

NORTH RUNCTON PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of Parish Council Meeting held on Tuesday 10th December 2013

Present: -

Cllr. J Leamon (Chair, Bor. Cllr.), Cllr, R Morrish (Vice-Chair), Cllr D Eakins, Cllr. F Leamon, Cllr. A Towler, Cllr. B Houchen, Cllr. R Markham, Cllr. P Yates and Cllr. J Fuller.

1. Apologies for absence.

Apologies were received and accepted from Bor. Cllr. Mr P Foster.

2. Declaration of interest / dispensations in items on the Agenda.

Cllr J Leamon declared her personal interests with reference to her position as Member of the Borough Council Planning Committee and Member of the East of Ouse, Polver and Nar Internal Drainage Board with reference to items 18 and 15 respectively. Cllr Fuller declared a pecuniary interest in item 18 of the agenda.

3. County and Borough Councillors Matters, PCSOs Report

Cllr J Leamon, in her capacity as Bor. Cllr., advised that County Councillor Toby Coke came to the public consultation on the Hopkins Homes planning application which was held over the weekend of the 7th and 8th December. She reported that there would be choirs performing in Kings Lynn at various venues on the 14th and 21st December. She also noted that the recent flooding problems had been handled well by the Borough Council's team.

4. Public Participation – All Members of the Public Welcome – 15 mins Session

The Council was asked when the work to alleviate flooding on the Twisty Twiney will take place as nothing has been done. The Clerk confirmed that NCC Highways had confirmed that the work is still planned to take place in the financial year 2012/13.

It was also reported that part of Chequer's Lane roadway, between the property called High Orchards and the A10 is sinking. This will be reported to Highways.

5. To Approve the Minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on 12th November 2013

Cllr Fuller proposed that the minutes be agreed as a true record. This was seconded by Cllr F Leamon and agreed by all.

6. To Report Only on any Matters Arising from the Minutes

There were no items to report.

7. Resolve to remove the press and the public in light of the following two items of a sensitive nature.

Cllr Markham proposed that the press and the public be removed and Cllr Fuller seconded this. All agreed.

8. School Road – the Council will discuss the on-going issue of access rights over School Lane.

Cllr Fuller declared a personal interest in this item.

Cllr J Leamon gave a summary of events, indicating that an initial professional valuation for an easement over School Lane was given at £18,000 in 2008 (based, it was understood, on the value of the plot at that time). In discussions with the Parish Council's surveyor Mr Turner (the Developer) initially agreed to pay this amount, but no building work proceeded and the easement documentation was not drawn up. Approximately two years later building works commenced. The Parish Council asked for the easement to be completed. Mr Turner reported that issues had been encountered with the land and that he wished to negotiate a reduced sum to obtain the easement. The Council subsequently requested a re-valuation from the surveyor. An informal valuation of £8,000 was advised, understood to be based on a reduced value of the plot. Subsequently, Mr Turner declined to agree to this sum and argued that although he recognised that the Parish Council owned a section of School Lane that there

was an implied right of passage over the site. Nevertheless he had still offered a sum to agree an easement 'to satisfy any doubt that any future purchaser of the property may have'.

The Clerk had invited Sue Lake to the meeting, a representative of Norfolk ALC (an advisory service for Town and Parish Councils) who has many years experiencing dealing with Parish Council matters and advising Councils on how to act within the restrictions of their duties and powers.

Mrs Lake advised the Council that, when disposing of an asset (granting an easement is considered a disposal of an asset) Councils are obliged to seek the best possible price. However, Councils must also be pragmatic in their decisions and take into consideration all aspects relating to the matter. In this instance, there has been a lot of discussion between the Council and Mr Turner over several years and several issues raised. The Council also noted that the last valuation of £8,000 was not received on a formal basis which means that it cannot be used as legal evidence of the value of the easement. In addition, Mr Turner had refused to pay that amount of money, citing issues which the Council must also take into account. The sale of this easement by the Council is its first where it will receive payment for an easement (this becoming necessary through changes in the law within the Countryside and Rights of Way Act, 2000), so the Council recognised that the decision needed to be made carefully.

After lengthy discussion, Cllr Fuller proposed that the Council accept Mr Turner's offer of £1,000 as payment for the easement over School Road. Cllr Markham seconded this. There were 7 votes in favour, 1 against and 1 abstention.

