

FRECKENHAM PARISH COUNCIL
Minutes of the Meeting of Freckenham Parish Council on
Monday 15th July 2019 at 7.30 pm in Freckenham Village Hall

Present: Cllr Wheeler, Pearson, Cornell, Douch, Barton

In attendance: Clerk, Jadi Coe, Cllr Harvey, Cllr Busuttil and 39 members of the public

Cllr Wheeler welcomed everyone to the meeting.

07/19/01 Apologies for absence & approval of reasons tendered

None

07/19/02 Declaration of interest in any items on the agenda

None

Cllr Wheeler reported that item 7.6, update on Sunnica Farm proposal would be brought forward.

07/19/7.6 Update on Sunnica Solar Farm proposal

Cllr Douch introduced himself to all in attendance and reported the following:

He and Cllr Barton attended a recent meeting of Graveney with in Goodneston Parish Council, located near Faversham in Kent. Graveney with Goodneston Parish Council are opposing the Cleve Hill Solar Park project, which is proposed to be built on an area known as Graveney Marshes. The proposals approximately 18 months ahead of the Sunnica project and are in the Determination stage, where councillors, local people and experts retained by the council are attending and speaking at hearings. Cleve Hill is an NSIP (National Significant Infrastructure Project), like the Sunnica proposal. Graveney with Goodneston Parish Council encouraged the formation of a Residents' Group which is reporting regularly to the Parish Council. They were concerned that because the Cleve Hill proposal affects several parishes and is close to the Kent/Medway county boundary, it could have caused division in opposing to the proposal and have worked to avoid this. They have encouraged us to ensure all group groups work together to present parishioners' views on the Sunnica proposal.

Graveney with Goodneston village has a trust fund which they were able to call upon for financial support, however Freckenham does not have this and would need to seek funds to pay for necessary costs, such as advice from a Planning Consultant.

Cllr Barton reported the following:

He and Cllr Douch have been busy creating a Parish Council Group to coordinate a joint response to the Sunnica Proposal. Following an initial meeting of representatives from six parishes, Snailwell, Chippenham and Worlington have confirmed they wish to be part of the group. The other Parish Councils that were invited to join the group. still need to confirm in a Parish Council meeting whether they wish to join the group. Having several parishes as part of the group, means that costs can be shared, we present a clear view, and we are more likely to find experts that can help several parishes together.

We have spoken with Suffolk County Council they sympathise with our views, that the proposed site is too large. We are waiting to hear from Cambridge County Council, East Cambs District Council and West Suffolk District Council on their views.

We have contacted various organisations including the RSPB, The Breckland Society and Natural England to ask if they would support the Parish Group and contribute their views.

We have requested an extension to the non-statutory consultation period as we believe the deadline is too soon.

07/19/03 Members of the public are invited to speak on any item within the Agenda

Members of the public voiced their concerns regarding the Sunnica proposal, included the following:

- That the Parish Council should be approaching land owners of the proposed site
- That Sunnica is fronted by several different Companies including one which went bankrupt, and concerns of what they may be hiding and whether if they went bankrupt again, what would happen to the site.
- If the change of use of the land from agricultural to industrial was made, then the land would not go back to agricultural once the scheme had come to an end
- The land is graded incorrectly by Sunnica, and that the soil quality is very good as we know by the crops growing around us

The Parish Council assured the members of the public that they do not support the Sunnica proposal, and that they would fight to prevent this being approved.

A member of the Community Action Group gave the following report:

Thank you for the opportunity to speak on behalf of the Say No to Sunnica Community Action Group.

As I hope you all know, we are not against Solar or Renewable Energy when projects are completed in the right way, following the Principles and Guidelines reflected in both the Governments own papers and those of other interested parties such as the Suffolk Preservation Society, Campaign for Rural England (CPRE) or even the Solar Trade Association.

