

**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 Jeremy Cameron

Cllr J Moriarty Norfolk County & KL&WN Borough Councils.

Item 1 **Apologies for absence**

* There were apologies from Cllr Ralph Sliwa, Cllr Peter Wilson, and Clerk David Williams

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. Will be forwarded to the next meeting.

Item 3 **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 4 **Approval of the minutes of the Council meeting**

* Unfortunately, with the Clerk not being able to produce the last minutes, they will be presented at the next meeting of the Parish Council in September 2022
* **Adoption of Standing Orders by the Council** Unfortunately, with the Clerk being ill this item will be updated at the next meeting of the Parish Council in September 2022.
* **Adoption of dated Policies to be reviewed and updated by the Council.**

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Item 5 **Actions arising from the above meeting not covered in this agenda.**

* All actions are covered in the agenda items from here on in this meeting.

Item 6 **To receive an update from Borough / County Council matters (Cllr J Moriarty)**

 Update on the ‘Big Norfolk Holiday Fun’ scheme (Norfolk’s Holiday Activities and Food Programme) Summer 2022

**Background**

• As previously reported, following the Government’s extension of the holiday activities and food programme, we are now in the second year of delivering this scheme following a successful national rollout in 2021, despite the challenges of the pandemic.

• HAF funding has been allocated to local authorities to enable children aged 5-16 and who are eligible for means tested free school meals to access free holiday activities over a week at Easter, 4 weeks over the summer and a week at Christmas, with a nutritious lunch included.

• Active Norfolk is continuing to coordinate our ‘Big Norfolk Holiday Fun’ programme, working with wider NCC colleagues and providers.

• During Easter we saw 1828 children participate in BNHF activities with approximately 70 providers across the county with 21137 sessions on offer.

**The Summer Offer**

• The summer programme will run from 25 July to September 3 and is open to children aged five to 16 (or four if they turn five in August).

• For the summer we have places for around 3,400 children with over 95 providers offering in excess of 68,000 sessions over the 6 weeks of the holidays and activities include sport, circus skills, arts and craft, dance, music, cookery and film making and lots more!

• Booking for our Big Norfolk Holiday Fun summer programme opened on Monday 27 June, with hundreds of free activities on offer to children.

• Families can book by visiting Big Norfolk Holiday Fun - Active Norfolk or via the county council’s webpages: www.norfolk.gov.uk/bignorfolkholidayfun

• This summer we have made it simpler for families to book onto BNHF sessions and removed the need for schools to issue codes to families. Families can book directly through the website and confirm their eligibility.

• Providers are required to ensure activities are inclusive and accessible for all children and young people. This includes those with special educational needs or disabilities. Providers are offered free workshops on inclusion, and wider SEND needs before the programme starts. To ensure reasonable adjustments can be made, details are requested at the time of booking and providers will discuss with parents and carers any specific requirements that their children have.

• Whilst BNHF is targeted at 5–16-year-olds eligible for means tested free school meals, we have some flexibility to offer a small number of free places for children who are vulnerable and might really benefit from BNHF activities. These places are being offered on a first come first served basis and we have asked schools or services working with children to contact BNHF to request a place.

• We are encouraging providers to offer blended sessions, with eligible children accessing activities free of charge, alongside some families who are not eligible for means tested free school meals, paying for the session.

• The BNHF team at Active Norfolk has worked hard to expand the offer in rural communities, as we know it can be difficult for some families to travel. In general, we cannot fund transport for families to access activities.  However, on an exception basis, where there are particular and exceptional circumstances, we may be able to support families.  Each situation is considered based on whether or not families have access to transport of their own, public transport, alternative family transport or options to lift share, the specific needs of the parent and the vulnerability of the child.   Families can contact the Big Norfolk Holiday Fun team directly to discuss their particular situation via bnhf@norfolk.gov.uk

**DEBATE NOT HATE**

Seven in 10 councillors reported experiencing abuse and intimidation within the last 12 months, with 1 in 10 experiencing abuse frequently, a new Local Government Association (LGA) Councillor Census, published on 30 June 2022, has revealed.

