

ASHWELLTHORPE AND FUNDENHALL PARISH COUNCIL

Draft Minutes of Meeting held on Tuesday 12th December 2023
at 6.30 pm Meeting held at Thorpe Hall Ashwellthorpe

Present: J Ives (Chair)
M Williams
C Leggett
S Allen
R Burridge arrived 18.50pm

Alan Arber (Clerk)

District Councillor Bob McClenning and County Councillor Catherine Rowett

No members of the public in attendance.

1) Apologies for Absence

Apologies received from Serge Engamba. All agreed to accept

2) Declarations of Interest None.

No declarations of interest

3) Minutes of the Meetings on 21st November 2023

The minutes were then agreed and signed by the Chairman as an accurate record of the meeting.

Proposed: Cllr Williams Seconded: Cllr Leggett

4) Public Open Forum

County Councillor Catherine Rowett's gave the following report [Appendix 1](#)

District councillor Bob McClenning gave the following report

Much of the last report made is still unfinished business. We have moved on to the NCC Cabinet member for highways and the local County Councillor regarding the flooding on the B1113 but all we get is silence. We will continue to press for some engagement.

We attended full Council at Thorpe yesterday and went through the motions but it is all very tribal.

We asked for the Council to declare a climate emergency, the response was the Council is already delivering on many fronts helping to target Zero Carbon by 2030.

Chair.....

But there is no emergency?

It was agreed to enact a policy using a Public Space Protection Order to deal with anti-social vehicle use in the district.

The Council also agreed to promote local nature enhancement modelled on the policy of Harleston and Redenhall Council. What that is vague but we might be told in the future.

The pylon issue and the resistance to it has been effective as now the Government, fearful of losing votes, has suggested to National Grid that an off shore scheme might be viable so discussions will commence.

The construction of the Long Stratton Bypass is about to begin after a wait of some 90 years since it was first mooted.

On behalf of your District Councillors can I wish you all a safe and Happy Christmas.

5) Planning

2023/3639 Supported by the Parish Council

2023/3547 The Parish Council have concerns on this planning application and will send their comments via the planning portal.

6) Matters Arising from previous Minutes.

The clerk has installed all t

he defib pads and bleed kits into the defib and has attached the relevant stickers to show this and changed the contact details on all the unit plus updated The Circuit on this too.

7) To hear an update and consider any necessary action regarding the following

Speed Awareness Machines and Faults

No report

8). Finance

a) To note the following payments made since last meeting

None

b) To consider payment of the following:

I. A Arber November Salary £522,82

II. EE Mobile Internet for Clerk's office Nov £41.18

III. Npower Street Lights November £59.97

IV. Defib warehouse New defib pads and bleed kits £446.40

V. KBS Depot New Noticeboard £541.20

VI. W Hodgson Grass Cutting at pond area £230.00

VII. To note any payments received after the agenda is posted

None

VIII. To agree the closure of the savings account and the transfer of the balance to the main business account

It was agreed that we would transfer the remaining balance of the savings account £1471.67 to the main business account

Proposed Cllr Leggett Seconded Cllr Williams

Chair.....

- c) Receipts since last meeting
None
 - d) Councils current financial standing

Community Account:	£8239.04
Business Account:	£1471.67
Total of both accounts	£9710.71

The Chair signed the bank statements as a true record of this minute.
 - e) To receive details of the clerk's appraisal and note actions
The clerk was thanked for his wonderful work this year and it was agreed that the clerk would receive a one-point SCP rise to SCP 24 as per his contract
Proposed Cllr Allen Seconded Cllr Ives
 - f). To agree the budget and precept request 2024-2025
The clerk had produced the figures for both and it was agreed that we would increase our precept by 15% taking our precept request for 2024-2025
Proposed Cllr Williams Seconded Cllr Leggett
- 9) Update on Thorpe Hall and other issues.
The clerk had received a complaint around the signs and that they are missing Saffron as a major contributor and it was noted that due to their size, it was felt that we may need planning permission which he will investigate. The signs will not be erected until this issue is resolved.
- a) Blacksmiths Lane
The clerk has sent the details to the county councillor for her to look at and he will send picture of the poor signage to Catherine for her to take the issue forward. A discussion was had this by the council and it was agreed to look at a width restriction with the county councillor on this.
 - b) Footpaths
The clerk has purchased big maps and details of the parish footpaths with one set for his office. One set for the Footpath warden and one spare set.
 - c) Village maintenance
The clerk commented the noticeboard is installed in Fundenhall and the play area signs have been made ready by Simon Allen to be erected asap once the actual location is found.
 - d) To review the data from the SAM 2 machine including New Road
The clerk was unable to download the data from the SAM machine on New Road today and as such will do so either next week or the first week in January. This was due to an error with the download software that needs updating, The batteries have been change and are working well.

