

## **BRAMFORD PARISH COUNCIL**

### **MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD IN THE PARISH ROOM, BRAMFORD ON MONDAY 15<sup>TH</sup> APRIL 2019**

**PRESENT:** M Brand, B Earthy, J Gardiner, P Heal, W Holton, A Horn, G Key

#### **1.4 QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC**

The Chair, Cllr Key advised those present that item 9 on the agenda was to be brought forward to follow item 5.

Cllr Key, welcomed Rhona Jermyn and Zac Norman from the Burstall Lane and Sproughton Community Group and Sproughton Parish Council respectively, who were attending the meeting, to give a presentation to Bramford Councillors regarding planning applications in the area.

Mrs Jermyn gave an overview of activities relating to applications in and around Sproughton and Bramford including the difficulties local residents face when responding to such applications, i.e. continual changes to the National Planning Policy Framework and the overwhelming size of relevant documents that individuals, with little experience of such matters, are expected to review when making comment on planning applications.

She stated both Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils had ‘failed residents’ by failing to adopt an up-to-date Joint Local Plan and that Highways’ mitigation with regard to the impact on road infrastructure was ‘...full of errors.’

Both Mrs Jermyn and Mr Norman stated it was important that both communities joined together to confront Babergh and Mid Suffolk DCs to hold them to account over planning failings.

A Bramford resident referred to a planning application for 13 houses to be built on the Fitzgerald Road site in 2003 stating that both the Parish and District Council opposed this application. They went on to mention the production of the Parish Plan document in 2005 (updated in 2012) where it was concluded that residents wanted to ‘...remain a village’ with an alternative site identified as a more suitable location for development (Cemex site – now with permission to build over 300 houses).

This resident went onto describe ‘Localism’ later becoming the ‘buzzword, with piecemeal plans being submitted, no overall coordination and applications being considered individually with the cumulative affects being ignored as a result.

They went onto reiterate earlier comments, stating the DC planning department was letting communities down, that traffic has nowhere to go and Bramford and Sproughton were becoming ‘trapped’ as a result.

Cllr Key stated that the Parish Council recognised the concerns raised and that similar comments have been continually made to the planning department when consulted over applications.

He went on to state that Councillors had previously opposed the development of the field in Fitzgerald Road in favour of the Cemex site and would continue to reiterate this position.

A resident stated the planning system was ‘broken’ with the District Council not having a current Local Plan in place so that developers were using the ‘sustainable development’ rules in the National Planning Policy Framework to push through applications as a result.

They stated Mid Suffolk DC had a five-year housing land supply which indicated no further need for new sites currently.

They went on to state the Vicarage Lane/Fitzgerald Road junction was on a blind corner and already 'lethal' with the junction at the B1113 equally as bad, especially at school-run times.

They stated the local infrastructure was struggling to cope, with the Primary School set to expand just to be able to cope with the Cemex development, and that the natural environment and productive agricultural land should be preserved.

County Cllr Field agreed that the planning system was not necessarily working, possibly due to the decision not to produce a Joint Local Plan in a timely manner. This being mainly due to the fact that all new housing was intended for Stowmarket.

He stated this hadn't worked effectively and the Joint Local Plan was now very late, with a number of issues affecting its delay.

He stated Mid Suffolk hadn't had a five-year housing supply, leaving the existing Local Plan with 'low weight' with regard to applications.

Despite the five-year plan being recently revised to show a sufficient supply, Cllr Field stated this still left the District Council with an out-of-date Local Plan and planning committees struggling to react as a result.

He concluded by stating the number of houses proposed for Bramford (610 approx) was a problem and that there were issues around Highways with it being difficult to persuade them to complete a simulation taking into account the whole area with regard to infrastructure issues.

Mr Norman stated both communities faced similar problems over housing applications, with over 600 houses planned for Sproughton alone. He stated the traffic at peak times was already impossible and that no consideration had been given to the cumulative effect of the applications currently being built, considered or in the pipe-line.