The LGA said councils are calling for government to work with local authorities and partners to urgently address toxic discourse and abuse against councillors or risk long-term impacts on local democracy and representation.

The report Debate Not Hate: the impact of abuse on local democracy, highlights how councillors are facing increasing abuse and intimidation from the public, with little power to deter perpetrators or support to tackle the issue. This is leading to the expectation that councillors must tolerate high levels of sometimes extreme abuse and threats, discouraging prospective candidates from engaging with local politics.

The support available to protect the safety and wellbeing of councillors is limited and inconsistent across the sector and can be uncoordinated between agencies. As a result, the LGA is calling for government to prioritise a change in legislation to put it beyond doubt that councillors can proactively withhold their home address from the public register. The LGA is urging local government leaders, the Government, partners, political parties and social media companies to sign up to a public statement, pledging to come together to develop and implement an action plan to address the issue of abuse of local politicians and their safety.

**Local Transport Plan for Norfolk**

The Local Transport Plan (LTP) was agreed at a meeting of Norfolk County Council's cabinet on 6 June and will now need to be signed off by the full council.

The Local Transport Plan (LTP) sets out the county council’s overall approach to transport, showing how transport can deliver wider ambitions including a growing economy, strong communities and reducing the impact on the environment.

Transport is now the biggest emitter of carbon of any sector in the UK and this plan is important in setting out the council’s policy framework for achieving carbon reduction of the transport network.

The plan includes the council's vision for improving transport between now and 2036 and is intended to encourage walking, cycling, bus and rail use as well as deliver major projects like the Western Link and Long Stratton bypass.

As part of the plan, the county council wants to investigate the possibility that the network of abandoned railway lines, many of which were closed in the 1960s, could become ‘greenways’, for use as walking and cycling routes, or even see the return of trains. Parts of several former Norfolk railway lines have already been converted into footpaths and cycle routes, such as the Marriott’s Way, Weavers’ Way and Lakenham Way. However, there are other stretches, particularly in rural areas, that the council believes should be protected from development, to allow them to eventually be revived for transport use.

The LTP does not have the power to stop developers building on the routes, but the council hopes that by including the possibility of greenways and even future rail use in the plan, it could help to deter them and keep the options open.

**Norfolk Access Scheme**

Message from Suzanne Dunwoody, Client Finance Services Manager

The Norfolk Assistance Scheme which the public may or may not be aware of. The scheme is available to any Norfolk resident who is experiencing financial difficulties and the team can provide information and guidance to contact support organisations or provide financial support to assist with the cost of food, energy, water or other essentials including white goods and furniture. NCC has also partnered with AgeUK to provide targeted individuals aged 65 and over as this has been a demographic group we have received the least applications from.

If you have any questions about NAS, please do not hesitate to contact Suzanne for further information Suzanne.dunwoody@norfolk.gov.uk

**Update: Jubilee Trees for Norfolk - June 2022**

The Jubilee Trees for Norfolk scheme is now live. NCC are offering tree packs at 50% cost, subsidised by DEFRA and NCC, and the scheme is open to everyone. This will enable up to 40,000 more trees to be planted across the county.

Community groups in my area can approach me to fund the other 50% of the trees and this is entirely at my discretion. There is an application process for the scheme and tree packs will be ready for collection in the planting season between December 2022-February 2023. If applicants have reached the payment stage, this means that their planting has been approved by the 1 million trees Team.

Please note that the 1 million trees team will not be involved in the payment process – applicants must approach me independently and proceed with any agreements and payments directly with me.

The discretionary Highway Member Fund, from which County Councillors can fund Highway and Environmental works in my area, was recently increased by £4,000 to £10,000 so that I can support tree planting and other biodiversity schemes in my area, but my main focus remains highways.

Guidance notes for the scheme can be found at www.norfolk.gov.uk/jubileetrees. Please get in touch with any thoughts or suggestions at tree.planting@norfolk.gov.uk

**Norfolk's Carers invited to apply for free Wellbeing Packs**

Norfolk County Council is to provide a further 3,000 free Wellbeing Packs to unpaid carers over the coming months, after previous packs were taken up enthusiastically across Norfolk.