Chair.....

- e). To look at current providers for contractors to the parish council for services
The clerk is looking into this at present
- f). Wood farm development
No reply from the developers' solicitors on this and we await their reply.
Road not been adopted on the development and is there a way that we can get the county to assist with taking these on asap to ensure they are put in good order. County Councillor Catherine Rowett would look at this for us
The Lack of grit bins on the edge of the footpath was discussed and this would be requested by the county councillor and Catherine will also look at the laws on insurance should anyone slip and fall.
- g). To agree to approve the application of the £300 pride in place clean it and bloom grant

Proposed Cllr Leggett Seconded Cllr Ives

10) Correspondence.

Asset register to be updated asap

Planning application 2023/3547 received

Planning application 2023/3639 received

Parish partnership application submitted

Website updated

Another Email sent to website contractor to look at producing a new website

Insurance claim submitted but no news on this yet

Budget Completed

Defib pads and Bleed kits received and installed as detailed earlier

New notice board received for Fundenhall

Parish precept Information received and Tax base noted too

Work done on the parish precept and the figure it needs to go up by

New clusters site information received but this does not affect Ashwellthorpe and Fundenhall

Physical Order placed for Gov.uk email domain

Planning contacted on the need for planning permission for play area signs

The Circuit updated

Clean it and bloom pride in place grant submitted

Clerks Appraisal undertaken

Letter sent to trustees on Parish office hire

Blacksmith's lane information sent to County Councillor

Internal Control undertaken

11) Items for the Next Meeting:

Precept request to be raised for all councillors to check

Chair.....

Internal control
SAM 2 data

12) Date and Place of the Next Meeting:

9th January 2024 at Thorpe Hall at 6.30pm

Meeting closed 7.30 pm

Chair.....

December 2023 Minutes

Ashwellthorpe & Fundenhall Parish Council

Councillor report, December 2023, from Catherine Rowett

December 2nd 2023

Icy roads and gritting

Norfolk's fleet of 58 winter vehicles treat 2,200 miles of roads on each full 3-hour gritting run. All A and B-class roads and some C-class roads are treated with a focus on commuter and major bus routes and as far as is possible one route into all villages. The A11 and A47 are gritted by National Highways. In addition some pedestrian areas and main pavements are treated in the centre of Norwich, Great Yarmouth and King's Lynn.

There are more than 2000 grit bins available around the county. These are for people to use as and when you need it, on roads, pavements and cycle paths. Do contact the Council if the bin has not been filled or there is some other problem.

Other problems in winter

There's lots of information about staying safe during cold spells on the county council website page called Norfolk Winter, which is [here](#). Take care to avoid burst pipes by ensuring that outdoor pipes are lagged, and that improved insulation hasn't left the pipes out in the freezing cold of your loft. Make sure you take warm clothes, rug, shovel etc when out driving in winter. Don't rely on the car's heating system to keep warm, in case you break down or get stuck. It's a good idea to follow the County Council social media, which will use the hashtag #NorfolkWinter for updates and advice relating to winter weather.

Council "devolution deal" plans

The Cabinet at the County Council have been considering the options available if they accept one of the so-called "devolution" deals that the government is using as part of its so-called "levelling up" plans. Cabinet decided to recommend that Norfolk accepts a "level 3" deal, which adds a range of additional responsibilities to the council's work (things that were formerly done by central government) and provides a longer term guarantee of some funding to deliver them over the period of the funding agreement that comes with the deal, but they opted to postpone implementation of the new arrangements until 2025. The current situation where councils are looking at year on year cuts and no long term plan for how they can make ends meet make it seem attractive or even necessary to go for this promise of some investment in Norfolk and some replacement of the funds that have been lost since Brexit and with cuts to local authority funds and with rising inflation eating away at what we do have the right to raise in local taxation. But there are grave doubts as to whether the funds (which are not index linked) will actually be sufficient to deliver any significant improvements, and the deal comes with some unsatisfactory constraints on the democratic functioning of the Council, including a leader directly elected by the people of Norfolk, who won't be a council member and might be at odds with the majority view of the Council, despite having to appoint a cabinet from elected members of Council. At Full Council on 12th December we discussed and voted on the proposals put to us by the Cabinet. There are differing views on whether this is just a pointless gimmick by a government that has run out of ideas and run out of money, whether it is the first step on a slippery slope to something seriously problematic, and whether we have to say yes to it anyway (as many other councils are) because the bribe is money that we can't afford not to have. In the event Council voted for the proposed deal, but there were divergent opinions in all parties.

