

PARISH COUNCIL
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MINUTES of the **Parish Council Meeting** held on Wednesday 7th February at the Village Hall, Bunwell.

Cllrs Present at the Meeting: Cllr J Chapman (Chair), Cllr R Smith, Cllr S Spooner, and Cllr D Ward

Also Present: County Cllr Catherine Rowett, the Parish Clerk and 5 members of the public.

MINUTES

ACTION

- 1. To receive apologies for absence** – Cllr Rupert Watson sent his apologies.
- 2. To record declaration of interest from Council members in any item to be discussed** – there were no declarations of interest.
- 3. To agree the minutes of the Parish Council meeting on 3rd January 2024** – pages 487-493, having previously been circulated to all members and agreed, were signed by the Chair.
- 4. Matters Arising from Previous Minutes** –
 - 4.1 Update on renewed lease for the Playing Field – the landowner has confirmed that an updated lease will be received shortly.
 - 4.2 Update on repairing signposting on Low Common – Mr Smallwood has confirmed that these fingerposts are in the process of being repaired.
- 5. To receive the County Councillor and District Councillors' Reports** – County Cllr Rowett had sent her written report prior to the meeting, and this is attached at the end of these minutes. Topics covered included the setting of the County Council Budget for next year, and she said that the Council had received a very disappointing settlement from the government, worse even than their pessimistic expectations, leading to the need to make even more swingeing cuts and putting at risk the very possibility of delivering even the basic level of services that are expected of a county council. Her list of requests under the Road Safety Community Fund went in for consideration in November, after much consultation and calculations by Adam Mayo, the Highways Officer. There were lots of requests, and they only considered two of hers, including one for a speed limit on the main road at Bunwell. They refused this on the grounds that not enough people had been hurt or killed. She is now working with Adam to try to find other ways of delivering alternative solutions including a feasibility study for a crossing point on the Turnpike (a zebra crossing is unlikely but a refuge island to make it safe to cross in two stages may be an option) or part-time flashing lights. Other topics covered included Roads and Railways, and health issues.
- 6. Resident's Questions** – Other matters raised are covered by Cllr Rowett's report or under other headings in these minutes.

7. To receive and discuss correspondence – emails received had been forwarded to Cllrs and dealt with as required. A local resident had emailed raising concerns that in heavy rain the water running down The Turnpike could cause flooding in the driveways of properties. The matter had been put to Highways in the past and they will be reminded of the concerns and asked for their help.

8. Working Groups – to receive updates from:

- 8.1 Planning Development Group – There are no updates to report.
- 8.2 Surface Water & Sewerage Group – Sarah Goddard reported that the group had met up with Katie Spillman, the South Norfolk Surface Water Drainage Officer and she had been most helpful. She will contact landowners and householders where necessary and Highways Dept are surveying roads in the area to try to mitigate the problem of surface water run-off.
- 8.3 To consider appointments to the above groups – Phil Gledhill has stepped down as Chairman of both these groups, but Cllr Smith will be reporting to the PC on behalf of the Planning Development Group and Sarah Goddard will report to the PC on behalf of the Surface Water Group.

9. Highway and Footpath Matters –

9.1 Highways: Update on suggestion for 30mph speed limit along The Turnpike – as reported by Cllr Rowett above, this suggestion has been turned down but she is pursuing the matter of improving safety on The Turnpike. Cllr Chapman reported that he had not been able to contact anyone at the local Police concerning setting up a Speedwatch Group. He will try again but it might not be possible to do this and other ways of reducing speeds could be considered. Another pole could be purchased to be sited on the approach to the bends coming into Bunwell from Tacolneston so that a SAM2 machine could be installed, or a permanent sign could be purchased to remind motorists that they are in a 40mph limit which might help to improve road safety.

Tibenham PC had contacted the Parish Council saying that they are hoping to install signs saying 'Horses – Slow Down' in Cargate Common and suggested that such signs might be useful in Low Common. Councillors agreed and Tibenham PC will be asked to obtain costings for consideration.

9.2 Footpaths: The Footpath Warden, Cllr Spooner, reported that she had received reports that walkers are using field margins instead of designated footpaths, and that dog owners are not clearing up after their dogs and depositing the excrement in the designated dog bins, or taking the bags home for disposal. She reminded walkers and dog owners that they should be mindful of the generosity of landowners in permitting access to their land, and this access should not be abused.

Mr Laurie, Chairman of Carleton Rode PC and landowner, said that the Government rules concerning public access to land and paths is changing and he may have to close access to some of his fields in Bunwell until the new rules are put in place. He pointed out that landowners do not receive any grants for allowing public access but as long as he is able to follow the new guidelines, he is keen to reopen paths where he can.

Cllr Smith reported that if the landowner agreed, a footbridge could be erected at the exit of FP8 at the bottom of the playing field to provide a

Cllr Smith

barrier so that children could not leave the field and go straight onto the roadway.

It was pointed out that the footpath from the end of Greenways down to the ford is not on the Definitive Map and Cllr Spooner agreed to look into this.

