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

**held at 6:00pm on Monday 23rd January 2023 at**

**West Acre Village Hall**

**Present**

**Parish Councillors:**

Cllr Eoghan Sheils (Chair),

Cllr Ralph Sliwa,

Cllr Jeremy Cameron

Cllr Lucy Birkbeck

Cllr J Moriarty Norfolk County & KL&WN Borough Councils

Clerk David Williams

Item 1 **Apologies for absence**

* There were apologies from Cllr Ernest Heatley and Cllr Peter Wilson.

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

* There were none.

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 Chair informed the meeting that the Parish Council will listen to residents, and they can speak during the meeting.
* There were two residents present.

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

* The minutes, for the previous meeting held on the 21st of November 2022 were presented and approved as true record.

**Proposed Cllr R Sliwa and Seconded Cllr L Birkbeck all agreed.**

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

* The Clerk had contacted Mr Terry Howlet who was prepared to continue with the maintenance of the SAM2 traffic sign and would keep charging the battery as and when required.

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

**Homelessness**

Both local and national bodies are offering advice to anyone concerned about their housing situation, whether they’re close to losing their home or starting to worry as bills rise.

In Norfolk, the Norfolk Community Advice Network (NCAN) run a helpline open 10am-4pm Monday to Friday on 0333 996 8333, and can be reached by email on helpline@ncan.co.uk

Advice and support is also available from the national foundation Shelter: anyone in Norfolk can call 0808 800 4444, open 8am-8pm Monday to Friday, and 9am-5pm on weekends and bank holidays.

Alternatively visit their website for support at england.shelter.org.uk/get\_help

For those concerned with rising bills and the cost of living, the Norfolk Assistance Scheme remains open, offering support for those in financial hardship across the county. Find out more, including how to apply, www.norfolk.gov.uk/nas or call 0344 800 8020.

For other assistance and support through the winter, Norfolk residents can visit [www.norfolk.gov.uk/wintersupport](http://www.norfolk.gov.uk/wintersupport)

**Winter Planning**

Planning work is co-ordinated by an NCC internal working group and who work with external partners including the NHS. Storm Arwen caused considerable disruption in parts of the country in 2021 and the Scottish government has published a series of useful reports on the lessons to be learned. Like other local authorities NCC are reviewing contingency plans in light of those reports. As we approach the peak winter weather season, the county council has put some advice on its website, so that people can make some prudent plans now, in the remote possibility that anything similar happens here. They have an external web page (Norfolk Winter - Norfolk County Council) as well as space on the intranet which will act as resource hubs for information that we will build over the coming months as we get more intelligence about imminent issues eg storms etc. Formal comms (social media, media and member comms) are planned for early January. The website includes links to practical guidance for example if we experience power cuts https://www.norfolk.gov.uk/safety/norfolk-winter/winter-power-cuts as well as links to weather and flood information.

Community support provided by Norfolk County Council reaches over 130,000 households.

Schemes operated or funded by Norfolk County Council have received over £50 million since 2021, providing community support including the provisioning of community food hubs, distributing grab-and-go bags at our libraries, and investing in community warm banks this winter.

The amount of information on available support is sometimes overwhelming and to make life easier for residents and to help accessing trusted and safe information, NCC has collated key information and guidance at www.norfolk.gov.uk/costofliving.

For anyone who can’t get online they have produced a new 8-page ‘Help with Living Costs’ booklet packed with information on where people can get help and support during times of need. This week 25,000 copies are being distributed to organisations and venues across the county including libraries, community supermarkets, community hot spots, the voluntary sector, and faith groups. It will also be made available in multiple languages and accessible formats as well as distributed electronically to schools, parish and district councils and other partner organisations.

The provision of the Household Support Fund has so far supported 130,000 households, including help with the cost-of-living for 30,000 free school meal eligible children. The Norfolk Assistance Scheme has supported more than 6,000 people, providing emergency financial help, essential household goods and furniture, and advice, support, and guidance to people suffering financial hardship.

The Norfolk Social Infrastructure Fund, administered by the County Council, provides funding for voluntary, community and social enterprise organisations who are helping Norfolk’s communities. By the end of January 2023, the fund will have distributed £2.25m directly to organisations so that new community initiatives and projects can be delivered on the ground. This year saw a 208% increase on the number of applications from 2021.

