

**Earsham Parish Council
Minutes
of a meeting of Earsham Parish Council held in
Earsham Village Hall on Wednesday 24th November 2021 at 7.30pm
COVID restrictions will apply**

Present: Councillors: Stephen Wood (Chair), Keith Reeve, Jim Bennett, Tony Leech, and Richard Randlesome and Peter Goodfellow

Also present: District Councillor Brendon Bernard, County Councillor Barry Stone, one member of the public and Lynda Ling (Clerk)

- 1. Election of Vice-Chairman** – Cllr. Randlesome put himself forward for the seat of Vice-Chairman which was unanimously agreed.
- 2. Apologies from members unable to attend** – None
- 3. Declarations of interest, in particular matters to be raised at this meeting**
 - To note any declarations of members pecuniary and/or non-pecuniary/other interests pertaining to items on the agenda
 - a) To consider any dispensation requests - None
- 4. Resolution to approve the Minutes of previous meeting**
 - Parish Council meeting held on Wednesday 6th October 2021 – Agreement was proposed by Cllr. Leech and seconded by Cllr. Wood **ALL AGREED**

There were no public comments

- 5. Reports –**
 - **Police, District and County Councillors** – District and County Councillors reports were circulated to Cllrs last week which included news from South Norfolk Council and Norfolk County Council. Updates included:-
 - NCC –**
 1. Village Rangers are in operation again and will be visiting areas to do minor jobs around the villages.
 2. EV Charging Points – If the Parish Council were considering the installation of a EV charging points, some funding is available to help with the cost via NCC.
 3. There is a Highways Safety Fund available which would be available to potentially fund the cost of some grit bins (agreement for which is on this agenda)
 4. A research trip was undertaken with NCC councillors and Arriva (bus company) viewing single decker electric buses. Potentially there may be a test in Norwich of this type of bus.
 - SNC –**
 1. The use of zoom has increased the participation of Councillors and the public, which can only be a good thing.
 2. The main topics being discussed at SNC is - encouraging business back to pre-endemic levels, reopening the Leisure Centres and the wonderful facilities available in them. discussions with our partners - Broadlands District Council on amalgamating our offices in a new build or other suitable building, expanding the waste services with more vehicles and larger facilities. Work has started on the next 5 year budget projections - with the aim of achieving a balance budget without losing any facilities, but with the reduction in central Government support, this will be a major challenge. Our cooperation with Broadlands has certainly helped reduce our operational costs and we keep exploring further cooperation.
 3. Hopefully the District Council will support the call to declare a Climate Emergency and start implementing policies which take into account the efforts to reduce carbon and methane emissions and save our planet.

- **Chairman's report** – Cllr. Wood reported the Village Tidy Up day was a great success. A length of guttering needs replacing on the village hall however, and Cllr. Wood asked if everyone would be happy if he purchased and undertook the work. All were in agreement.

- **Parish Councillors –**

- **Cllr. Meade –**

1. Reported that a couple of residents had approached him and asked if Church Road could be changed to a 20mph speed limit. A short discussion followed on why this was unlikely to happen, as a 20mph limit is unenforceable by Police.
2. Cllr Meade has written to NCC about siting the **WW1 Commemorative Plaque** on the side of the road and is still waiting for a response, Cllr. Meade has also contacted Black Dog Signs and worked out the wording for the fingerposts. Scott Bone is willing to paint the post and fingerpost. Discussion turned to the **Millennium Film** and it was suggested copying it onto a memory stick as it would be easier for everyone. Some further discussion needs to take place on this.

- **Cllr. Randlesome** – Has viewed the Millennium Film which he thought was very good.

