

BUNWELL PARISH COUNCIL
MILL HOUSE, LENWADE MILL, NORWICH, NR9 5QA
www.bunwellpc.info

Chairman: J Chapman,
Tel: 07783 329833
e-mail: chapman.jdc@gmail.com

Clerk: Mrs Margaret Ridgwell,
Tel: 01603 871636
e-mail: bunwell-pc@live.com

MINUTES of the **Bunwell Annual Parish Meeting** held on Wednesday 8th May 2024 at the Village Hall, Bunwell.

Cllrs Present at the Meeting: Cllr J Chapman, (Chairman), Cllr R Smith and Cllr R Watson.

Also Present: Parish Clerk, County Cllr Catherine Rowett, District Cllr Suzanne Wateridge and 19 members of the public.

MINUTES	ACTION
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- 1. To elect a Chairman and receive the Chairman's Declaration of Acceptance of Office** - Cllr R Smith proposed that Cllr J Chapman be elected Chairman. This proposal was seconded by Cllr Watson and agreed by all. Cllr Chapman signed the Chairman's Declaration of Acceptance of Office. **To elect a Vice-Chairman** – Cllr J Chapman proposed, and Cllr Watson seconded, that Cllr R Smith be appointed as Vice-Chairman. All were in agreement.
- 2. Newly elected councillors to sign their Declaration of Acceptance of Office and any Co-options to be considered** - A Co-option Application Form had been received from Mr Mike Booty and all councillors agreed that he be appointed to the office of Parish Councillor. He will be invited to sign his Declaration of Acceptance of Office form at the next meeting.
- 3. To receive apologies** – apologies were received from Cllrs Spooner and Ward.
- 4. To record declaration of interest from Council members in any item to be discussed** – there were no declarations of interest.
- 5. To appoint Defibrillator Warden, Footpath Warden and Play Area Warden** – Cllr Chapman agreed to carry on his responsibility for the defibrillators; Cllr Spooner agreed to carry on as Footpath Warden; and Cllr Smith agreed to carry on his responsibility for the Play Area.
- 6. To agree the minutes of the Parish Council meeting on 3rd April 2024** - The minutes of the previous meeting on 3rd April 2024, pages 507-509, having previously been circulated to all members, were signed by the Chair.
- 7. To discuss matters arising from the previous Meeting** – matters for discussion will be raised in the relevant items below.

- 8. Matters Arising from the Annual Parish Meeting Minutes** – matters of concern included the use of the CIL money and road safety. These will be discussed in the relevant items below.
- 9. Resident’s Questions** – Items raised by residents will be discussed in the relevant items below.
- 10. To receive and discuss correspondence** – emails received had been forwarded to Cllrs and dealt with as required.
- 11. Working Groups** – to receive updates from:
- 11.1. Planning Development Group – there are no updates to report
- 11.2. Surface Water & Drainage Group – NCC Highways Dept have surveyed the drainage in Bunwell Street and hopefully will be carrying out improvements in the near future. Katie Spillman, SNDC Drainage Officer, will be following up her contact with landowners to help alleviate drainage issues. She reported that the culvert near Orchard Farm will be repaired.
- 11.3. National Grid Pylon Proposals Group – There is an interactive map available on the National Grid website which shows all the proposed pylons and the working areas for haul roads and lorry parks. These roads will be 6.5 metres wide requiring huge amounts of hard core to be transported into Bunwell Hill and Low Common, using minor roads and destroying the local environment. This increase in traffic will have an impact on all Bunwell residents, not just those close to the proposed pylons. It was also pointed out that the work will take approximately 3 years to complete and the whole length of the route will be worked on during this time. The ESO, which is an offshoot of the National Grid, has carried out a survey of the proposed pylon scheme and summarises eight options to bring energy from the North Sea to Tilbury. An offshore route is much cheaper in the long-term but the short-term estimate is that pylons are cheaper. Another option is to bury cables along the whole length, which would not be cheaper but would cause less long-term damage, and it might also be possible to use a different pylon design and put the new pylons alongside the existing route rather than decimate even more areas. The Group have produced a leaflet giving all the facts which has been delivered to all Bunwell residents to increase awareness of the problem. They are also consulting landowners affected by the scheme and studying maps showing the wildlife habitats involved and the precious nature of the Tas Valley – one of only 200 chalk streams in the world. The local MP visited the site and is encouraging NCC to carry out a landscape analysis. As a Parish Council we are doing all we can to avoid the devastating effect this scheme will have on residents, the environment and the bio-diversity of our village. The consultation ends on the 18th June 2024 and the Parish Council will send in a strong objection to the scheme. Individual residents are also encouraged to send in their views to have even more impact. After this consultation ends the results will be passed to the Planning Inspectorate and then on to the Secretary of State for ratification. Cllr Rowett reiterated that she is campaigning on our behalf and NCC have agreed to work with Suffolk and Essex County Councils to ensure that the offshore route is agreed as the preferred option. It was agreed that the Pylon Group send their recommendations to the PC before the next meeting so that their objections can be discussed and agreed before forwarding to the National Grid consultation.

