

# North Runcton Parish Council

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Minutes of the North Runcton Annual Parish (Residents) Meeting held at the Village Meeting Place

Wednesday 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2019 7.45pm

**Present:** Cllr Rick Morrish (Chair), Cllr Lee Stevens, Cllr Jeremy Fuller, Cllr Paul Yallop, Cllr Keith Longhurst

23 members of the public were also present and Bor. Cllr Peter Gidney and Bor. Cllr Simon Nash

## 1. Apologies

Cllr K Fuller, Cllr L Davies, Cllr B Houchen

## 2. To accept the minutes of the Annual Residents Meeting held 15<sup>th</sup> May 2018

The minutes were accepted and signed by the Chairman.

## 3. Chairman's Report

Cllr Morrish read his report as follows;

I think this year can be summarised largely as 'the year when things didn't quite happen'. We didn't leave Europe, we didn't win the World Cup and Prince Philip didn't manage to kill himself or apparently anybody else. Similarly in North Runcton – various things we thought were going to happen, haven't as yet – so I can only report on where we have got to.

The Borough Council have been inching forward with their plans for the West Winch Growth Area. Their consultants completed their Infrastructure Delivery Plan – which supposedly sets out what infrastructure is required in order to facilitate the development, how much it will cost and how that might be funded. The Borough Council cabinet have approved the plan – but there are still concerns about viability. It was mooted that a 'steering group' would be set up which would include representatives from the Parish Councils. This has not materialised. The Borough failed to get a Government infrastructure grant that would have been used to fund initial road building. They have been told that they are more likely to be granted funding if there is a clear plan in place. Therefore, in conjunction with the County Council they have now employed engineers to design the proposed 'Relief Road' and this work is currently proceeding. They also propose to submit their own planning applications – a full application for the road and an outline application for the entire Growth Area.

As most of you will recall, developers submitted a second major application for another 500 houses within the Growth Area in December. We worked with West Winch PC to hold a public exhibition about it in February. The scheme seems to depend wholly on existing roads for access and failed to indicate how it would contribute to other proposed infrastructure. The Borough have requested additional work – but in reality it seems unlikely the scheme will be determined until the Borough have their own plans in place.

We have looked at various other planning applications this year. Applications are in for a Lidl supermarket, a family pub and hotel and a drive-in Greggs bakery (kid you not) at the Morston Point development at Hardwick – which lies within North Runcton. None have been determined and we understand there are flood risk issues that may result in the whole site being raised. We have objected to all three applications due to the lack of a coordinated approach on design and especially landscaping. We feel this is a prominent site at the gateway to the town and it needs to be well presented. We have commented on a number of smaller residential developments. So far we have not benefitted from any monies from the Community Infrastructure Levy – where some of the levied funds are allocated to the local parish. Recent completed developments were all given consent before the levy was introduced. We recently submitted a response for the Borough Local Plan Review consultation – essentially pointing out that we felt that more development along the A10 corridor would lead to more traffic and more congestion - and that a radical new transport strategy was now required.

After some promising meetings we have also failed to make much progress with the SDA. As many of you will know, they gained planning consent for a new access road from the Setch/Blackborough End Road last year - and this road is now essentially completed. However little significant work appears to have been undertaken on the main site in recent months. A group of Cllrs were shown around the site last summer and were impressed with the quality of build. We also had a meeting with representatives from the church earlier this year in which we asked for a written agreement that School Lane would not need to be used for access in future and for a contribution towards repair of the road. We felt it was a positive meeting and there were discussions about how the camp site might benefit village residents in future. However, we are still awaiting for confirmation that these proposals are acceptable.

A positive thing this year has been our collaboration with the Norfolk Wildlife Trust and their 'Wildlife in Common' project. This is promoting the value of common land across Norfolk where there are more than 300 commons – and we are lucky in North Runcton to have four of them. The Wildlife Trust are encouraging local residents to go out and survey their commons and they have 20 target species they are particularly interested in. We have at least 13 of them – including we think at least 4 amphibians and 3 reptiles. We are also looking at the history of the commons which we are sure date back to at least Anglo-Saxon times. Out of this project we are in the process of setting up a 'North Runcton Conservation Volunteers' group.

In the autumn we again held a successful bulb planting morning, this time setting bulbs along Rectory Lane and we will hope to add to those bulbs again this autumn. The Parish Council has also funded a new sign to the Church and VMP and we were delighted to receive a kind donation of a defibrillator from the Plymouth Brethren community. This has recently been installed at the Cricket Club and will be maintained by the Parish Council. We have also received a kind donation from Peter Lemon which the Council has agreed will be partly used to set up the Conservation Volunteers and partly used to invest in the VMP.

The refurbished VMP continues to be well used – with Buttercups playgroup, Rainbows, 2 art clubs, Photography, Pilates, Yoga, and Triathlon clubs, a Pagan Moot, and the Sound Bath therapy group all using the hall regularly - as are the PC and the PCC. Also – remember to come here tomorrow for your monthly vote! Heating costs have been soaring however, and we are presently reviewing how we can get these down.