- **Clerks Report** – This was circulated to Cllrs earlier in the week and included:-

1. An update on the reporting of signs that need repairing or replacing. The NCC Gypsy and Roma Traveller Service have been contacted about the bus parked on Old Harleston Road.
2. Councillor Training is available at a cost of £60.00 per delegate – is anyone interested in attending two sessions in January? Cllrs. Goodfellow, Randlesome and Wood put their names forward

ACTION – CLERK

3. The Emergency Planning Officer at SNC is thinking of setting up a network of the three councils most affected by the flooding last year, namely Earsham, Bungay and Ditchingham, and having a representative from each to communicate with SNC. Would anyone in Earsham be willing to be that representative. The Chairman volunteered to be the contact for this network.

6. **Village Items –**

- **Update on all village items, including the speed sign on School Road, WW1 Commemorative Plaque, Signpost, Millennium film –**

Cllr. Goodfellow informed members of recent statistics on the number of vehicles recorded and their speed for Church Road. From the end of October until 24th November, there was a total of 4920 vehicles leaving the village of which 197 were driving at over 35 mph and 40 vehicles driving at over 40mph. Statistics will continue to be collected.

- **Update on the Million Trees for Norfolk initiative** – Cllr. Meade informed members that the information he had originally been given was incorrect and the fund for the tree's was still open. Cllr. Meade passed round a copy of a plan for the planting of trees at the Harleston end of the village and will look at what is still available through the fund.

- **Update on Speed Watch Group** – Cllr. Goodfellow informed members that three sites were visited with the Police on Church Road, School Road and The Street. Six volunteers have completed online training with two more hours still to completed in December which will be the final training before the Group can use the equipment. The Group will be given a speed gun, temporary and small signs advising of Speed Watch activity and fluorescent jackets. Cllr. Randlesome asked on how the data would be used and what was the process for its reporting, Cllr. Goodfellow remarked that a form with vehicle details would have to be completed and submitted to the Police. The first letter would be a warning, 2nd letter would indicate that the driver would be targeted if any further speeding occurred and if caught, the driver would be subjected to a fine. The whole idea is to get people to slow down.

- **Update on grit bins for the village and agree costs to purchase 2 x 200 litre bins if approval is given by NCC** – It was agreed to take up the County Councillor's offer to purchase bins and claim the funds back from NCC. It was also agreed to purchase 3 bins instead of 2 and 300 litres not 200 litres. Highways have given approval for the two new locations on School and Church Roads, but are checking whether the site at the junction of the two roads has ever been sanctioned by them.

- **Tidying up the exterior of the Village Hall and War Memorial area** – Covered during Chairman's report. Thanks were extended to Karl and Rachael Gunton for getting the parish magazine out in time for residents to be aware of the Village Tidy Up. Twelve people turned up and it was suggested that this could be done twice a year in future.
- **Discussion on utilising a handyman/gardener for the village** – To date there have been no expressions of interest.
- **Discussion on suggestion to purchase another notice board for the Bungay end of the village** – A brief discussion was held on where it could be sited if agreed, Cllr. Goodfellow suggested contacting the Primary School as they have a notice board which does not appear to be used which was donated by the PTA.
- **Discussion on email received from the Deputy Lieutenant regarding presentation of plaque** – As there are no events planned in the near future, the Clerk was asked to contact the Deputy Lieutenant to ask if the plaque could be sent to the Parish Council instead.

ACTION – CLERK

- **Discussion on the NCC Parish Partnerships Initiative and if the Parish Council wish to apply for funding – closing date for applications 10th December 2021** – A conversation was held to see if this fund could be purposely utilised and it was decided that a 20mph part time sign may be of use on School Road near the school. The Clerk to contact Westcotec to get a quote. Comments were also made about the lack of white lining which has eroded over the years, at the Church end of School Road, the Clerk will contact Highways about this

ACTION – CLERK

7. Planning Applications – Recent applications and decisions made by South Norfolk Council which were NOTED by members of the Parish Council

APPROVED

Application Number: 2021/1626

Application Type: Full

Proposal: Change of use from residential annex to holiday let

Location: Waveney Barn Old Railway Road Earsham NR35 2SD

Decision: Approval with Conditions (Delegated)

Date of decision: 19 October 2021

8. Policies – To review and agree Policies of the Council which will include:-

- Communications Policy – updated
- Complaints Procedure – no change
- Data Protection Policy – no change
- Equal Opportunity Policy – no change
- Health & Safety Policy – no change
- Training & Professional Development Policy – updated

Agreement to approve the above policies was proposed by Cllr. Wood and seconded by Cllr.