- 12. Highway Matters** – It was agreed that the Parish Council would wait until Cllr Rowett’s feasibility study is completed before any suggestions are made to improve the safety of pedestrians crossing The Turnpike outside the Village Hall. The PC will also contact NCC Highways reminding them that they are responsible for the condition of Brick Kiln Lane and asking that repairs are carried out as a matter of urgency. **Clerk**
- 13. Footpath Warden Report** - Cllr Spooner has reminded residents that she needs completed user-evidence forms from at least 12 local residents to prove that the path between Greenways and the ford on Barhams Lane has been used as a public right of way for at least 20 years. A map of the route and the user evidence forms are available on the Parish Council website.
- 14. Playground** – There are no ongoing repair issues at present. The Annual RoSPA inspection will take place in June.
- 15. Planning Applications – to discuss and vote on any new planning applications** – Application had been received as follows:
- 15.1. Application No. 2024/0993, Land west of 1-4 The Cottages, Wymondham Road. Proposal – outline planning permission for 4 dwellings. Cllr Smith had been in contact with several residents on Wymondham Road and they had asked that the Parish Council support their views that this application should be refused on the grounds that: The access lane to the site is not a public right of way, is liable to flooding, and is narrow with poor visibility onto Wymondham Road; The drawings submitted are inaccurate and do not show the many large mature trees on the site which would have to be removed; The site is not in a sustainable location being some 1.2km from the local shop and there are no pedestrian pavements or paths along Wymondham Road. It is likely that the site is home to many species of birds, insects, mammals etc and there are a number of natural ponds very near necessitating a full ecological and tree survey before any planning decision is made. **Clerk**
- 16. Finance**
- 16.1. Payments for the month had been circulated and councillors agreed to these transactions.
- 16.2. Cashbook balance – this had been circulated to all Councillors and was noted.
- 16.3. The Councillors considered and approved the Annual Governance Statement of this year’s AGAR.
- 16.4. The Councillors considered and approved the Accounting Statements and report from the Internal Auditor as part of this year’s AGAR.
- 17. To receive matters of importance from Councillors** – Cllr Rowett reported that work in progress includes Highway matters, the Norwich to Tilbury Pylon Proposal, the Long Stratton Bypass, national reforms to disability benefits and Fit Note reforms. Her report in full is attached at the end of these minutes.
- 18. To receive items for the next Agenda for Consideration** – To follow up items raised above.
- 19. Date of next meeting** – Wednesday 7th June, 2024 at 7.30pm
- 20. Meeting Closed 8.55pm**

MINUTES	ACTION
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BARCLAYS COMMUNITY ACCOUNT

BALANCE AS AT 03.04.24	£0.10
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RECEIPTS THIS MONTH – UNITY TRUST CURRENT ACCOUNT

BALANCE AS AT 03.04.24			£15,935.94
DATE	RECEIVED FROM	DESCRIPTION	ACTUAL AMOUNT
24.04.24	South Norfolk Council	Precept	7,750.00
17.04.24	South Norfolk Council	CIL Payment	2,358.50
BALANCE C/FWD			£26,044.44