Cllr Spooner

10. Playground/Village Hall –

Following the successful bid by the Parish Council for a Lottery Community Grant to install a new Rotating Cone Climber on the playground, it was agreed that an official opening should take place at the end of the February half-term week to celebrate. Details will be advertised locally nearer the time.

11. Planning Applications – to discuss and vote on any new planning

applications – Applications Nos. 2024/0039 and 2024/0193 had been considered by the councillors and there were no objections. Councillors agreed the wording of comments to be added to planning applications for extensions to existing buildings or for new builds, to ensure that surface water is not allowed to enter the sewerage system or to be discharged onto the highway.

12. Finance

12.1 Payments for January had been circulated and councillors agreed to these transactions.

12.2 Cashbook balance – this had been circulated to all Councillors and was noted.

12.3 Appointment of Internal Auditor. The Clerk is looking into this matter and will advise councillors when one has been found.

Clerk

13. To receive matters of importance from Councillors –

Cllr Smith reported that the noticeboards outside the shop had been taken down temporarily and one had been reinstated. It was suggested that the spare one is erected at the Village Hall to be used exclusively by the PC to avoid notices being obscured by general notices. This was agreed and Cllr Smith will arrange this.

Cllr Smith

Cllr Chapman reported that the green display lights on three defibrillators are not working. He will investigate the reason and arrange for the repairs.

Cllr Chapman

Cllr Ward voiced his concerns that the very large vehicles using Rectory Lane were having to mount the pavement when exiting this lane and causing damage and erosion to the verges. He agreed to speak to Harveys and ask for their help in improving the situation.

Cllr Ward

14. To receive Agenda items for the next meeting – to follow up matters discussed above.

15. Date of next meeting – Wednesday 6th March 2024 at 7.30pm.

Meeting Closed 9.05pm

BARCLAYS COMMUNITY ACCOUNT	
BALANCE AS AT 03.01.24	£0.10

RECEIPTS THIS MONTH – UNITY TRUST CURRENT ACCOUNT			
BALANCE AS AT 03.01.24			11,838.00
DATE	RECEIVED FROM	DESCRIPTION	ACTUAL AMOUNT
23.01.24	HMRC	VAT Refund	5,555.19
BALANCE C/FWD			17,393.19

PAYMENTS FOR APPROVAL THIS MONTH: UNITY TRUST CURRENT ACCOUNT					
BALANCE AS AT 03.01.24					£11,838.00
PAY TYPE	PAYEE	DESCRIPTION	ACTUAL AMOUNT	VAT	PAYE
BACS	Bunwell Village Hall	Hall rental Jan	30.00		
BACS	Jason Goddard	SAM2 maintenance and move	50.00		
BACS	M Ridgwell	Jan Salary & Exps	308.75		68.60
	Unity Bank	Service Charge	18.00		
Total			406.75		68.60
RECEIPTS			5,555.19		
BALANCE C/FWD					£16,986.44

CASHBOOK BALANCE: 07.02.24

Details	CR	DR	
Cash Book Balance Brought Forward (Barclays Saver A/c & Unity Bank)	11,838.10		
Receipts this month (see listed above)	B	5,555.19	
Payments this month (listed above)		C	406.75
Cash Book Balance Carried Forward (=A+B-C)			16,986.54
Barclays Savings A/c balance			0.10
Unity Balance			16,986.44
TOTAL CASH IN BANK:			16,986.54

Councillor report, January 2024, from Catherine Rowett

05/02/2024

County Council Budget

The Council has received a very disappointing settlement from the government, worse even than their pessimistic expectation, leading to the need to make even more swingeing cuts and putting at risk the very possibility of delivering even a basic level of the services that are expected of a county council. The settlement does not cover the cost of inflation, the increase in the minimum wage, and the extra burdens imposed by a rural and aging population and considerable deprivation caused by long term illness in the wake of covid and by poverty, especially child poverty in many of our most deprived towns.

The problem has been mildly alleviated by additional emergency funding injected by the government after it became apparent that a large number of councils would be unable to deliver their statutory obligations and were likely to go bankrupt. The extra funding is directed for social care, especially children’s services (which are especially strained by the

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increasing child poverty and deprivation in working families who can't cover the cost of food and heat at home) and there is also a boost to the rural services grant which helps councils with the additional costs of servicing a large rural area (such as Norfolk) but again the funding will struggle to cover the extra costs of maintaining drainage systems on roads and storm damage, flooding, coastal erosion and damage to the waterways from pollution from roads, fields and sewage.

The budget will come to council to approve on 20th February. I along with the rest of the Green Group have been preparing some proposed amendments, to try to ensure that the most important things are protected, but there is very little wriggle room when the resources have been cut to the bone under more than ten years of Conservative government austerity and incompetence.

The MIG

The Minimum Income Guarantee is a way of subsidising the cost of care, including residential care, for severely disabled people who need to pay for care out of their allowance. It ensures that however much their care costs, they will have some income left to spend on basic necessities such as clothing, shoes, toiletries, outings and so on. The council is required to ensure that people have a certain level of income left, so even if their care costs more to provide, the council will cover the remaining cost so as to leave the person with a little income left over, and families will not be out of pocket if they have a disabled person living with them.