The main objections to the Sunnica proposal are as follows: -

- The sheer size
- The loss of productive agricultural land for food production
- Failure to assess alternative brown field sites
- Disturbance of archaeological treasures
- Loss of views and local amenity such as walks and Byways
- Change of use from agricultural to industrial land
- Use of NSIP rather than sensitive local planning
- Loss of Breckland landscape character
- Poor quality of the Sunnica consultation
 - Red lines, maximum area
 - Name calling (NIMBY)
 - Poor communication
 - Local views not respected
 - Done deal mentality
- Noise and chaos from construction and clear-up from such a large site for in excess of two years
- Provision for animal welfare
- Birds (protected species like Stone Curlews)
- Bats
- Operational humming noise from battery plants, lighting from security fences and loss of privacy from CCTV security
- Negative affect on village settings
- Negative affect on house prices
- Unknown effect on human health and mental health

Message to Freckenham Parish Council:

Before the first public consultation at Worlington the Parish Council were invited to attend a separate consultation, as far back as March, where Sunnica informed you of their proposal.

In our view, the Parish Council failed to attach the appropriate level of seriousness, urgency or importance to the communication that should have alerted the village to this threat.

We ask that in future, not only for the Sunnica proposal but also for any other issue affecting the village that this will change.

In addition, we note from the minutes of a recent Parish Council meeting that you would seek to gain some form of preferential agreement for a private electricity wire from Sunnica.

As is clear from the Governments own guidelines and various associations involved in these sorts of schemes (such as the CPRE) this is not best practice and I quote:

‘CPRE has concerns about developers offering ‘goodwill’ payments to communities, which can bring the planning system into disrepute. Nor is it good public policy to secure the support of the immediate community through one-off payments when developments effect a landscape enjoyed by a much wider population, including the next generations. The Community Action Group would ask that the Parish Council do not seek mitigation of any sort and immediately inform the village if offers are made by Sunnica.

Not only does it weaken our negotiating position it strengthens Sunnica at a time when we are opposed to their proposal.

Once or if we are ever in agreement of a sensible scheme, accepted by the village, we can, in full transparency, make certain conditions on the scheme for the good of the wider community.

We would now like to inform you of the current status of the Community Action Group:

Having reviewed information on the Sunnica proposal that had been placed on-line by the Planning Inspectorate a group of concerned residents met to decide how we felt about the scheme and what action we should take to spread this alarming news.

Although this initial meeting led to regular Monday meetings in the conservatory of the Golden Boar, with growing numbers of attendees, it became obvious to us that the communication from Sunnica had been below most villager's radar, who were either unaware or not aware how large an area the panels would cover.

With this in mind we undertook a communication exercise to ensure every villager formed an opinion and could exercise their voice either for or against the proposal.

With the support of the owner of Impress Express and the owner of Woollards Timber, we constructed over 55 sign boards and with resident's permission erected them around our village, before the Sunnica Consultation, to ensure everyone was highlighted to the threat and had the opportunity to attend the Freckenham session and fully understand what was proposed.

In addition, we distributed Say No to Sunnica leaflets at the Farmers Market and other events to encourage even more people to attend which we are proud to say resulted in the highest turnout by any village to attend a consultation session including a local journalist from the Newmarket Journal.

It was gratifying to note that Brian Harvey (District Councillor) also attended and made clear his support for the Say No to Sunnica campaign and also posed in the campaigners photograph which was later published in the Newmarket Journal on-line.

We would also like to point out that we fully respect a local land owners, Richard Tukes decision to remove his land from use by Sunnica in this proposal, shortly after the consultation and after discussing the negative effects with many of our long-standing villagers who have known the Tuke family for many years. However, until the planning permission is sought by Sunnica there remains a threat from Sunnica of compulsory purchase or rental, so we will continue the campaign.

So, with the aim to increase awareness, we further exploited media opportunities, kicked-off first by Jane Leitch with a telephone interview with Suffolk radio which spread to the article on the front page of the Newmarket Journal, then a BBC Look East clip on television, an article in the Bury Free Press and a second publication in the Newmarket Journal. We are currently trying to secure a feature on Countryfile in an attempt to reach a national audience to raise awareness that this could happen to any village anywhere in the South of England.

