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**Minutes of the West Acre Parish Council Meeting**

**held at 6:00pm on 11th July 2022 at West Acre Village Hall**

**Present**

**Parish Councillors:**

Cllr Eoghan Sheils (Chair),

Cllr Ernest Heatley,

Cllr Ralph Sliwa

Cllr Jeremy Cameron

Clerk: David Williams

Item 1 **Apologies for absence**

* There were apologies from Cllr Ralph Sliwa, Cllr Peter Wilson and Cllr J Moriarty Norfolk County & KL&WN Borough Councils.

Item 2 **Declarations of interest (under the West Norfolk Borough Council Code of Conduct) and any requests for dispensation**

* There were no declarations
* There were no requests for dispensation.
* The Clerk was to check that all Councillors had submitted up to date Declaration of Interest forms to the Borough Council by checking their website. It was also discussed that Cllr Birkbeck had stood down due to non-attendance over the last six months. The Chair advised the meeting that the Clerk and Himself had a conversation with Cllr Birkbeck and the opportunity would be available to return when commitments eased.

Item 3. **Election of Chair and Vice Chair for the ensuing year.**

* Election of Chair for the ensuing year. Proposed by Cllr P Wilson and seconded Cllr E Heatley. Cllr E Shiels was duly elected as Chair and signed the Declaration of Office Form.
* Election of Vice Chair. Proposed by Cllr E Shiels and seconded Cllr P Wilson. Cllr E Heatley was duly elected as Vice Chair and signed the Declaration of Office form.

Item 4. **Adoption of Standing Orders by the Council**

* The Clerk informed the Councillors present, Standing Orders would now be change as covid restrictions were deemed to be redundant. The updated version would be sent to Councillors prior to the next meeting in July 2022.

Item 5**. Adoption of dated Policies to be reviewed and updated by the Council**.

* The Clerk informed the Councillors present the updated versions would be sent to Councillors prior to the next meeting in July 2022 for their approval at that meeting.

Item 6 **To confirm that the public will be invited to comment on any agenda items at the discretion of the Chairman. All comments regarding matters under discussion must be addressed to the Chairman and must be made politely, be as brief as possible and finish when requested by the Chairman.**

* The Chairman informed the meeting that the Parish Council will listen to residents, and they can speak during the meeting.

Item 7 **Approval of the minutes of the Council meeting**

* The minutes of the Council Meeting held Thursday, 16th March 2022 were approved by the Parish Council and signed by the Chairman as a true and accurate record.

**Proposed Cllr Seconded Cllr J Cameron, All those present agreed**

Item 8 **Actions arising from the above meeting not covered in this agenda.**

All actions are covered in the agenda items for this meeting.

Item 9 **To receive an update from Borough / County Council matters (Cllr J Moriarty)**

**NCC AGM 10th May 2022**

The County voted to oppose any new incinerator on borders of West Norfolk and Fenland. In seconding the vote Cllr Stuart Dark, leader of the Kings Lynn and West Norfolk Borough Council praised the efforts of independent Councillor Alexandra Kemp and Green Borough Councillor Michael DeWhalley.

The Council again refused to declare a Climate Emergency. Some councillors looked uncomfortable voting against something they had recently voted ‘For’ at their Borough Councils.

There was only one change in the cabinet. King Canute turned down the job of Environment portfolio holder. There is one woman on the cabinet – again.

The government is considering ending charges for taking DIY waste to the local recycling centre, so watch this space.

**SIBELCO**

Liaison meeting at the end of the month. No sign yet of the new Minerals and Waste Policy. Met with Rights of Way Officer and walked much of the Grandcourt area and he has written to Sibelco listing concerns.

**Platinum Jubilee information for your Parish**

I have received a few enquiries for links to help with information to share with your Parish council meetings.

https://platinumjubilee.gov.uk/get-involved-with-the-platinum-jubilee/

Highways - To recognise the Platinum Jubilee, NCC has agreed a further reduction in the usual Parish fee to reflect the year and will be charging a reduced fee of £22 as it is 2022. An application form can be found on NCC’s website here under the section “Carnivals, sporting events and other celebrations”.

For signage and road closures you will need to contact your individual highways area offices please. Highways development management officer areas map.pdf who will be able to advise you.

**The Norfolk Cost of Living Support Scheme**

What is the Norfolk Cost of Living Support Scheme?