The packs, which are provided through Covid funding from the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC), are designed to support unpaid carers and include Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) to support recipients in their role as a carer, as well as a range of pick-me-up items for the carer including chocolates, toiletries, and other treats to bring a little joy in these difficult times.

If you are a caring for a friend or loved one, or know somebody that is, you can register your details online to receive a pack. Those who are eligible will have a pack posted directly to their home. To apply for a pack today, please visit:

<https://forms.norfolk.gov.uk/service/carers_wellbeing_pack>

So far, Norfolk County Council has provided over 4,000 packs to unpaid carers since February 2021, working with partners Carers Matter Norfolk, Caring Together and Carers Voice to deliver them to carers across Norfolk.

The packs have also been made available through Norfolk and Suffolk Foundation Trust, Norfolk and Norwich University Hospital, James Paget University Hospital and Queen Elizabeth Hospital, King’s Lynn, all of whom are working in partnership with the Council to support the project.

Unpaid carers can also find a wide range of support available via Carers Matter Norfolk, a service commissioned by Norfolk County Council. Details of the personalised support available for carers can be found at https://carersmatternorfolk.org.uk/ or by calling 0800 0831 148 (Monday to Friday 9am to 8pm, Saturday 10am to 2pm).

The wellbeing packs for unpaid carers were funded through the Infection Prevention and Control Fund which is provided to Local Authorities by DHSC. The scope of the funding was limited and used to prevent the spread of Covid-19 infections. Norfolk County Council took the decision to use a small proportion of the overall funding towards supporting Carers to keep themselves and their loved ones safe during the pandemic. The majority of the funding was used to prevent the spread of Covid-19 infections in care homes and other care settings.

The Carers Matter Norfolk service is commissioned by Norfolk County Council to offer a range of support for carers of all ages and the people they care for. These include weekly ‘Virtual Cuppas’ during which Carers can share their concerns and successes and support each other, especially in difficult times.

**£13 million savings proposals considered**

Proposals to save £13 million will be considered next month (July), as the first step towards meeting next year’s £60 million target.

Norfolk County Council’s cabinet will discuss the first batch of proposals, with a further £47 million due to be considered in October.

Councillor Andrew Jamieson, cabinet member for finance, said: “Like all councils, we were facing higher costs and demand for services, even before the recent rise in inflation.

Cabinet will consider proposals to save:

• £6.45 million from adult social services, including use of reserves and more savings from existing programmes

• £3 million from children’s services, including withdrawing from the Professional Development Centre in Woodside

• £2.1 million from community and environmental services, including a review of the mobile library service, Wednesday closures of recycling centres and reduction of weedkilling on highways to one treatment per year

• £200,000 from strategy and transformation, through professional leads

• £50,000 from governance, by increasing income from the registration service

• £1 million from finance and commercial services, through annual income from the council’s company, Repton Property Developments Ltd

If cabinet supports the proposals, the public will be consulted over the summer to inform a redesign of the mobile library service, to save £200,000 from its £422,000 per year budget. Further consultations on other budget proposals will take place in the autumn.

The council will propose a Council Tax level for 2023/24 later this year, once it has received guidance from the Government. Until then, the council’s planning assumption is 2.99 per cent, including a one per cent adult social care precept.

Finalised budget proposals will be considered by cabinet, early next year, before the full council takes a final decision in February 2023.

Item 7 **Finance Matters- to receive and draft budget for 2022 /2023**

The Chair informed the meeting that the finance report had not changed from the last meeting.

* 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 8 **Highway matters-to receive update**

* The Chair had been in contact with Andy Wallace the area Highways Manager the following was read out by the Chair to inform the meeting. Many thanks for the time to meet the other day.
* The following is a note of the key points & actions we discussed.
* Once agreed with you I will send it to parish councillors, Jim Moriarty & Jade Calton so I’m happy to adjust it as necessary.
* I am on leave next week so I am hoping you might also reply also to my work address - eoghan@sheilsflynn.com as i can pick this up more easily remotely

