

Minutes of the Annual Meeting of the Parish held at the Waggon & Horses on Tuesday 2nd May 2017.

Attending: Peter Ginger, Nicky Hornsey, Tracey Johnson, Marie McGuinness, Claire Bowes (County Councillor), Margaret Parker (Clerk) and twelve members of the public.

The meeting began at 7.00pm

The Clerk explained that the Parish Council was currently in the unusual position of having neither a Chairman or a Vice-Chairman. It was therefore necessary to elect someone to chair the Annual Meeting of the Parish. In this situation, the person elected could be anybody present at the meeting. It was decided by means of a vote that Tracey Johnson would chair the meeting.

1. Minutes of the Annual Meeting of the Parish that took place on 3rd May 2016 were approved and signed by the Chairman of the meeting.
2. The Chairman of the meeting then read the annual report which was provided by the ex-Chairman of the Parish Council. Reports were also supplied by the County and District Councillors. These three reports are included at the end of these minutes and will be published on the Parish Council website.
3. The Clerk provided detailed summaries of the Parish Council finances that showed a balance of £28949 as at 31st March this year. The accounts had been audited recently by the Internal Auditor and found to be accurate and satisfactory. As the accounts had not yet been audited by the External Auditor they must currently be classed as 'unaudited'.
4. There then followed an 'Open Forum' session when members of the public were able to ask questions and make suggestions for the village and its future.
Skate Park – The subject of the provision of a skate park was again raised. It was suggested that this would need to be positioned in the far corner of the recreation ground due to the noise generated by such installations. A Councillor had recently been approached by a business owner who was concerned that the car park at the industrial estate was currently being used by teenagers. As requested at the last meeting of the Parish, the Clerk had approached other local Parish Councils for their consideration of a joint venture. There had been no response from them.
Forward Plan – A resident asked about any progress on the 'Forward Plan' that the Parish Council had agreed to adopt last year. There had been no further mention of it and he felt that if it was not going ahead then a decision needed to be made to that effect.
Cycleway – A resident explained that the cycleway was not being maintained properly. Several punctures had been caused by overgrown brambles etc. It was explained that this was the responsibility of the Highways Dept. at Norfolk County Council. The Parish Council will report this and the County Councillor also agreed to follow this up.

This meeting was then closed and the Annual Meeting of the Parish Council commenced.

Included below:

Ex-Chairman's Report – David Barnett
County Councillor's Report – Claire Bowes
District Councillor's Report – Phil Cowen

Chairman's Report

The past year has seen its fair share of ups and downs but overall it has been successful for Griston. Just 2 months into the fiscal in July, Malcolm Bellingham, chairman, resigned from the Council, with me as vice-chairman temporarily stepping into the role until the next meeting took place in September, when the council duly confirmed my appointment, with Takis (Duggie) Zachariades taking the role of vice-chairman. Also during the year we lost the services of councillors Andrew and Stephanie Merritt-Morling. They were ultimately replaced by the co-option of Rose Woolhouse and Nicky Hornsey, and January saw the co-option of Peter Ginger to bring the council back to a full strength of 7.

During the course of the year I had been busy leading the campaign to raise the funds to pay for the new village sign. With one week to go before the unveiling we were given the final sum needed from a generous local benefactor to complete the £2,250 required, and the sign was unveiled on October 1st by Mr. Andrew Garner, to much publicity from the local press, EDP and BBC Radio Norfolk. Such was the success of the whole sign project that I proposed at the November meeting of the council that we consider celebrating our famous legend with a festival in the summer. The idea was well received and, with the support of the Wayland Partnership, the Happy Project and the backing of our county councillor, Claire Bowes, most people in the village will now be aware that over the weekend of 24th/25th June this summer, it will take place to raise funds for EACH, Home Start and the parish.

We were also fortunate during the year to be bequeathed £12,000, which enabled the council proceed with the purchase of land on Carbrooke Road. What this land will be used for will be a matter of serious consideration once the purchase is complete, but ideas so far include a 'quiet garden' including a dog-walking area, an exercise area or a wild-flower area - or even a combination of all 3! - that is for the council to decide in the future.

One subject which received much attention during the year was the council's proposal to install 'gates' similar to those in Caston at the start of the 30/40 mph speed limits into the village. It was discovered, however, that there was a distinct groundswell of opinion amongst residents that it would not be a good use of our resources. In keeping with the council's policy of considering the views of residents, the March meeting saw a very open discussion on the matter, and the council ultimately resolved to shelve those plans in favour of SAM2 flashing speed signs, which it is hoped will be obtained and installed during the next fiscal.

Unfortunately I decided, for personal reasons, to step down completely from council duties in March. My successor as chairman will be elected this evening. I would like to take this opportunity to thank my councillor colleagues for all their support and dedication during my term in the chair, and I wish them all every success for the future. For my own part, I will continue to support the council, am on the committee for the Babes In The Wood Festival and will carry on administrating the village website and Facebook page, so my involvement in Griston life is far from over!

David Barnett
2nd may 2017.

COUNTY COUNCILLOR REPORT TO ANNUAL PARISH MEETING 2017

The last year has been a year of achievement for the County Council.

While a great number of changes have taken place, the culture of the council has been driven in a much more responsive, flexible direction. While there is much still to do, it's reputation has improved.

We have not ducked the extremely difficult decisions that have been needed, including in Children's Services, where we are determined to deliver the change needed.

All achievements over the last year must be seen against a backdrop of ever-shrinking budgets and growing demand for a number of our services.