**The full breakdown of funding includes:**

• £27 million invested in delivering Multi Use Community Hubs in King’s Lynn and Great Yarmouth in partnership with the Borough Councils, and as part of the Town Deal programme, supporting skills, health, and wellbeing

• £20 million of funding for residents in hardship between 2021 and 2023 through the Household Support Fund

• £2.25 million for the Social Infrastructure Fund, with a further £750,000 to be awarded in Spring 2023

• £500,000 of funding for community food hubs, with the Norfolk Community Foundation leveraging further private investment and funding

• £220,000 has been invested to provide 110 warm hubs in communities this winter

• £150,000 of extra investment in VCSE organisations

This funding has enabled Norfolk County Council to achieve a wide range of community support, including:

• 130,000 households supported via the Household Support Fund

• 12,000 people supported in accessing community food hubs

• Over 6,000 people supported by the Norfolk Assistance Scheme

• 4,500 grab and go bags handed out across all 47 of our libraries

• More than 1,200 Ukrainian guests helped to settle in Norfolk, including over 400 children.

**Norfolk County Deal update - thin gruel**

Councillors have agreed to progress a £612.9m County Deal that will also transfer more powers and funding from the Government to Norfolk.

Following a debate at full council on 17 January, the council’s cabinet agreed to progress the deal at their later meeting on the same day.

According to the report to cabinet, the deal would mean that, from 2024 onwards, the County Council could:

• target funding and resources to Norfolk’s own priorities, with a new investment fund of £20m per year for 30 years.

• unlock housing and employment sites with an injection of £12.9m capital funding in this Spending Review period and new powers to drive regeneration, housing and development priorities.

• invest in the skills we know we need, with devolution of the adult education budget and input into the new Local Skills Improvement Plans.

• invest in local transport planning and consolidate transport budgets to direct funding to better meet our local needs and priorities.

• strengthen the local business voice to inform local decision making and strategic economic planning through the future integration of New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership.

• have a council leader who is directly elected by the public, with the first election in May 2024.

• raise our influence regionally and nationally, enabling our voice to be better heard by Government to shape future policies and funding decisions for the benefit of our County.

A six week public consultation on the deal will be launched on 6 February.

The full council will decide whether to support the change to an elected leader, in December. If approved, an election will be held in May 2024.

Further details on the County Deal, including the full text, here.

You can register for updates at countydeal@norfolk.gov.uk

**Multiply free maths courses and new Multiply Champions in Norfolk**

Multiply is a new government-funded programme to help adults across the UK to improve their numeracy skills.

The Multiply project awarded Norfolk County Council £4.7 million to provide numeracy support, training and qualifications until April 2025 which would be delivered by partners such as Norfolk Adult Learning, City College Norwich, the College of West Anglia, and East Coast College.

The Multiply project enables Norfolk County Council to distribute funding to learning partners to deliver a variety of courses to boost confidence and skill with maths. The range of courses include preparation for maths qualifications, such as Functional Skills, help with managing money, and courses aimed at specific workplaces which will be delivered alongside employers.

Good maths skills can help you find more job opportunities and lead to higher wages. Or they can help you prepare for further study. They also help in everyday life, such as helping children with homework and budgeting money.

You will be able to take part if:

• You are over 19

• You do not have maths GCSE at grade C (or equivalent)

• You live in Norfolk

Norfolk County Council has also hired 7 new Multiply Champions, one for each District, to promote numeracy skills in people over 19 without a GCSE at grade 4/C.

Making maths accessible, approachable, and engaging is one of the key challenges for the new Champions. They will attend events, community hubs, and libraries to help inspire people to take up a variety of courses on offer.

People can view the available Multiply courses in Norfolk on the Norfolk County website here.

**Active Travel England funding for Norfolk**

Norfolk County Council has been successful in securing £657,388 funding from Active Travel England to support the improvement of active travel options across the County. The money comes from the Active Travel Capability Fund of £32.9 million which expects to see millions shake up the way they travel. The investment is to help local authorities in England design, develop and consult on high-quality active travel schemes.

The funding received is the full amount that the County Council requested in a bid submitted in September. The bid outlined that Norfolk would use the money on active travel projects to enable more people to walk, wheel and cycle.

More information about Active Travel England here

**Norfolk’s highway biodiversity and cutting use of weedkillers.**

The locations of 5 new roadside nature recovery study areas, set to be a blueprint for new reserves and nature and wildlife friendly verge management across the county, have been revealed.

Sites near Taverham, Wells-next-the-Sea, King’s Lynn, Heacham and Flitcham will be considered by councillors next week as part of plans to increase the number of roadside nature reserves to 300 (from the current 110) by 2024.

Members of the committee will also be considering a draft policy set to cut the use of weedkiller on highway areas, schools, care homes and county farms.

The Infrastructure and Development select committee will meet at 10am on 18 January, the papers for the meeting are available on the NCC website.