We continue to develop the Parish Council website but have failed to find the time to properly develop a history page. However, to mark the centenary Armistice in November we did manage to gather a brief history of some of the 15 men commemorated on our war memorial – which made for a very moving account of life and death in West Norfolk at that time. I must also pass on the sincere thanks of the Parish Council to Lilian Fisher – who after many years as the local poppy day fundraiser, is retiring this year.

This year we said goodbye to Amanda Dobbing, who had been a Cllr for four years, and we will be pleased to welcome at our next meeting her co-opted replacement – Cllr Laura Gunn. I thank all my fellow Councillors for their continued support. Special thanks to Lee Stevens for his continued management of our speed signs. Lee logs and analyses the data and is finding that, although we believe the signs do work as a deterrent - a stubborn minority continue to speed through the village at speeds of anything up to 70mph. We suspect many of them are residents! Please drive considerately and stay below the 30mph speed limit! Middleton have had some success in setting up a Speed-watch group – which refers speeding drivers to the police. If any residents wish to help form such a group, please speak to Lee this evening. Other ongoing irritants are flytipping and dog fouling. Please feel free to report any miscreants – these actions are illegal and would attract considerable fines.

Thanks also to Rachel our clerk, who amongst many other things managed to successfully resolve a dispute with Scottish Power over electricity costs and took on being our cleaner at the VMP with a consequent saving to our outgoings. Thank you, Rachel, for all your work and support.

As a group we continue to work towards the Local Council Award Scheme benchmark standard and to identify the areas where we might seek to be better. We hope to submit our application later this year.

#### **4. Finance**

Rachel Curtis, Clerk and RFO read out the finance reports as follows;

At 31<sup>st</sup> March 2019 the Parish Council's income and expenditure account shows income of £40,726.02 and expenditure of £19,850.37. The higher than normal income figure includes the reclaimed VAT on VMP expenditure which was received in this financial year, a figure of £14,791.30.

The Parish Council agreed at its January meeting to not increase the precept for 19/20 and it remains the same as 18/19 at £15,852.

The balance of the Village Meeting Place account as at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2018 is £1,554.05. The final retention payment to Bespoke has been made for the refurbishment work to the Hall and a further 2 loan repayments have been made to the PWLB. The loan which was taken out in September 2017, has a repayment period of 10 years with an interest rate of 1.59%. The current balance outstanding is £30,096.76. At its January meeting the PC agreed to fund one loan repayment of £1,900 per year to assist in the running costs of this community asset.

Electricity costs continue to be of concern with £4,432.14 paid out in 18/19, with a similar figure being estimated for 19/20. This is being closely monitored and work has begun to obtain quotes for alternative heating systems in order to bring running costs down.

The combined closing cashbook balance for 18/19 of the PC and VMP is £26,221.61, this shows the PC to be in a sound financial position maintaining the recommended range for a Parish Council Reserve (between 3-12 months gross expenditure). This also allows some reserves to be allocated for road repairs to School Lane when required.

#### **5. Borough Councillors Report**

Cllr Simon Nash introduced himself to the meeting as a new Borough Councillor with an interest in the Standards of the Borough Council. He is a member of the Licencing and Appeals Board and the Licencing Committee. He encourages residents to contact him for a chat and voice any concerns they may have.

Cllr Peter Gidney has been re-elected and his new role is cabinet member for Project Delivery. He said his decision making will be based on what's good for the environment and will take a keen interest on transport issues including rail and the bus service. He welcomes questions from residents and will take up issues which are of concern and encourages people to challenge the Regeneration and Development Panel via the Borough Council.

County Councillor Graham Middleton was not present at the meeting.

#### **6. A short presentation on the use of the defibrillator from the RRT**

George Turner from the RRT and Oscar Palmer from Aero Healthcare attended the meeting and Oscar gave a demonstration on how to use the defibrillator and a brief overview on how to recognise the signs of a heart attack and cardiac arrest. The demonstration was very informative and Councillors and residents said they had learnt a lot from it. The PC thanked the RRT and Plymouth Brethren community again for their kind and generous donation to the village. It was confirmed that the unit is the property of the PC and it is their responsibility to maintain.

#### **7. Reports From Community Groups**

##### **Buttercups Pre-School - Linda Creed was present and reported the following;**

The Pre-School group feel part of the village and community, they use the church on many occasions as part of their learning. Funding from the Local Authority has not increased but pension contributions have and also the minimum wage. The Pre-School is run on tight margins and survives on donations. They now have a competitor in the form of a Pre-School in West Winch who offer the same session times as Buttercups, 4 children have moved there already. They are concentrating on advertising and finding it a challenge to attract people to sit on their committee. Thanks go to their Treasurer Neil Harries who has

held this role for the past year and also thanked the PC, Rachel and Rick for their help in management matters in the hall. Linda announced she would be stepping down from her position of committee Chair in July.