PAYMENTS FOR APPROVAL THIS MONTH: UNITY TRUST CURRENT ACCOUNT

BALANCE AS AT 03.04.24			£15,935.94		
PAY TYPE	PAYEE	DESCRIPTION	ACTUAL AMOUNT	VAT	PAYE
BACS	Bunwell PCC	Annual donation for churchyard	1,000.00		
BACS	SB Auditing	Annual Internal Audit	125.00		
BACS	Village Hall	Rental for April	30.00		
BACS	Jason Goddard	SAM2 maintenance, 3 mths	150.00		
BACS	M Ridgwell	Apr Salary & Exps	333.04		68.60
Total			1,638.04		68.60
RECEIPTS			10,108.50		
BALANCE C/FWD			£24,406.40		

CASHBOOK BALANCE: 08.05.24

Details	CR	DR	
Cash Book Balance Brought Forward (Barclays Saver A/c & Unity Bank) A	15,936.04		
Receipts this month (see listed above) B		10,108.50	
Payments this month (listed above)			C 1,638.04
Cash Book Balance Carried Forward (=A+B-C)			24,406.50
Barclays Savings A/c balance			0.10
Unity Balance			24,406.40
TOTAL CASH IN BANK:			24,406.50

Councillor report, May 2024, from Catherine Rowett

06/05/2024

Work in Progress

In theory we have progress on several things I've been trying to get done, though sadly you may not have seen the results yet. I've now had the official results letter for my applications for the Road Safety Community Fund, which have turned out to be rather puzzling since what they say in the letter doesn't match what I understood I'd been awarded nor what I thought I had requested! It appears that we're getting all or some of the speed limit improvements in Bressingham and Fersfield (not 20 mph but 30, since 20 wasn't an option under this scheme), and perhaps they have indeed discovered that one can get a collection of speed limits done under one (costly) Traffic Regulation Order, which, if true, is a very good precedent. These will be implemented within the next 12 months, God willing. I also asked for a 30mph speed limit

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on the Turnpike in Bunwell. That was refused, so I believed we had got nothing, but they now say they have awarded a Vehicle Activated Sign for Bunwell (which I didn't think I had ever asked for, or even considered). I am trying to find out what exactly this is and where it is to be installed. I trust it is something that the Parish had asked for. Meanwhile, believing I had nothing to assist with the dangerous crossing point on the Turnpike, I have commissioned a feasibility study for making a safer crossing there, using part of my 2023 highways budget. In Aslacton, I've been chasing and got promises for action on the speed limit (long approved but never installed) on Pottergate Street, which should be done by June this year. I've ordered, and will fund or partially fund, various signs, paint and chevrons for some of the roads with problems of dangerous bends and misleading junctions, and I'm co-funding with Councillor Wilby a solution for the unmarked and neglected Furze Green Hamlet that crosses two parishes/divisions and highways officers. This is now in progress. I've also commissioned the designers to come up with signs to stop long lorries from using Tabernacle Lane in Forncett. I'd like to get a UK-wide solution to change the way Sat Navs work, when it comes to tiny single-track lanes to eliminate the problem of delivery vans and lorries taking short cuts at speed due to delivery targets and carbon reduction targets.

In addition to work to solve drainage problems in the Street in Bunwell, the Environment Agency has been researching natural flooding solutions for the feeder tributaries for the Tas and for the area around Shelfanger. They're reporting to Shelfanger in May. I've been looking into better signage at the steep and deep Ford in Forncett, and I'm told that the Council is undertaking a review of all the County's fords, to improve safety. This is promising, but I fear it will take a long time before we get action.

I've been pestering footpaths officers, particularly with cases where enforcement is lacking, such as in Gissing. The new route for the FP6 in Gissing is now official so we can put pressure on to get it opened up. In some places we have problems with irresponsible dog-owners. There's no one-size-fits-all solution to this, so we need to work out what might help in each case.