To ensure we could give a clear mandate for organizations, associations and the Parish Council to act on behalf of the village we conducted a door to door petition to concretely understand the support both for and against the scheme.

The results are as follows:

There are **152** homes in the catchment of Freckenham.

Of these, **21** were not included due to being empty, rented out with no view by the tenant, no view due to sickness or ill health, no reply after multiple attempts and a leaflet drop or they are excluded due to being a member of the Parish Council with an impartial view.

Of the **131** remaining **3** accepted the scheme as submitted by Sunnica.

Leaving **128** against the scheme, making a total of **97.7%** of villagers opposed to the proposal.

The petition documents are being finalised and a copy will be made available to both the Parish Council and The National Infrastructure Planning Inspectorate.

In addition, on the 1st July we visited the Action Group G.R.E.A.T. (Graveny Rural Environment Action Team) in Faversham, Kent to pick up useful information and learn from their experiences in fighting another large proposal at Cleve Hill.

We researched on-line reports from Government bodies and associations such as Historic England, English Heritage, Breckland Society, RSPB, BTO, Suffolk Preservation Society, CPRE, Solar trade association, Natural England and many others in an attempt to lobby as much support against Sunnica as possible.

Going forward, we have a face to face meeting with the Director of Suffolk Preservation Society on Wednesday 17th July before they attend the Fordham Sunnica Consultation. Their aim in meeting with us is to coach us in how to run a successful campaign.

We will continue to strengthen our working relation with the action group members in other villages affected (in particular with Worlington). We are pleased to have two of these member with us here this evening.

It is also our intention to work very closely with the Parish Council Alliance. It is clear that they are best placed to network within local Government for support. At Cleve Hill they managed to get every relevant Councillor to oppose their scheme and we hope to do the same.

It is very important that the Neighbourhood Plan is completed as soon as possible including an Appendix covering the Industrial Solar & Battery Plant to give a further insight into your views on what you would or would not find acceptable.

We are setting up a smaller working group to ensure we keep up our communication and lobbying to all interested parties. This will involve more face to face meetings, letter writing and media updates. Once we have met with The Suffolk Preservation Society, we will have a better idea of the skills and experience we require and will look for more volunteers.

We are already using Social Media platforms Facebook, Instagram and Nextdoor and will increase their usage in the weeks ahead with an offer of help from a resident who lives in our village.

With help from volunteers we will continue to campaign and protest in the affected villages and surrounding towns to raise awareness and support. Depending on the actual planning application submitted by Sunnica we will consider to take our protest to the Houses of Parliament and National TV coverage.

In a few moments one of our members will demonstrate our new Website that has been set up with the support of their IT at Elveden Estates, being a Director of Finance and Services.

First, I would like to give a shout out to some key people for their hard work and or pledges of money for the campaign. There is no doubt that this is a community that can pull together when needed and all of you who are hosting signs in your gardens, a big thank you.

Finally, thank you for the opportunity to update the Parish Council and we look forward to seeing you at the next informal update at 6.30pm at the Golden Boar on Monday 5th August.

Cllr Wheeler thanked the speaker for his report and assured everyone the Parish Council were taking the Sunnica proposal very seriously.

In response to the Community Action Groups message to the Parish Council Cllr Wheeler responded stating that the Parish Council have acted promptly and efficiently. When the Parish Council were first notified of the Sunnica project, the Parish Council promptly arranged a consultation with Sunnica, which took place on 3rd April. He further mentioned that the Sunnica proposal was on the Agenda for the Annual Parish Meeting in May, of which the agendas were delivered to every household in the village. Subsequently despite the importance of the subject only 20 villagers attended, which was very disappointing. It was also on this evening's agenda, in which the agendas are published on the Parish Council website and displayed in the three notice boards around the village.

He subsequently mentioned during item 07/19/15 urgent business, the reason private wire had been mentioned was because a member of the Public at the Annual Parish Meeting asked that question- If the scheme went ahead, what how or could the village and/or residents benefit from the scheme ie- as reported request a direct line to benefit the village.

Cllr Douch reminded all that it was important that the Parish Council and the Community Action group work together going forward and not against each other.