It is a £7.7m package of hardship support offering increased flexibility and choice in the way a broader range of households can access help.

The council is topping up £6.7m of Government funding from the Household Support Fund with a further £1m to create the scheme to help households struggling to pay for food, , energy and water bills, and other essentials.

**Why is it different to the hardship help we have been offering to date?**

Previously the focus of our support has been on helping those facing hardship as the economy recovers from the pandemic and providing a bridge between the end of furlough and the Universal Credit top-up.

Now the main challenge we face is the spiralling cost of living crisis which is hitting a far wider number of households hard who cannot increase their income through employment.

So, over the last month, we have reassessed the way we offer support and created this flexible and broad-based scheme using best practice from the hardship support we’ve been providing over the last year and following the Government guidance of aiming our support at a broader range of people including families, older people, and other vulnerable households.

**What else are we doing?**

To ensure part of the support the council is offering is sustainable for the longer term, in addition to the £7.7 million Cost of Living Support Scheme, we are also investing a further £225,000 capital into our partnership with the Norfolk Community Foundation Nourish Norfolk food hub offer, bringing the total investment over the last year to £500,000.

**How will the £7.7 million be spent?**

• Cost of living vouchers

£3.6m to support families with seven monthly cost of living vouchers for children eligible for means-tested free school meals. The payments will total £120 per child over the seven months of the scheme and will be in the form of supermarket vouchers which can be spent on food, clothing (in larger supermarkets), and other household essentials. The vouchers will be paid from April (backdated) up to and including October. Payments will be £15 per child per month, with a £30 enhanced payment for August, recognising the increased pressures families face over the summer holiday.

This approach gives families flexibility and choice by allowing them to budget monthly and offset vouchers against other financial pressures on their household bills and activities. It also means families will have payments during and outside school holidays with the option of saving them to use only in the school holidays if they prefer

• **NAS**

£1m allocated to the council’s Norfolk Assistance Scheme (NAS) to support families in hardship, where there isn’t eligibility for free school meals. This support is available to families with very young children, young carers, and families caring for children with disabilities, many of whom may be facing significantly higher energy bills

• **Vouchers and cash for older people**

£2.2m, a third of the Government funding, to support those aged 65 or over by providing cash and voucher awards through the voluntary sector and other partners such district, borough and city council, including a specific collaboration with Anglian Water, as well as support through NAS. The work with Anglian Water will support customers aged 65 or over who are on Anglian Water’s social tariffs, because they are in financial difficulty, providing a package of support to reduce and prevent debt. The Norfolk Assistance Scheme will also have specific provision of £900k for this group.

• **Funding for district, borough and city councils**

£840,000 to support others in need, including funding for district, borough and city councils to meet immediate housing concerns. This part of the scheme will also mean that voluntary sector agencies can refer those they are working with to the council for support. As with the other two groups, specific provision, totalling £500k has been made within the Norfolk Assistance scheme.

**11 May 2022**

**Norfolk County Council to help schools extend ‘warm welcome’ to Ukrainian refugees as they begin to provide support**

Norfolk County Council is providing an extensive package of support to help schools to welcome children fleeing the war in Ukraine.

The council is supplying schools across the county with much needed provisions so that educational resources and places of sanctuary can be given to child refugees.

This includes

• Funding towards laptops, bi-lingual resources, extra tutoring and a range of English as an Additional Language resources

• Opportunities for teachers to access trauma informed workshops to help understand the experiences and support children may need.

• Language support training, guidance and strategies and free translation services

• Guidance and support to help schools discuss the conflict in Ukraine

• NCC’s fully funded Young Interpreters’ Scheme

The council will adapt and evolve what’s on offer as more information about children’s needs emerges.

Recreation Road Infant School in Norwich are one of the establishments who have welcomed their first pupil. They were recently awarded ‘School of Sanctuary’ status, a national network of over 300 primary and secondary schools all committed to creating a culture of welcome and inclusion for refugees and people seeking asylum.

Michael Bunting, Head Teacher at Recreation Road Infant School said, “Our community is delighted to welcome our first arrival from Ukraine. We have organised a tour of the school and their classmates have been keen to be part of a buddying system, aimed at providing support and reassurance throughout the day. The class have also made some thoughtful changes – for example, they’ve translated the class’s visual timetable into Ukrainian.

Norfolk County Council have helped tremendously with our preparation, and staff have been able to access useful training and will have ongoing specialist support.