The Council will be consulting on their proposals to reduce the MIG in Norfolk, which would have a considerable impact on the quality of life and personal dignity of young and working age disabled people given that we are facing considerable inflation in costs for clothing and other necessities. The consultation will open on 19th February.

I, together with my Green colleagues, are preparing our proposals for amendments to the budget for the Council to vote on this month. We are looking to get the Council to vote to continue to fund the MIG at the levels they have been at in recent years, and not to make these cuts at a time of such hardship in many families.

Road Safety Schemes:

My list of requests under the Road Safety Community Fund went in for consideration in November, after much consultation and calculations by Adam Mayo, our highways officer. There were lots of requests, and they really only considered two of mine, one for safer speed limits in various locations around Bressingham and one for a speed limit on the main road at Bunwell. They refused the latter on the grounds that not enough people had been hurt or killed. A clear example of the bonkers criteria that prevent us from making people feel safe to come out and walk, ride bicycles or walk dogs and horses.

I am now working with Adam to try to find other ways of delivering alternative solutions for the problems that didn't get support, or were too low down the list to stand a chance. I've been saving my highways allowance for these projects and hope to find affordable options for at least some of them. Thanks to a letter from the children at Bunwell School I am hoping to get a feasibility study for a crossing point on the Turnpike (a zebra crossing is unlikely but a refuge island to make it safe to cross in two stages may be an option). But this insistence that safety comes last when it comes to deciding what interventions are required is really problematic.

I've tried twice now to get a motion to Council for setting up a working group to investigate how we might change the criteria to make it easier to get a safer speed limit in places where village communities want it. I'd like us to be the council that leads the way on promoting safer rural roads, to inspire other councils to do the same. 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.

We ran out of time at Council in December and January, so I'll have another go at bringing the motion in March. I really want it debated and not just voted down without discussion, because I can't believe the other councillors don't also have parishes clamouring for something better.

Buses and active travel

I'm looking to arrange a discussion with officers and parish councils about a few situations where we don't have a useful timetable, even though there is a scheduled bus. Another thing we are building into our budget amendment is finding funding to restore on-demand bus provision, such as the Borderhoppa, in the rural places without sufficient transport. We need to make village life a joy, even for those who can't access a car, and those who are trying to get around in more planet-friendly ways.

The Council has now extended free bus travel for those who hold a concessionary pass on grounds of disability, so that

it covers travel before 9.30 a.m: this allows those with disabilities to get to work and training opportunities for free, if there's a bus that works for that. But it's not much use if there is no bus that runs at that time!

Roads and railways

Work is now starting on the long awaited Long Stratton bypass. It will take traffic out of the centre of the town, which is good, but not off the roads altogether. In fact, new fast roads always tend to increase traffic overall. We need to be looking at other solutions, and I'm keen to get a head of steam up behind the Railfuture project of reopening one of the stations (closed by Beeching) on the London line between Norwich and Diss. The one between Forncett and Long Stratton seems the most likely, to serve a large number of people both in Long Stratton and the villages nearby. Purchasing the land, as an investment towards making this possible, is one of the proposals for capital investment in our Green group's County Council budget amendments. We'd use the new transport and investment money levelling up money that comes with the county devolution deal for this.

How do sixth formers get to school or college?

The County Council is undertaking its annual review of its Post-16 Transport Policy Statement. There's a consultation about the [Post-16 Travel Scheme](#) (subsidised travel for eligible students aged 16-18 and 16-25 year olds with Special Education Needs and Disabilities, to get to a school sixth form, sixth form college or further education learning establishment). The council spent £3.8m on this in 2022-23, providing travel assistance to 1,320 students across Norfolk. To reflect forecasted inflation, the parental contribution for the Post-16 Travel Scheme may need to rise. They're consulting on two options for increasing parental contributions: a 3% option, based on current inflation levels and a 6% option based on the council's inflationary forecast for 2024-25. The 6% figure more likely represents the true rise in costs in the coming year.

News and campaigns this month:

Health - HIV testing week awareness - Norfolk campaign launched

Norfolk County Council is encouraging residents to get tested for HIV during this year's National Testing Week (Monday 5 - Sunday 11 February).

In Norfolk, of the people newly diagnosed with HIV between 2017-21, almost half received a late HIV diagnosis. There are particularly high prevalence areas in Norwich and Great Yarmouth.

Pharmacy First

The government has introduced a new scheme to enable simple illnesses to be dealt with at the chemist's instead of at the doctor's. Unfortunately it coincides with record numbers of local chemists closing down, so it seems unlikely that it will help with anything. There seems to be no plan to save the local chemists.

The end of disposable vapes

The government is outlawing disposable vapes. This is good news not just for the sake of preventing the epidemic of vaping among children but also for the environment.

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](#).

Catherine Rowett

5th February 2024