significant change to current practices and

that the greater crested newt population is healthy therefore the Natural England objectives are being achieved. It was agreed to form a working party comprising Cllr. Lynda Whitbread, Cllr. Colin Whitbread, Cllr. Lesley Taylor, Cllr. Steve Thorpe and the Chairman to review the detail of the report and provide feedback to the SWT. When a revised version has been received, the report will be presented at a meeting of Moor residents where their feedback will be sought.

7. Planning

The Council agreed to support planning application DC/22/1986/FUL – install solar panels – Brookside Lodge, Yoxford Road provided the solar panels are sited in the position shown on the plans and are not visible from the road.

ACTION: Clerk to inform the planning authority.

8. Parish Matters

a) The Chairman said that he, the Clerk and a resident met with members of the Environment Agency to discuss their routine maintenance programme in the Minsmere New Cut. The EA undertakes a weed cut between Reckford Bridge and the Minsmere Sluice to maintain the conveyance of water and to manage flood risks. This approach takes into account the number of properties at risk of flooding in Middleton and Eastbridge based on their current hydraulic modelling for the Minsmere River and its tributaries. Each autumn/winter they inspect the watercourse and this informs whether they will undertake this maintenance in any given year. The EA's permissive powers to carry out channel maintenance only applies where there is a flood risk to people and properties not gardens, outbuildings or farmland. Whilst there is flood risk to gardens and outbuildings in Middleton, there are no properties at risk of flooding and therefore this informs their decision not to conduct any channel maintenance upstream of Reckford Bridge. Whilst the EA does undertake channel maintenance works, the ultimate responsibility for maintaining a watercourse usually lies with the riparian owners, the persons who own the land on each bank. The riparian owner is also usually responsible for any fallen trees and branches in the channel. Reports of woody debris in the channel received by the EA are treated on a case by case basis and they engage directly with landowners to inform them of their rights and responsibilities and to provide appropriate advice and guidance. Where there is a genuine flood risk to properties then fallen trees and branches are removed from the channel. In other circumstances, the EA may advise a riparian owner about the potential ecological and wildlife habitat benefits derived from leaving woody debris in the channel. The Chairman of Theberton and Eastbridge Parish Council was also present at the meeting and he asked about the EA's approach to dredging and desilting as the Sizewell Marshes often flood, as they should, but the speed of drainage into the New Cut has recently been reduced. The EA replied that in many locations, including the New Cut, dredging and desilting does not achieve a sustainable and effective reduction in flood risk and they are not funded to undertake this type of maintenance for land drainage purposes. They acknowledged that weed cutting will improve drainage rates from the marshes in the short term but dredging would not be effective. They may undertake some dredging but only for small stretches near curves, bridges and culverts and they note that sediment usually returns within 3-6 months. Finally, the EA members advised that a different department is responsible for the overall water quality in the New Cut and they agreed to provide the Council with contact details for a further site visit to discuss the need for a holistic approach to watercourse management.

ACTION: Clerk to arrange a further meeting.

b) The Council discussed applying for an Outreach Post Office at the Village Hall. The Clerk explained that the facility at Yoxford does not generate any income for the Village Hall and the sub-postmaster has reported that they are very short staffed.

ACTION: Cllr. Lynda Whitbread to feedback to the Hall Management Committee.

c) The Council agreed to convene a separate meeting after the summer break to discuss the strategic aims for the parish.

d) The Council agreed to apply for a free hedgehog home from the Coast and Heaths AONB team for the Recreation Ground.

9. Finance

- a) The Council noted the latest financial position.
- b) The Council approved the Community Infrastructure Levy Report 2021-2022.
ACTION: Clerk to submit to ESC and upload to website.
- c) The Council authorised the payments below, with the exception of Cllr. Colin Whitbread who did not approve payment of the lawnmower maintenance invoice as it was not pre-approved by the Council in accordance with due process.

Details	Payee	Amount	Power
Clerk's Salary	Sharon Smith	£244.80	LGA 1972 s.112
Lawnmower Maintenance	Carl Robinson	£55.00	LGA (MP) 1976 s.19
Website Domain Name	IONOS Cloud Ltd	£12.00	LGA 1972 s.142
Data Protection Registration	Information Commissioner's Office	£35.00	LGA 1972 s.111

10. Correspondence

The Council reviewed the correspondence received between 5th May 2022 and 8th June 2022. It was noted that EDF were unable to attend this meeting due to a prior engagement.

ACTION: Clerk to invite EDF to attend the next meeting.

11. Next Meeting

The Council agreed the date and time of the next meeting which is scheduled for Tuesday 12th July 2022 at 7:00 pm at the Village Hall.

MIDDLETON CUM FORDLEY PARISH COUNCIL AS SOLE TRUSTEE OF THE MIDDLETON RECREATION GROUND TRUST

1. The Clerk has not yet completed her report on health and safety matters for the pavilion.
ACTION: To be added to next month's agenda.
2. The Council noted the monthly play equipment safety inspection report. The Chairman summarised the four medium risk findings:
 - i) Cable Way – the vertical cracks in the supporting timber posts are regularly tested to ensure the splits do not continue into the ground which would affect stability. There is no imminent risk of failure but regular monitoring is ongoing and the entire structure will eventually need replacing. This finding concurs with the annual safety inspection conducted by another inspector.
 - ii) Train – loose or missing fixtures - this is an aesthetic rather than a safety issue.
 - iii) Logs – the Recreation Ground Working Group will discuss whether the rotten timber logs should remain, be reduced or replaced.
 - iv) Gate – the Recreation Ground Working Group will inspect for surface trip points and decide whether to replace the safety matting.

Cllr. Lynda Whitbread reported that the metal bar on top of the swing is moving.

ACTION: Chairman to ask EPS to fix during next month's inspection.

3. The Council considered a request for adult outside gym equipment and the offer of a financial contribution from the Middleton Recreation Ground Fund Raising Committee towards the purchase. Cllr. Lesley Taylor said she supported the request as the Council has invested heavily in the provision of play equipment for children which only represents a small proportion of residents. The

Council agreed and decided to ask the Recreation Ground Working Group, which has a wider membership than the Council, for its views as to the position of the equipment and the number of pieces required.

ACTION: Chairman to progress.

4. The following payments were authorised:

Details	Payee	Amount	Power
Union Jack Flag	Sharon Smith	£29.99	LGA 1972 s.137
Electricity	British Gas	£25.09	LGA (MP) 1976 s.19
Electricity	British Gas	£34.12	LGA (MP) 1976 s.19

The meeting closed at 9:00 pm.