Cllr Barton reported he would attend the Community Action Group meetings to update members of work that the Parish Council had carried out.

A member of the Community Action Group was invited to give a representation on the now live website 'Say No to Sunnica'.

The website was displayed on the projector screen and the member detailed points of the website including the link to complete the Sunnica questionnaire, which she urged everyone to complete in and use to comment on the poor quality of the Sunnica public exhibitions held.

A member of the public raised the question of asking the RPA for assistance as they support inappropriate development, why we hadn't approached more parish councils and if Sunnica could compulsory rent land if the land owning was unwilling to lease their land.

Cllr Barton responded stating he had contacted more Parish Councils but the Parish Councils had not confirmed whether they would be joining the Parish Council group at date.

It was reported that if Sunnica could potentially compulsory lease land if they could prove no other suitable site was available.

07/19/04 To receive reports from the County Councillor, District Councillor and to receive the Police Reports

Cllr Busuttil reported that he supported the Say No to Sunnica project, and he has already expressed his objection publicly. He has a scheduled telephone call with Matt Hancock (MP) secretary tomorrow to brief him on the proposal and local residents' views.

Cllr Harvey gave the following report:

Good evening to you all my report as District Councillor this month is as follows:

- The West Suffolk Council Leader is Cllr John Griffiths
- Main portfolio holders are
 - Deputy Leader & Housing - Cllr Sara Midway-White
 - Resources & Partnership - Cllr Sarah Broughton
 - Governance - Cllr Carol Bull
 - Regulatory - Cllr Andy Drummond
 - Families & Communities - Cllr Robert Everitt
 - Growth - Cllr Susan Glossop
 - Leisure, Culture & Community Hubs - Cllr Jo Rayner
 - Operations - Cllr Peter Stevens
- The committee makeups are still being worked through with the first meetings being held early July. These are advertised on the WS Web site, but if you require any specific information please let me know.
- The first round of consultation events is being held during May/June for the new proposed National infrastructure Project for the installation of a massive Solar farm "Sunnica". Principally based between Worlington and Freckenham with the second site at the junction A11 – A14 Chippenham.
- The process for Planning application reviews has changed slightly. It is now very important if Residents or PC's do have any concerns to ensure that these are raised to the appropriate Planning Case officer with copies to myself at: - brian.harvey@westsuffolk.gov.uk or on my mobile – 07801-472461 in order that I can present these issues at the "Revised Delegation Panel meetings".
- Recent thefts from the Church roofs at Freckenham & Tuddenham show the importance for smart water marking and other security measures. Freckenham village has already started to hold fund raising events in support of these repairs which are not fully covered by insurance. I am able to offer limited financial support towards these events but am unable to offer financial support directly to the Church itself. If there are any planned events being organised say by the village hall please let me know soonest in order that the appropriate applications can be made for assistance.
- We have recently received an update briefing on the new Mildenhall Hubb which is in the construction stage expected completion towards the end 2020.
- And finally, I have had The Honour to have been elected as the 1st Chair of West Suffolk Council, with my Vice Chair Cllr Margaret Marks.
- As you can imagine a very busy year ahead. If you have a local civic type events which you might like the Chair to attend please let me know soonest.
- I'm also on Twitter @Brian4manorward.

Cllr Harvey stated he was happy to take any questions, but the offer was declined.

Cllr Harvey also stated he was able to take 10 guests on an arranged trip to Toggam Solar Farm in Lakenheath on 30th July 2019. Cllr Barton thanked Cllr Harvey and he said he would provide names of those due to attend in due course (LB) Finally, Cllr Harvey stated that he may be uncontactable for 2-3 weeks from 5th August.

07/19/05 To confirm the minutes of the Annual Parish Council meeting held on 20th May 2019

The minute reference 5/9/22 was amended to state 'Sub-Committee' instead of 'Working Group'. The minutes of the meeting dated 20th May 2019 were then proposed as a true record of the meeting and the minutes were signed by Cllr. Wheeler.