Item 7 **Community Infrastructure Levey (CIL) proposals to be discussed.**

The Chair asked the Councillors, if they had any preferred place or project that could benefit from a CIL application to the Borough Council of Kings Lynn and West Norfolk. Councillor Birkbeck suggested the area around Mill house could be enhanced. This was a well-used place during the summer by residents for paddling, picnicking. Councillor Cameron suggested disability sports coaches could be sponsored to the area. As a way of enhancing the opportunities for all villages and this could talk with other Parish Council members to enhance this. Councillor Sliwa raised the point of helping the West Acre Billiards Club extend to accommodate two tables in the village hall would be a way of the Club also playing league games. Mr A Birkbeck informed the Council that it might be very complicated construction to extend the Billiard room. Mr A Birkbeck thought construction of toilets could be considered for the Mill Farm area. The ford was the responsibility of Norfolk County Council, and the Chair did suggest that the road needed to be addressed and this would be their priority he believed. The Council would need to have resident input before making an application, and it was suggested that when the West Acre News is next published that a piece asking for residents ideas as well. Councillor J Moriarty suggested that the Council research previous applications that were successful to see the supporting information required for a bid to be successful.

Item 8 **Finance –** To approve payments as per the schedule presented**.**

**Payments for 21/11/2022 to 20/01/2023**

**The only payment was the Clerks salary £262 for November and December.**

**Proposes Councillor R Sliwa Seconded Councillor L Birkbeck all agreed.**

* It was proposed by the Chair that the Council has a separate precept and budget meeting via Zoom on Friday the 27th of January 2023 at 0900am. All Councillors were invited to attend.

**Proposed by Councillor Eoghan Sheils Seconded Councillor L Birkbeck all agreed.**

Item 9 **Planning Matters to receive any update or clarification regarding current planning applications in the village.**

* The Char informed the Council about the master plan for the Abbey Barns development of the area.
* The planning applications for the Stag Inn and Ford Cottage change of use are still on-going.

Item 10 **Discuss arranging update on river/rewilding.**

* The Chair stated new path has been created and it will be track. West Acre way will be part of a co-ordinator the Borough Council and Norfolk County Council have created five new routes. Mr A Birkbeck informed the Council that it would be good to have advertising for an opening walk of the route by residents and the Councillors and have a small piece in the West Acre News. Cllr R Sliwa asked was it possible to have transport so that people who could only walk one way could get back and this was agreed by Mr A Birkbeck who thought it an excellent idea as the walks could be up to 4 hours in combined time.

Item 11 **To discuss requests for grit and recycling bins at the Village Hall**

* There was a discussion on when and who looked after the existing grit bin in the area. Although it was empty at present once Norfolk County Council filled the bin it was who would spread the grit and take responsibility for this. Mrs Belinda Bush had made enquiries regarding a recycling bin and the Borough Council had said it would have to be a commercial one which was too big and there was nowhere for it to be placed safely. Councillor R Sliwa was asked by the Chair to take the matter back to village hall committee clarifying what assistance they were seeking.

Item 12 **To discuss Brewery pollution of the river.**

* The Chair introduced this item which was referring to testing at the testing point in October 2022 by Environment Agency (EA). The Chair had emailed Duration Brewing Limited. The Chair had received a statement from Miranda and Hamish and read it out on their behalf. `Upon sampling by the EA it was agreed that the discharge was not of significant visual quality to allow further discharge and testing of the discharge confirmed this to be the case. Therefore, no further discharge was allowed, and all discharge was tankard away. The planned improvements in March 2022 were delayed due to supply chain issues. These have now been addressed. So, after the planned winter shutdown Outfall should be of a more consistent quality. Weekly testing is still taking place and we are meeting the EA targets yet still tanking the discharge away. The Chair stated they are not outflowing into the Nar. Mr A Birkbeck gave a short briefing to the Council on discussion with the EA. There is hoped to be a discharged into an aqua flow and then the river.

Item 13 **To discuss new gate access adjacent to River Road.**

* The two gates were placed as part of the new pathway. The gates will have boards next to them indicting the route and how the pathways develop a coordinated link with other villages and who has sponsored the project.

Item 14 **To discuss Parish Council joining Parish UK a GOV.UK information site.**

* This was a way of unifying Parish Councils email addresses and was a government sponsored thing. It was purely voluntary, and the Council thought it would be better to stay with the address that already exists. Also not allow the Council to be opened up to a constant stream of commercial enquiries which were not relevant to the size of Parish Council that West Acre is. All agreed.

**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

Item 12 **Date and Time of the next meeting.**

* The next meeting will be **Monday 20th March 2023** at 6pm in West Acre Village Hall.

The Chair thanked everyone for attending. The meeting closed 7:36 pm