Randlesome subject to one or two minor changes.

ALL AGREED

9. Finance –

- **To agree continued membership of SLCC at an annual cost of £110** – Agreement proposed by Cllr. Bennett and seconded by Cllr. Meade **ALL AGREED**
- **Approval of items of expenditure invoiced since the October 2021 meeting and note balances** – Agreement proposed by Cllr. Wood and seconded by Cllr. Leech **ALL AGREED**
- **To discuss the budget for the next financial year 2022-23** – The draft budget and report had been sent to Councillors 10 days previously for their consideration. In the interim the tax base figures had been received from SNC and the figures used in the budget have turned out to be correct. There are still some minor changes to be made in relation to the gratuity scheme for the Clerk, and it was agreed to review and agree the budget at the January meeting after this has been discussed in more detail.

In the report the Clerk had informed members that the Allotment Account did not have enough funds to pay the next water bill by direct debit and asked for the parish council to agree to top up the account from the parish council general funds. This has always been an account that only just had sufficient funds, but due to the purchase of a new post and gate, new tap and compliance with Water Regulations over the last couple of years, the cushion of money that existed had been exhausted. It was agreed to transfer £500 to the allotment current account. Agreement proposed by Cllr. Wood and seconded by Cllr. Goodfellow.

The Chairman asked members if they were happy to continue the meeting for a further 25 minutes as the meeting was now overrunning. All agreed.

10. Playing Field/Play Equipment/Bowls Club/Allotments

- **Update on the review of allotment rules and regulations** – Ongoing. The Chairman asked the Clerk to send him the new version of the rules again for alteration where necessary.
- **To discuss weatherproofing the play equipment and associated costs** – Cllr. Goodfellow regularly looks at the play equipment and had reported to the Clerk and Chairman that the wooden equipment could do with weatherproofing because after being in place for the last few years, it showed signs of weathering. The Clerk was asked to contact the original installers and ask for their advice on best to protect it.

ACTION - CLERK

12. Significant Correspondence – Noted - NALC Wellbeing information on plaque for parish councils, email from resident regarding timing on approval of minutes, email from residents regarding the gap between the main river Footbridge and the bridge over the Mill stream is getting waterlogged. The Clerk had spoken to a resident earlier today who had concerns over raised tarmac on the footpath between her and her neighbours homes on Queensway. The Chairman offered to take a look and send the Clerk a photo so it could be reported to Highways.

13. Business for the next meeting - Village items, allotments and budget

The meeting was adjourned for public participation at 21.48 and reconvened at 21.55

Items discussed during this session were as follows:-

- District Councillor Bernard commented that some funding was available for the Queen's Platinum Jubilee Event.
- The member of the public informed members that two trees have died on the Playing Field and need replacing.
- Footpath near Marston Moor bridge has not been cut back even though other footpaths have.
- Suggestion on the School and Church Road junction – could it be made into a No Entry to stop the cutting across the corner from Church Road into School Road.

14. Confirmation of the date of the next meeting – Wednesday 26th January 2022

The meeting ended at 9.56pm

Signed ... S. Wood
Dated26th January 2022

Budget

Parish Council Budget Document - The budget document is based on a 3.09% increase to the precept but could withstand no increase to the precept request this year, but would leave a deficit of £482 overall.

Playing Field Budget Document - is showing a minus figure, although the expenditure has been pared down as much as possible but there is still a deficit of £318. This has come about not only due to rising prices but also due to the drop in income over the years.

In summary, no change to the budget as written and no increase in precept would produce a loss overall of £800 for the year.

It needs bearing in mind that we do not know how much of an increase there will be on running costs for either Parish Council or Playing Field and don't forget that the Allotment account is running very low on funds due to having works carried out over the last two years so this may need topping up.