07/19/06 Matters arising from the Minutes not covered in the Agenda

None

07/19/07 Planning

07/19/07.01 To consider any planning applications:

7.1.1 DC/19/1118/HH – Householder Planning Application – single storey extension at 6 North Street, IP28 8HY (expiry date: extended to 16/7/2019)

It was agreed there were no objections to the planning application and that the Parish Council supported it. (JC)

07/19/07.02 To note applications pending:

DC/19/0146/FUL - Planning Application - (i) change of use from agricultural land to accommodate 20 holiday lodges with associated camping area (ii) managers accommodation (iii) and open space for tourist accommodation and (iv) new access and associated parking. Ferry Lane, Worlington.

Noted

07/19/07.03 To note other applications:

DC/19/1205/TPO – Sycamore, lift canopy to 5 metres over parking bays at The Golden Boar Inn, Freckenham

Noted, no objections

DC/19/1180/TCA – Spruce, fell at The Golden Boar Inn, Freckenham

Noted, no objections

07/19/07.04 To note applications determined:

None

07/19/07.05 Update on Neighbourhood Planning Process

It was reported that the Neighbourhood Plan committee must keep working alongside the Sunnica Action Group. It is hoped that the plan will be completed early next year.

Cllr Wheeler reported that the final grant of £6,348 has now been confirmed and should be in the bank account within three days. This amount will be used to pay the consultant fee.

Cllr Pearson stated he felt it would be beneficial to hold another drop-in session in the Village Hall to keep residents up to date on progress

It was reported that there was a vacancy on the Planning Committee and it would be useful to have this filled by a knowledgeable resident.

07/19/7.06 Update on Sunnica Solar Farm proposal

This item was brought forward, and was reported after item 2.

07/19/08 Recreation Ground and other assets

07/19/08.01 Playground Report

A member of the public in attendance at the meeting gave her views on the dog mess in and around the village, particularly at the playing fields, and reported she often picked up after irresponsible dog owners. Another member of the public stated that as the grass had not been cut regularly this has caused issues locating her dogs waste.

It was reported a particular dog owner was causing issues by allowing their dog off the lead on the field and allowing their dogs in the play area. It was agreed that the clerk would draft a letter to the resident in question. (JC/DW)

Cllr Wheeler stated that the Parish Council were reminding dog owners to be responsible installing signs at the playing field, and publishing this in the Parish Pump including threatening that the playing field could be closed to all dogs if dog owners were not responsible.

07/19/08.02 Update on grass cutting

Cllr Cornell reported that the grass had not been cut as regularly as she would have liked but this has now been cut and that the weed pile would be removed in due course. She also reported that the patch of grass by the tree would have wild flower seed planted to create a wild flower area.

Members of the public reported that there were lots of weeds around the play equipment including prickly weeds and that the children's pathway is overgrown with vegetation.

07/19/08.03 Update on the wall between Chippenham Road & Shores Close

It was reported work had begun, although only a few bricks had been replaced.

07/19/08.04 Any other matters relating to the Recreation Ground

It was agreed that the self-closing gate still needs to be fixed specially now as dogs were entering the play area.

07/19/09 Highways Inspection

Cllr Wheeler reported that resurfacing of various roads in the village had either taken place or was due to take place, including Elms Road, which had been missed from the original Highways letter sent to residents. Cllr Wheeler also stated he is fighting to get the cats eye reinstalled on the roads to help improve safety.

It was reported a resident in the village may be using public parking spaces in the village to carry out trade. Cllr Harvey suggested contacting the relevant Housing Association, including a copy to himself, to advise whether permission for this had been given. (JC)

07/19/10 SALC

The date of the next local meeting was confirmed as 10th September 2019 at 7:00pm and is to be held at Lakenheath Pavilion and the date of the Annual General Meeting is 12th November 2019, at 11.30am and is to be held at Providence House, Princes Street, Ipswich. Cllr, Wheeler, Pearson and Douch also possibly, Cllr Cornell and the clerk if they were available would attend the scheduled local meeting.