Road Safety Schemes:

My list of requests under the Road Safety Community Fund has now gone in for consideration, after much consultation and calculations by Adam Mayo, our highways officer. There were lots of requests, but few will be funded, probably only one per councillor unless they are very cheap, or unless some councillors get nothing.

My next task is to work with Adam to try to find other ways of delivering some of the schemes that won't win, or were too low down the list to stand a chance. I have not yet spent my highways allowance because I have been saving it for these urgent safety schemes. More on this anon.

Meanwhile I also put in a motion to Council for December 12th asking for a cross-party working group to be set up with a view to making it easier for villages to get safer speed limits where they wish to have them, and rewriting the Norfolk Speed Management Strategy to prioritise safe speeds in rural areas, and to proactively reduce accidents before they happen instead of after. Ten times as many people die on rural roads as on motorways. Cyclists are almost three times more likely to be killed on a rural road than on an urban one. My motion did not get debated in December because time ran out on discussing the devolution deal, so I shall put it in for January instead. I was on Radio Norfolk at breakfast time talking about it on Monday 11th December.

Cost of Living Payments - winter fuel help for pensioners

The Department of Work and Pensions has announced that pensioners across the country have started to receive up to £600 to help with energy bills this winter.

Most Pensioner Cost of Living Payments are made automatically in November or December and should be received by 26 January 2024. Further details [here](#).

The government advises that pensioners who do not receive a payment by 26 January 2024 should contact the [Winter Fuel Payment Centre](#).

Buses and active travel

I am pursuing some enquiries on behalf of some villages concerning the provision, or lack of it, of Flexibus and Borderhopper services, and the unsatisfactory timing of bus journeys (which are sometimes useless for the purposes one might travel for). Please let me know if these issues apply to you.

Contact me

You can contact me on Catherine.rowett.cllr@norfolk.gov.uk for Council-related business, and I look forward to helping with a range of issues that people have already brought to my attention. I'm always delighted to attend award ceremonies, events, centenaries, lectures, exhibitions, conferences, debates, litter picking parties, campaign events and protests, so don't hesitate to add me to your mailing lists! I also have a facebook page which includes updates on what I am working on, posts about events and opportunities relevant to residents, and a place where you can comment and leave your views on things I want to ask you about. The link is [here](#).

County Council campaigns this month:

Christmas travel plans

The Travel Norfolk website and journey planner can help plan your journeys this Christmas. With local, accurate and real-time public transport information, the site offers a one-stop shop for people wanting travel information for Norfolk and finding a travel mode to suit them.

For those needing to head to Norwich by car, there is now also the option to show live parking information for the main multistorey car parks, helping Christmas shoppers to see where spaces are available during peak times. Simply click on the key on the site's journey planner map and select from a range of useful information – as well as parking spaces, you can quickly and easily locate the nearest Beryl docking station, vehicle charging point, taxi rank or toilet facilities.

The journey planner continues to develop with even more capability coming soon, including park & ride journeys and multi-modal options.

To find out more about more about the journey planner and to plan your festive journeys, visit

travelnorfolk.co.uk/festivetravel.

Bus travel stats

Latest figures show that passenger numbers have increased throughout the year with the number of fare-paying passengers now exceeding pre-covid levels, during which passenger numbers across Norfolk and the UK fell dramatically. Approximately £12 million of our extra DfT funding was allocated to providing new or expanded bus routes and increased service frequencies on key routes, including more evening and weekend services.

In Norfolk, overall bus passenger numbers have increased by 18% in the last year, with the number of fare-paying passengers now at 107% compared to pre-pandemic baseline figures. Norfolk is bucking the trend, as nationally, bus usage figures are at between 89% to 98% of pre-pandemic levels.

Catherine Rowett

12th December 2023