To counteract the Playing Field deficit, my suggestion would be to resolve to agree to increase the Playing Field precept share from £1000 to £1500 per year. This will cover the shortfall if the budget is accepted as it stands, and hopefully keep the Playing Field accounts in the black for the years to come.

So things to think about whilst considering the budget:-

- Is there a sufficient safety net of earmarked funds for the budget lines?
- Is there any expenditure listed that could be reduced eg - Cast Iron Post?
- We have two new councillors on the PC so should there be a training budget included? Current new councillor courses are running at around £60 - £80 per person per course.
- Was the Parish Council thinking of celebrating the Queen's Platinum Jubilee? If so, a budget line needs to be put in to pay for any plans you may have.

Precept

As everyone will know, councils are facing a particularly difficult time with costs rising dramatically after COVID19 and subsequent increases in utilities. The pandemic is not over yet, so potentially there could be more disruption and rising prices in store. This has made it very difficult to estimate the level of money that would be required for the running of the parish going into the next financial year.

As a member of a clerking network, the discussions between clerks on parish and town councils up and down the country on that forum, are suggesting that some parish councils are putting their precepts up by as much as 20% to cover the ever-increasing costs of running their assets and facilities.

Current annual cost to the resident is £53.21 and the council tax request remained the same for 2020/21 with no increase.

I won't get the Band D figures until the middle of December, so this is just something to think about with a final decision being made at a meeting in January 2022, so I have based an estimate on last year's figures in the table below. You will see that I have just taken a guess at what you may want to see in terms of how the figures work out if the precept is kept the same or increased. The Parish accounts and reserves are healthy at the moment, but please be mindful that things are changing and more expenditure will need to be made in the future, plus the cost of any projects that you may wish to undertake.

EXAMPLE – final figures won't be known until the Band D figures are given to the PC by South Norfolk Council but the figures below are worked out using the tax base figures of 293.

Precept request For the year	Percentage Increase to resident Per year	Cost to resident for 2020/21 Per year	Extra cost to resident from previous year	Money to parish council (+ or -) from last year's precept
£15,590	0	£53.21	0	0
£16,072	3.09%	£54.85	£1.64	+£482
£16,250	4.2%	£55.46	£2.25	+£660
£16,500	5.8%	£56.31	£3.10	+£910
£16,750	7.4%	£57.17	£3.96	+£1160

Money held in Parish Accounts for specific purposes

<u>CIL monies currently spent and balances</u>		
Payments upto October 2019	£ 15,446.10	
Minus - New LED lanterns for Elms Close and The Street (Nov 19)	£ 2,990.00	
		£ 12,456.10
Minus - Heating in Village Hall (January 2020)		£ 1,049.65
Balance as at 13th May 2020		£ 11,406.45
Minus - Remaining LED lanterns from replacement programme		£ 4,692.36
Balance of CIL monies		£ 6,714.09
<u>Ringfenced money - Playing Field Savings Account</u>		
Money paid over from Playground Committee for repair/replace of equip.		£ 2,140.29
Minus - repair of pavilion on play area (August 2020)		£ 53.16
Balance as at 21st July 2021		£ 2,087.13

Above is a reminder of the money that is held within the Parish Council accounts that have to be used for specific purposes.

I would like to suggest using CIL money to pay for the new seating bench, and SAM2 machine, future purchases may include grit bins, noticeboard, litter and dog bins – this will all have to be agreed at a parish council meeting but is expenditure within the remit of using CIL money. The wood preserving of the equipment on the play area can also be paid for out of the money set aside for the play equipment, this is on the November agenda for agreement.

Overall, there is not a pressing need to increase the precept this year as we have built up healthy reserves over the past few years despite making good improvements to the village and its assets, but costs are going up and consideration would need to be given to increasing the precept perhaps next year if the council don't wish to put any extra financial burden on residents during 2022.

Lynda Ling – Parish Clerk - 11th November 2021