In addition, Cllr Markham proposed that a requirement to pay a fair and reasonable amount towards ongoing maintenance of the road should be included in the easement, along with a requirement that Mr Turner pay all the Council's legal fees arising from the production of the easement. He also proposed that it is made clear to Mr Turner that the Council does not currently contribute towards the maintenance of the road but that it would acquire three quotations and accept the best value quote as and when it takes on the maintenance costs again. Cllr Towler seconded this. There were 8 votes in favour and 1 against.

Cllr J Leamon asked for it to be minuted that she did not agree with the decision and questioned whether it was legal to accept a lower figure than that which the Easement was valued at.

9. Clerk's employment – the Council will formally approve the Clerk's salary and employment terms and contract.

The Clerk left the meeting whilst this item was discussed. Cllr J Leamon read out the original letter of appointment, detailing the terms of employment to which Mrs Senter had agreed. It was confirmed that the terms were in order. Following completion of her probation period the Council voted to ratify Mrs Senter's appointment. This was agreed unanimously. It was agreed that the employment terms and contract will be finalised at the earliest convenience – following new model documents published by Norfolk ALC. It was noted that a 1% pay increase for Council Clerks was enacted in April 2013. It was agreed that this salary increase should be paid and backdated to the time of appointment on the pro rata basis. It was agreed that the Clerk should prepare the necessary documentation to finalise these decisions. The Council agreed that a 'Personnel Sub –Committee' should be confirmed that would work in the future with the Clerk to finalise matters pertaining to employment law. This will specifically include contracts of employment, employment policies, grievance procedure, training and performance management. It was agreed that the sub-committee should comprise of the Chairman (presently Cllr J Leamon), Vice-Chairman (presently Cllr Morrish) and one other councillor (nominated to be Cllr Towler). A time will be set for the sub-committee to meet to agree future procedure. The sub-committee will report to full council after meetings to make its proposals for the whole Council to ratify.

The Clerk re-joined the meeting.

10. Risk Management – the Council will discuss the management of its assets.

The Council acknowledged that it currently has no formal procedure in place which provides evidence that the Council is regularly monitoring its assets. It was noted that if anyone incurred any injury or loss whilst using a Council asset (I.e. School Road) then the Council could not prove that it had taken reasonable precautions to ensure that this did not happen. This could result, in the worst case scenario, in the Council's insurance company not paying out on any claim made.

Cllr Morrish proposed that the Council acquires quotations for risk management from independent firms who can provide risk assessments for all of the Councils assets, undertake regular inspections and provide reports indicating any maintenance work that the Council should undertake. Cllr Eakins seconded this and all agreed.

11. Precept 2014/15 –the Council will consider options for the 2014/15 precept and Budget subject to final approval at the January meeting.

The Council considered a draft budget for 2014/15 which the Clerk compiled. Following a recent training course, Cllr Morrish noted that consideration for possible election costs should be made in the budget as some Parish Councils have recently suffered large costs for elections now that the District Councils no longer cover the costs. It was noted that there has not been an election in North Runcton for some time and that the next full elections will not take place until 2016. The Clerk allowed £100 in the budget and advised that another amount could be added to the 2015/16 budget to accumulate an amount of money which could be used to cover election costs, should this arise. However, the Council must consider an appropriate amount to budget for this cost, which may not happen, in relation to the relatively small annual precept that it receives.

The Clerk had included other expenditure items which the Council has each year, including grounds maintenance and insurance etc. She also included a budget for risk management. It was noted that the budget showed that the Council would effectively break even should it maintain its current precept of £5,500. It was noted that the Parish will possibly grow considerably in the next year or two due to the recently proposed development of 1110 homes and there will inevitably be more matters for the Council to manage and more households contributing to the Parish Council's precept, too. It was agreed that this should also be taken into account when deciding the precept for the coming financial year.

The Council agreed that the income and expenditure for the Village Meeting Place should be considered separately. When considering income and expenditure for the current financial year, it was evident that a small profit is being made. However, the Council needs to be aware that some maintenance requirements could be very costly and would require the Council to draw on reserves rather than being able to cover the costs through normal income/expenditure.

The final decision on the Council's precept requirement will be made at the January meeting.

12. Notice boards for common land – the Council will consider the costs of notices to be erected on the gates at each Common.

The Council considered a draft drawing of the signs produced by the printers. It was noted that two signs would be required per gate so that the wording is evident to people accessing or leaving the Commons. The Clerk reported that each sign would cost £34.12 + VAT and that 12 would be required to cover all gates onto Common land. There were some concerns over the durability of the type of sign proposed, therefore, Cllr Markham proposed that 12 signs are purchased at a total cost of £409.44 + VAT on the proviso that Cllr Morrish is satisfied with the material and construction of the signs when he visits the printers. Cllr Towler seconded this and all agreed. Cllr F Leamon suggested that the Clerk enquires as to whether a discount would be provided as the Council is buying the signs in bulk.