He stated he felt it was important that both communities united with other local parishes to create stronger and greater opportunity for consultation with both District Councils.

A resident presented the Parish Council with a note, allegedly compiled by Cllr Kingham, making threats over a potential planning application.

This resident was advised that the matter had been referred to the Monitoring Officer as per Standing Order guidelines, for further investigation.

Cllr Key gave assurances to relevant parties that this matter did not represent the Council as a whole and that Councillors had felt 'very uncomfortable' with regard to the matter.

He went onto request the Clerk keep those concerned updated with regard to the ongoing investigation.

## **2.4 TO RECEIVE THE REPORTS OF THE DISTRICT AND COUNTY COUNCILLORS**

Verbal and written report from County Councillor John Field, including potential children's centres funding cuts, possible work on the footpaths along Bramford Road to River Hills this summer and issues over 'energy projects' and climate change.

## **3.4 APOLOGIES**

None received

## **4.4 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST RELEVANT TO THE AGENDA**

None received

## **5.4 MINUTES**

Minutes of the meeting held on Monday 18<sup>th</sup> March approved and signed

## **9.4 PLANNING**

- a. DC/19/01649 – Outline Planning Application (some matters reserved) – Residential development of up to 175 dwellings and access, including open space and landscaping (DUPLICATE APPLICATION – DC/19/01401) – Land to the south of Fitzgerald Road.

Councillors considered this application and wish to make the following observations. In light of these observations, and the significant objection from local residents, Bramford Parish Council supports the feelings of the community and objects to these proposed duplicate developments.

The Parish Council considers the failure of Mid Suffolk District Council to adopt an up-to-date Local Plan, over a number of years, as critical to the achievement of sustainable development, in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework, in that '...clear policies that will guide how the presumption should be applied locally...' are not fit for purpose (para 15, NPPF).

Para.150 of the NPPF states '...local plans are the key to delivering sustainable development that reflects the vision and aspirations of local communities'.

The Parish Council feel the continued delays in consulting with local communities over the proposed Joint Local Plan, going back to 2017, indicates the local planning authority has failed to comply with this requirement, forcing unsuitable and unsustainable development onto the local community.

Para.153 states 'Each local planning authority should produce a Local Plan for its area...that can be reviewed...to respond flexibly to changing circumstances'.

Without an up-to-date Local Plan in place Parish Councillors feel the local planning authority is in no position to review such a document in line with this requirement, again forcing unsuitable and unsustainable development onto the local community.

Para.156 states local planning authorities should set out 'strategic priorities' to deliver the provision of infrastructure for transport, flood risk, health, security, community and cultural infrastructure and other local facilities.

The Parish Council believes that none of these considerations have been suitably identified within the applications submitted for this development, even if the new Local Plan were in place to do so. Para

157 indicates a preferable 15-year time horizon for drawing up a Local Plan which leaves the current document significantly inadequate and unreliable.

Para.159 states a local planning authority ‘...should have a clear understanding of housing needs...’ through a Strategic Housing Market Assessment, which should identify the scale and mix of housing the local population is likely to need over the plan period.

Parish Councillors have yet to see a copy of this document. They are unaware of the age of such a document, bearing in mind the age of the Local Plan, and consider this to be a significant area of concern as to whether suitable housing is being considered for Bramford.

Para.162 states the local planning authority should work with other authorities and providers to ‘...assess the quality and capacity of infrastructure...’ including transport, health, social care, education and flood risk, and its ability to meet forecast demands.

The Parish Council believes that Mid Suffolk DC has fallen well short in anticipating the cumulative impact of this, and other substantial developments either approved or awaiting a decision, on Bramford residents. Main road structures in and out of the village are not suitable for the anticipated increase in vehicular movements, effectively trapping local residents. No provision has been made for new health-care facilities for a number of years and residents are forced to attend GP surgeries in Ipswich that are surely near capacity. The promise of pre-school facilities is short-lived and unsustainable if secondary schools are unable to accommodate the increased demand.

The Parish Council remains unconvinced over the promise of infrastructure funding when much of this is consumed by relevant authorities at a national level, thereby leaving local communities without necessary facilities.