The school’s been given some additional funding to support our new arrival’s learning which we’ll be using to fund an iPad with language support apps and special translation pens. These will help our new pupil access learning more easily. We hope that she’ll fulfil her potential, alongside making new friends”.

More information about the Homes for Ukraine scheme in Norfolk is available at www.norfolk.gov.uk/ukraine. There are specific pages to help those arriving, information and advice for hosts and details of face-to-face Community Help events.

**Herewith my Borough Council report**.

**New Bin Rounds**

The new bin rounds have started. The idea is to make them more even and save fuel. It was not ideal that I, as your Borough Councillor, was given incorrect information on the whether the days of collection would change. It would appear the Borough only found out itself by looking on Serco's website. Hardly an auspicious start and speaks volumes for any contract we might have signed.

**Jubilee Coins**

The Borough has funded the issuing of 'Jubilee Coins' to be distributed to all primary school children. The mayor will be visiting schools to hand out the coins and I have been asked to visit schools in Flitcham and West Acre. The coins will also be available for sale.

**New Mayor**

The new Mayor was elected earlier this week - Cllr Lesley Bambridge.

£150 energy rebate payments are now being made to council taxpayers who pay by direct debit. People should start to see the money arriving in their bank account from Monday 16 May onwards.

Payments are being made in batches and it will take a few weeks to process all the payments. Residents should note that it may take a couple of days from the payment being made to the funds clearing in their accounts.

We, like many other district and borough councils, have needed to introduce and test new software. We have created additional support to assist with administering this scheme to ensure that people get the payment as soon as possible. The final testing has been completed and payments are now being made.

Next week, a form for those who do not pay by direct debit, will be available to complete online.

**CIL**

New arrangements are being agreed for future CIL funding applications as the last round was very oversubscribed. More details will follow once agreed by Council.

**Planning**

Continued staffing issues means the department is not working to the satisfaction of the council but I am pushing for greater communication with those who report breaches of planning conditions as the current policy is not to keep such residents informed of progress of investigations. We are a 'computer says NO' council.

**Local Plan**

The Local Plan is with examiners, and they will initially write with questions before a formal hearing. I question as to why we bother as the planning committee takes no notice of whether something is against the Local Plan, particularly if it involves an application from a current or previous conservative councillor. Corrupt, I couldn't possibly comment.

Cllr Wilson suggested that there should be a **special newsletter** dedicated to informing the residents. The Clerk to email Cllr Sliwa with information from Cllr Moriarty.

Item 10 **Finance Matters- to receive and draft budget for 2022 /2023**

* The Parish Council monies held in the **Community Account** £2150.80 and in the **Business Premium Account** £2503.15 **a Total of** £4653.95
* Online bank was still on going.
* The end of year Annual Governance Audit Return (AGAR) was being processed. An exemption was being sent to PKF Little John the national auditor as the Parish Council had sums under a £25,000.

Item 11**To receive feedback from 9th of May meeting.**

* The Chair suggested that there maybe could be a walk or talk in addition. Cllr Heatley proposed a freedom of information request how the budgets sit with the rewilding to answer accountability to the taxpayer. This was seconded by Cllr Cameron and all agreed. Cllr Heatley to take this up on behalf of the Parish Council.

Item 12 **Highway matters-to receive update**

* The Chair had been in contact with Andy Wallace the area Highways Manager he is meeting the Chair next Tuesday morning in the village and he will be reporting at the next meeting. Hedges to be raised by the Chair to see who and when they are cut in the village.

Item 13 **Discussion on SAM 2 monitoring.**

* On-going, to be reported at the next meeting.

Item 14 **Planning Matters to receive any update or clarification regarding current planning applications in the village**.

* The Chair informed the meeting he had contacted the borough planning officer there was no further information going forward on the retrospective planning applications in the village. There was an issue with containers being on site and there was also parking problems as well. Residents were very concerned.

Item 15 **To consider requests from the Public to propose items for the next Parish Council Agenda.**

• Tree plantations will be reported back on at the

Item 16 **To receive Councillors’ issues and or village matters.**

* Jubilee events need to be reported on to the Norfolk Jubilee website.

Item 17 **Date and Time of the next meeting.**

* The next meeting will be **Monday 11th July 2022** at 6pm in West Acre Village Hall.

The Chair thanked everyone for attending.

The meeting closed 7:50 pm