Norwich to Tilbury Pylons

My input to the County's response to the Statutory consultation must go in by Wednesday so I'll be preparing it today and tomorrow. Many thanks to residents who have sent local information about effects in their area. I have attended some important briefings with other councils/councillors from Suffolk and Essex, and I'm working on a response that reflects the fact that we need a better solution, and a better way of ensuring that government planning systems work with local people to place important infrastructure in appropriate places, without destroying the environment in the process. I attended the fantastic art exhibition in Forncett, highlighting the beauty of the local area. I am concerned about the damage that preparing for and erecting the pylons will cause, not just their long term presence.

Undergrounding would also damage local ecologies, roads and hedges. Local consultation information events are in Ashwellthorpe (Thursday 9th May), Tibenham (Friday 10th May), Diss Town Football club (Wednesday 15th May), all afternoon-early evening.

The attempt to silence local voices is not a good look on the part of the current government, nor is the blithe assumption that we can just build more and more and never ask whether less would be better—less demand, less consumption, more economical ways of living, more nature, more happiness.

Norfolk County Council Full Council meeting, Tuesday May 7th.

This meeting is the AGM so we'll be appointing the leader and cabinet etc for the coming year. There will also be motions. I've submitted my motion about rural speed limits and hope it will be discussed and voted on. I've also submitted a motion about the National Grid Pylons scheme. The Conservatives have tabled an amendment to my Pylons motion, which will probably pass, but I don't know whether they will support or oppose the motion. The amendment will remove some key points I wanted to make to protect us for the future. There are also motions on NHS Dentistry and on the Norwich Western Link road. I shall speak on the one about dentistry.

Norfolk things:

Long Stratton Bypass

Construction of the bypass has begun and we now have road closed signs on all side routes that the road will cross. For further details on the closures [view the Long Stratton Bypass works public information notice \(PDF\) \[173KB\]](#). Further information and updates relating to the Long Stratton Bypass, plus a link for those wishing to subscribe to Long Stratton Bypass e-news, are available on the county council website [here](#).

National Government things

Prime Minister's "moral mission" to reform disability benefits

Mr Sunak is proposing reforms to disability benefits. He wants to solve the fact that the number of people claiming disability benefits for mental health conditions has doubled since 2020. The plan is to change the eligibility criteria, assessment process and types of support, and remove the cash that people are allowed to spend on what they need on a regular basis, including things that they might enjoy. helping people on benefits to stay in or return to work. The government say that they will consult on proposed reforms to disability benefits system to ensure benefits are targeted at those who need it most.

The information about the proposed changes can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/modernising-support-for-independent-living-the-health-and-disability-green-paper/modernising-support-for-independent-living-the-health-and-disability-green-paper>

I would strongly encourage anyone who is concerned about the well-being of people they know who struggle with their disabilities or mental health or receive these PIP payments to respond to this consultation, if you care about the values that this country has lived by over the last century, in trying to care with compassion for those who have received a hard lot in life and for those who are waiting for non-existent NHS treatment or other kinds of help.

Fit Note Reform: government call for evidence

Another related issue is this call for evidence to inform a programme of work announced at the autumn statement in 2023, to explore reforming the "fit note" process. The government says this is "to support those with long term health conditions to access timely work and health support". What they mean is that they don't want doctors to assess whether a person is fit to go back to work, and they want a system that allows them to set targets for cutting people off from getting sick notes, remove their access to sick pay and force them back into work (or starvation), as they do with other benefits. They are looking for "enhancements that stakeholders would require for the fit note to better support people to start, stay and succeed in work". Please consider contributing to this evidence-gathering process. They want to hear from employers, healthcare professionals, patients, carers and those who access fit notes, representatives of local systems or local system partners (e.g. local authority, community social enterprise), interested academics and stakeholder organisations

To participate in this call for evidence use [this online form](#). Further information about the call for evidence is available [here](#)

Contact me on

Catherine.rowett.cllr@norfolk.gov.uk for Council-related business. See also my facebook page [here](#).

Catherine Rowett 6th

May 2024

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