At a service level, achievements have been seen across our service areas.

Norfolk moves into top-half of the GCSE league table - Provisional GCSE results for 2016 have put Norfolk above the national average for the first time in a decade.

A unique partnership - Norfolk County Council and children's charity, Barnardo's, are developing an imaginative new approach to working together to better support children and their families. The new service, which we anticipate having in place by summer 2017, will focus on edge of care provision; supporting more children to remain at home with their families (where it is safe to do so), as opposed to coming into the care system.

Getting more of Norfolk's young people into top universities - the Norfolk Higher Education Scheme has gone from strength to strength this year. It was founded to link up sixth forms and colleges in Norfolk to share opportunities for university applicants - such as mock interviews,

workshops, outside speakers and university visits. All 33 schools and colleges in the county have signed up to the scheme. This year, having opened up to all Norfolk students applying to any university, 1,220 have already registered. In summer 2016, 48 Norfolk state school students were offered places at Oxford or Cambridge University. Increasing numbers of care leavers are moving into higher education.

Growing our own social workers – recruiting and retaining social workers is a challenge for many councils. In summer 2016, NCC launched our own social care academy which offers training and mentoring to social workers.

In Good Company - Loneliness can cause ill health and reduce people's ability to lead fulfilling and independent lives. In November 2016 we launched our IGC campaign – working with partners, including charities and the local media - to combat loneliness and raise awareness of the wide range of support on offer in Norfolk.

Giving a warm welcome to Syrian refugee families - Norfolk has a long tradition of extending the hand of friendship to those in need and this has held true in this case of welcoming Syrian refugees to the county. At the beginning of February, the first five Syrian families arrived in Norwich. Extensive work was done with district councils, health authorities, schools and voluntary groups to get everything in place to welcome the families, all of whom have young children. We were also inundated with offers of help and support from Norfolk residents and local faith and voluntary groups.

Acting against domestic violence – in December 2016, we reached the 500 mark for training domestic abuse 'champions' in frontline professions to help people suffering abuse.

Better broadband - the latest tranche of Better Broadband for Norfolk (BBfN) will see high-speed broadband coverage reaching more than 95% of Norfolk home and businesses by spring 2020. Currently, 87% of households and businesses in Norfolk can get a superfast broadband service, more than double the number four years ago (42%). But we won't be satisfied until everyone in Norfolk has access, so we will continue to push for more investment and make the money we already have go as far as possible.

Integrated transport strategy – along with Suffolk County Council and the New Anglia LEP, we have commissioned Mouchel to research and produce an integrated transport strategy, covering air, road, rail, buses, sustainable transport and ports, which will be used to lever in transport investment from Government. The work was commissioned in October 2016 and is due to be published shortly.

Awards - The Library and Information Service won the national Libraries Change Lives Award for its pioneering work in partnership with Norfolk Public Health to promote healthier lifestyles. This work is being taken up as an example of good practice by libraries across the UK. Enhancing the reputation of NLIS

Claire Bowes
County Councillor
Watton Division

Breckland Council 2016-2017

Breckland Council has continued to provide high quality services whilst maintaining the lowest district council tax in the country. As part of the government's change in funding policy we are set to receive £3.3m less from central government in 2017-18, compared to 2010-11. So to help make up this shortfall we took the difficult decision to raise district Council Tax in Breckland by £4.95 a year from April – the equivalent of around 10p more per week.

The £4.95 rise is based on a Band D property but, as the majority of residents in Breckland (77%) live in properties rated Band A-C, most people in the district will see their District Council Tax rise by less than £4.95.

By way of comparison, for every £1 of council tax collected, 76 pence goes to the County, 14 pence to the police, 5 pence to towns/parishes and 5 pence to Breckland

Our aims and objectives for the district are set out in our 4 key strategies

- ❖ Supporting Breckland to develop and thrive.
- ❖ Providing the right services at the right time and in the right way.
- ❖ Developing the local economy to be vibrant with continued growth.
- ❖ Enabling stronger, more independent communities.

This year we have seen the completion of the regeneration scheme at Riverside in Thetford that has provided an hotel, cinema and restaurant complex on a key site in the centre of the town that employs close on 100 local people and contributes to the local economy in a variety of ways, whilst north of Dereham in Mileham we have completed the first of two housing schemes. The second in Attleborough will commence on site in the near future

We have secured funding for work to commence on the A11 corridor to begin the process of delivering more highly skilled jobs to the district and the Thetford Enterprise Park has moved a step closer to realisation

We are working with other public sector bodies to make access to services across a range of disciplines to be more user/customer friendly and continue to work with health partners to further the healthy living agenda across the district

Our new local plan is nearing completion and is being prepared for its final round of consultation prior to being submitted to the secretary of state for ratification and we are hopeful that this will be adopted by this time next year.

We continue to lobby for better provision of services in the district and have seen a vast improvement in the provision of faster broadband services throughout the year. This programme of work continues and more rural communities are scheduled to see an improvement in the months ahead. We have earmarked and ring fenced some £950,000.00 to assist in the provision of better broadband services to harder to reach communities

This year we are embarking on a market town initiative whereby we are seeking to assist the 5 market towns and the hinterlands that they support to provide an appropriate and meaningful provision of local services.

All of the above are of course in addition to the core business of waste collection, recycling, environmental protection, food safety and hygiene, planning and a myriad of back office functions that are provided by our officer corps.

Phil Cowen
Breckland District Councillor