07/19/11 West Suffolk District Council Town & Parish Forum

It was reported that the date of the next meeting is still to be confirmed

07/19/12 Financial Matters

07/19/12.01 To confirm payment of invoices

The following payments were confirmed for approval:

<u>Name</u>	<u>Details</u>	<u>Q no.</u>	<u>Amount</u>
J Coe	Salary	1019	£750.10
HMRC	Clerk PAYE and NI	1020	£187.40
J Coe	Expenses	1021	£19.41
Community Heartbeat Trust	Replacement batteries	1022	£223.20
D. Wheeler	Councillor expenses	1023	£27.30
Gipping Press	Printing of Pump	1024	£172.90
TOTAL			£1,380.31

07/19/12.02 To consider any invoices received after the Agenda was issued

The following payments were confirmed for approval:

<u>Name</u>	<u>Details</u>	<u>Q no.</u>	<u>Amount</u>
Peter Taylor-Whiffen	Pump editing	1025	£140.00
David Wheeler	Chairman's Allowance	1026	£100.00
Community Heartbeat Trust	Rescue Safety Kit	1027	£15.60
Jadi Coe	Sunnica expenses	1028	£24.00
			£279.60

07/19/12.03 Clerk to update on bank balances held

The clerk reported £2,342 was held in the current account and £16,051 was held in the deposit account at 15th July 2019.

07/19/12.04 Amendment to Bank Signatories

It was agreed to sign and send completed bank mandate adding Cllr. Douch as a full signatory on the current bank account. (JC)

07/19/12.05 To consider any charitable donations under S.137 of the Local Government Act for 2019-20 in line with the budget

It was proposed and agreed by all to make the following donations as per last year:

- St Nicholas Hospice Care- £50
- East Anglian Air Ambulance- £50
- East Anglian Children's Hospice- £50
- The Royal British Legion- £75
- The Sarmatians- £50
- The Alzheimer's Society -£50

07/19/13 Working Groups Report

07/19/13.01 Circular Walk

Cllr. Barton reported that the farmer continued to plough part of the walk although you could now walk around this on the grass verge.

Cllr Douch reported that the sign on Elms Road had been knocked down, he agreed to report this to the relevant authority once Cllr Barton provided him with the relevant contact details. (LB/AD)

07/19/13.02 Emergency Plan

Cllr. Pearson reported that there was no update apart from an email being received to attend a training course, to inform attendees how to use a village hall as a management centre, however he felt this training was not needed.

07/19/13.03 Defibrillator monthly check Report

Cllr. Wheeler reported that replacement batteries and a new rescue kit had been purchased and the volunteer who carries out the monthly checks had kindly agreed to replace the items.

07/19/13.04 Community Speed watch

Cllr. Cornell reported that several checks had been carried out and speeding vehicles were logged including a lorry travelling at 50mph outside the village hall. Cllr Pearson reported that due to volunteers of the group being on holiday no checks had taken place at the other end of the village.

07/19/14 Correspondence Received

None.

07/19/15 Urgent Business

Cllr Wheeler reported the Freckenham Golden Boar had advertised in the Parish Pump and that he agreed the Freckenham Golden Boar could advertise at the same rate as residents of the village.

Cllr Wheeler suggested making a donation to the Church to help fund the purchase of replacement roof lead or the equivalent. The clerk reported that a Parish Council cannot financially help churches.

Cllr Douch queried that he could not find a Community Electricity scheme similar to that of the Community Oil purchase scheme. Cllr Wheeler responded stating he would look more into this as he believed there was something on the market.

Cllr Cornell reported of a vehicle not stopping to give way when entering Elms Road from The Street. It is hoped that once the white lines are painted after the resurfacing has been completed, it will be clearer to vehicles that they need to give way.

Cllr Douch reported that at his home he had trimmed his hedge and has applied to EDF to have the high part of the hedge that reaches the wires to be cut, and if agreed then the road (Mildenhall Road) may be partially closed whilst the work is carried out.

07/19/16 Future Meetings

The date of the next meeting was confirmed as 16th September 2019.

The meeting closed at 10:20.

Jadi Coe

Clerk to the Council