### **Art Group - Lyn from the Art Group submitted this report which the Clerk read**

We are a lovely mixed group of varying abilities and our artists range from beginners to the very accomplished, those who come to chat and socialise to those who love to exhibit and sell in a range of mediums, most prolifically watercolours, some acrylics and some pastels ( or all 3). We are a non profit group and so for less than £2.00 per week you can come along , get free tea and biscuits, make new friends and pick up hints and tips from those around you. There are places available on a Thursday afternoon!!

We have had a lively start to 2019 with workshops by well known local artists and plans well in hand for 3 exhibitions this year. Our first Pop up Gallery is on June 8<sup>th</sup> at East Winch village hall , 2pm – 4pm. Where we will have an ‘artist in action’ as well as a super display of very reasonably priced original art works, greeting cards and a browser full of limited edition copies and ‘bargain buys’, all by the invitation of the East Winch Fete organisers and fund raisers for the local church.

Our summer exhibition will be on Saturday the 17<sup>th</sup> and Sunday the 18<sup>th</sup> of August, with free entry and free parking , keep your eye on the Parish Magazine for more detail of what’s happening and how to join us together with details of our November exhibition which is on the weekend closest to remembrance day.

Lastly don’t forget to pop your head in the Red Phone box which is now our permanent gallery by kind courtesy of the Parish Council.

### **Parochial Church Council - Ken Matthews , Church Warden was present and reported the following;**

The PCC is in the process of submitting grant applications to fund work to repair the render on the tower and for work on toilets and kitchenette facilities. Ken thanked the PC for their supporting letter for one grant application. The Church has raised £27,000, but the cost of works to the tower and roof total £298,000 and water supply £45,000. The Heritage Fund application for the roof has passed the initial enquiry stage and thanks goes to Peter Lemon for his kind donation to aid the match funding for this. The Church is being opened up to be used for Inspired Lessons, where schools can come and use the space for creative writing and maths.

The PCC are looking at ways to link up with the Borough Council with opportunities to open the Church to the public more frequently.

### **Linda Fuller reported on the following;**

Flower festival which will be held 31<sup>st</sup> May – 3<sup>rd</sup> June, 10am – 5pm daily. Friday 31<sup>st</sup> will include an evening concert followed by a supper, Saturday 1<sup>st</sup> and Sunday 2<sup>nd</sup> refreshments will be served in the VMP and there will be stalls outside the Church and a Songs of Praise service on Sunday evening. Any volunteers the help set up the Church and also man the Church would be greatly appreciated.

Community Hour on Saturday 22<sup>nd</sup> June

Churchyard Clear Up - Saturday 12<sup>th</sup> October

Harvest Supper – Wednesday 23<sup>rd</sup> October

## **8. Update on the West Winch Growth Area Development**

Cllr Morrish ran through the current situation with the West Winch Growth Area – noting that it now seemed unlikely that either the Hopkins Homes application for 1100 or the Metacre application for 500 houses now seemed likely to be determined this year. He summarised a recent meeting with the BCKLWN road design consultants (WSP) that was attended by Cllrs from West Winch and North Runcton. Cllrs had emphasised the desire to retain easy access between both villages. The consultants had presented options for this which included a bridge to take Rectory Lane traffic over the new ‘relief road’. However, the likelihood was that Chequers Lane would be closed to traffic and only a foot/cycle bridge would be

provided to retain local access. It was proposed to have a public exhibition of the road design later this summer.

**9. North Runcton Conservation Volunteers**

As part of the ‘Wildlife in Common’ project with Norfolk Wildlife Trust (NWT), the Parish Council are proposing to set up a ‘North Runcton Conservation Volunteers’ group. The idea would be to retain a group of local volunteers who could taken on tasks to help enhance local wildlife habitat and support local wildlife. Wildlife Friendly management of parts of our four commons would be a key goal. Work is currently underway to provide better surveys of plants and animals that live on the commons. NWT are particularly interested in 20 indicator species – and our commons are known to have at least 13 of them. A number of activities have been planned for the next year of the Project - which ends next Spring. These include wildlife and bat walks and a ‘family education day’ on Saturday July 6<sup>th</sup> which will be held at the VMP. In the autumn the volunteers will start having ‘workdays’ and anyone interested in joining in should get in touch with Cllr Lee Stevens or Rick Morrish. The group will run under the auspice of the Parish Council and it was proposed to put part of a kind donation from Peter Lemon toward setting up and running the group in initial months/years.

**10. Ideas Session – Comments from Parishioners were as follows;**

- The road markings on the Rectory Lane/New Road junction are fading an motorists are cutting the corner which is becoming dangerous. Clerk has reported.
- Cllr Gidney suggested that the conservation volunteers set up and maintain their own tree register.

The meeting closed at 9.30pm and refreshments were served.

Signed ..... xxxx May 2020