**Mill Ford**

* We agreed that the highway & footpaths in the approach to the river crossing is in a very poor state – typical views attached. Actions agreed
* We agreed that you will look into what immediate repairs might be afforded through your current funds – although you made it clear that these are limited certainly for this current year what funds your bridges team might be able to contribute.
* The parish council will, in turn, look into the possibility of other funds, including potentially via “CIL”, which might be available on the basis that the ford and adjacent common are in fact increasingly providing valuable open space access for a wider hinterland including the increasing population of Swaffham.
* We discussed the possibility of closing the road to vehicular traffic and I think you thought NCC would prefer to wait to see how the process is concluded for the South Acre ford before considering a similar option for West Acre
* We also agreed to keep each other informed re progress

**Sandy Lane**

* We acknowledged the increase in traffic on Sandy Lane (most existing trucks from the brewery – pic attached), no traffic management enforcement by the various Abbey Barns businesses.
* We agreed that the road is in a poor condition and the recent hand repairs are not adequate for the longer term so you will arrange for a more holistic mechanical repair process to be undertaken – which should make for a longer lasting repair.

**Drainage and ditches**

* We looked at various ditches including Low Road, Church Green and Castle Acre Road
* You confirmed that all the ditches/grips in the village will be cleared out by the IDB (on behalf of NCC) over the coming months (before winter?)
* You also confirmed that NCC would revisit the work at the Low Road/Castle Acre Road junction – installing one or two new gulley’s (to better intercept surface flows) with an under-road pipe discharging into the adjacent pit (as previously agreed with the estate). This work, if maintained, should significantly reduce the amount of surface flow through the village and onto Fullers Lane.
* I made the point that some of the ditches especially on Church Green are not functioning efficiently because the concave shape of the carriageway prevents surface flow entering many of the grips – you are going to give this some thought as to a localised solution.
* (Post meeting note – we should not forget “The Warren” when it comes to clearing out the roadside ditches)
* In addition - we looked at the access created into Laundry Cottage on River Road, and you agreed to follow up to check if it has been approved formally – The PC understands that this is currently recorded as “not approved” by NCC.
* We did not discuss specific dates or programme for any of the work referenced above so it would be good if you could confirm likely timings for the various works/repairs (hopefully before the autumn?)

Item 9 **Discussion on SAM 2 monitoring.**

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

Item 10 **Planning Matters to receive any update or clarification regarding current planning applications in the village**.

* The Chair started discussions on the planning in the village, including further outfall of consent issues @ Abbey Barns. Residents on river road had received letters as a consultation process for a retrospective tap room. The Parish Council have not received a consultation. To formalise the tape room limited days of opening which will include a Sunday and there is a plan on the borough planning portal. Residents are concerned about increase in hours and access with the placement of orchid. Also, the proposed parking is close to residents. Highways have visited and made observations. EA have written to the brewery further breach of discharging. 6 retrospective applications on-going. Real risk the noise levels from outdoor music. Cllrs Cameron and Heatley suggested the scale of enterprise increase is not in keeping with a small village hamlet, also the amount of vehicle access. A letter of objection be drafted to the Planning authority with everyone’s observations and concerns.

Item 11 **Future of the Village Pub update.**

* The Chair Thanked Cllr J Moriarty for him taking up the resident’s concerns. There had been a fair explanation by the estate as to the works being carried out in advance of full planning proposals for the area. The Chair had emailed the estate to enquire as to the progress as the predicted time scales were slipping to have the pub back up and running.

Item 12. **Cost of living crisis – review of village impacts/Household Support**

* Household support fund for those over 65 would be identified in need of help. If anyone was aware and would benefit, could they inform the Parish Council who needed to apply by the 22nd of August 2022.

Item 13. **To invite requests from the public to propose items for the next Parish Council meeting. [These may be addressed to any Parish Councillor or the Clerk at any time before the agenda of the next meeting is published].**

* None came from the floor

14. **To receive Councillors’ issues and or village matters**

* Fullers Lane was now very overgrown the Chair would ask the estate if they could help out as it needed more than just cutting back.

Item 13 **Date and Time of the next meeting.**

* The next meeting will be **Monday 26th September 2022** at 6pm in West Acre Village Hall.

The Chair thanked everyone for attending.

The meeting closed 7:50 pm