The Parish Council remain considerably concerned over Highways input, believing the need for an overview of the impact all planning applications in the area, from Great Blakenham to Wolsey Grange, should be considered as a whole. They feel that this particular consultee is failing to reflect the true impact of development in the area as a result.

Paras 178 and 179 state local authorities have a duty to cooperate on planning matters that cross administrative boundaries, with the Government expecting areas of common interest to be diligently undertaken, and that local authorities should work collaboratively with other bodies in the production of a Joint Local Plan regarding strategic matters, such as joint infrastructure.

The Parish Council fail to see how this is being implemented by Mid Suffolk and Babergh District Councils, resulting in the steady creep of housing development between Bramford and Sroughton and the apparent eventual demise of two unique, individual rural communities.

Councillors therefore believe the local planning authority is unlikely to satisfy the requirements under para.181, where evidence will be expected to demonstrate effective cooperation to plan for cross-boundary impacts when Local plans are submitted, when both Mid Suffolk and Babergh District Councils are far from submitting any such plans in the foreseeable future it seems.

In conclusion the Parish Council believes that sufficient sustainable development is already planned or ongoing within the Bramford area (Cemex site – 300 houses, Fisons – over 90 houses, By Pass Nurseries – up to 20 houses) to satisfy NPPF criteria and that consideration should be given to delaying the granting of further major development for at least a five year period, to establish whether existing infrastructure can cope with the already increasing demands being made upon the parish.

## **6.4 STATUTORY BUSINESS**

None to consider

## **7.4 ACTION PLAN**

- a. Works to Council Building – external woodwork and windows – Clerk is seeking quotes from contractors
- b. Works to Council Building – repair of decorative stone – Clerk has made enquiries with BRAMM for suitable contractors
- c. Cemetery – Additional Pathway – no further action completed at this time
- d. Cemetery – Field adjacent, maintenance – Clerk to present revised contract for legal advice
- e. Cemetery – Unauthorised Structure – Clerk to make further contact with ICCM and obtain legal advice
- f. Speed Indicator Sign – now delivered and ready for use

## **8.4 FINANCE**

- a. Monthly Payments – Councillors agreed to sign cheques to the value of £6,024.59, which includes £3,435.74 of emergency work to the water supply at Stationfield Allotments.
- b. Draft End of Year Accounts – Councillors considered the figures presented and accepted them as a reasonable reflection of spending for the 2018/19 financial year, subject to two further minor adjustments pending.
- c. Street Cleaner's Wages – Councillors agreed to an increase in line with the new Living Wage rate of £8.21 per hour.
- d. Clerk's Salary – Councillors agreed to an incremental increase to the new level 22, in line with NALC pay scales.
- e. Parish Room Hire Fees – Councillors agreed to waiver a hire fee for local groups who could demonstrate strong membership links in Bramford, and a reduction to £10 for other local community groups. To be reviewed if necessary.

## **10.4 REPORTS FROM COMMITTEES AND RELEVANT GROUPS**

- a. Bramford Playing Field – Cllr Gardiner stated there was nothing to report
- b. Loraine Victory Hall – Cllrs Earthy and Horn stated new toilets had now been fitted
- c. Bramford Open Spaces – Cllr Key stated there was nothing to report
- d. Councillors Report
  - i. No activities to report from Councillors
  - ii. No reports on village issues to report

#### **11.4 CLERK'S REPORT**

The Clerk reminded representatives of Committees and Local Groups that year-end reports were required for the Annual Parish Meeting on 22<sup>nd</sup> April.

It was agreed to keep this date, despite it being a Bank Holiday, due to there being no other suitable date to re-convene it.

#### **12.4 ITEMS FOR NEXT MEETING**

Councillors were reminded that the next full council meeting on the 20<sup>th</sup> May was the Annual Council Meeting, following the local elections.

Councillors requested an item regarding membership to the Allotments Association be added to the agenda.

8.50pm Meeting closed

CHAIR

DATE