13. War Memorial Repairs – the Council will receive an update from the joint Committee on progress raising money and consider a request for funding.

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Cllr Markham and Cllr Eakins reported to the Council that the joint Committee had agreed that it should try to raise £4,000 to ensure that there is enough money to cover all repairs. The Committee aims to do this by sending an appeal letter out to everyone in the Parish. All donations made will be collected and administered by the Parish Council. Cllr Markham and Cllr Eakins confirmed that the Parochial Church Council will be dealing with covering all costs associated with work required to the trees in the Churchyard and that this would not be part of the War Memorial repair project. The Committee had noted that there will be more funding available for repairs to War Memorials in 2014 due to the 100th year anniversary of the start of World War I, also. On behalf of the Committee, Cllr Markham requested £150 from the Parish Council to cover the costs of the envelopes etc required for the appeal. At this point, the Chairman suspended standing orders to allow Mr Samways to address the Council who confirmed that he would donate £100 towards the repairs to the war memorial. Mr Samways was thanked for this generous donation. Cllr F Leamon proposed that if the Council was to donate £150, it should be for the repairs only and not for administrative costs. It was agreed to consider this again in January.

14. Correspondence received – see attached schedule.

There was no correspondence to consider.

15. Neighbourhood Plan – the Council will hear an update.

Cllr Morrish advised that there were no further updates to provide. There is planned to be another meeting on the 18th December with the Planning Aid Advisor.

16. Village Meeting Place – the Council will consider a report regarding general maintenance requirements at the building, proposals regarding the electricity supply and decide on future advertising within the Parish.

Cllr J Leamon confirmed that she had visited the Village Meeting Place with a local, reputable builder to consider any general internal and external repairs that are required. A quotation for various repairs to the roof, outside wall and door was provided, amounting to £431.20. Cllr J Leamon confirmed that the builder had got the relevant public liability insurance in place. Given that some of the issues found need to be dealt with urgently and that the quotation was considered very reasonable for the amount of work involved, Cllr F Leamon proposed that the quotation be accepted and that the work is requested to be undertaken at the earliest convenience. This was seconded by Cllr Yates and agreed by all.

The Clerk reported that the electricity supplier for the Village Meeting Place, Scottish Power, had put the Council's account into dispute because it is clear that the meter is not working correctly. A visit from an engineer has been arranged for the 20th December and Cllr Eakins kindly offered to let the engineer into the Hall.

The Council noted that the Parish Magazine has ceased distribution but that an Annual Parish Directory is going to be produced which the Village Meeting Place can still be advertised in for a cost of £45 annually. It was agreed to accept this cost.

17. Highways – the Council will discuss any Highways issues and consider reports from NCC Highways regarding previous raised issues.

It was reported that surplus water is laying on New Road between numbers 28 and 34. It was noted that this seems to have become worse since the new houses have been built.

Surfacing works are required on New Road in several places.

It was noted that when turning into New Road from the A47 in the dark, that the turning is very difficult to see as there are no lights. It was noted that reflectors near the bench would be very useful.

18. Planning

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a) Applications to consider

Construction of 32 holiday log cabins and clubhouse/swimming pool/gym for holiday use including managers accommodation in no. 39 The Green and change of use from racing/livery yard to general livestock and ancillary storage ancillary to holiday business

The Council agreed the following response to this application.

General:

The Council still feels the plan and design information provided is very vague in detail – with little information about any site clearance works, groundworks, trees to be removed, where spoil will be placed when the pond is built, details of the proposed petting farm and associated buildings and facilities, proposed landscape works and the design of infrastructure for the clubhouse facility (including parking, bins, external stores etc). These are just some details that the Council feels are relevant in order to illustrate that the scheme has been thoroughly considered, potentially adverse impacts identified and that the scheme is therefore likely to be acceptable in this setting. The Council feels it is a significant complex in an overwhelmingly rural setting and there are many aspects to the development (both within and beyond the site boundaries) that appear to have been given little consideration.

The Council is pleased that the boundary hedges now proposed are to be native species – but feels for a scheme of this size a full landscape masterplan would be appropriate with the application.

Access and traffic:

The Council still feels insufficient information has been submitted regarding likely traffic generation. In the Council's view the impact to residents on School Lane, The Green and New Road is likely to be significantly adverse and unacceptable.

As the Council has noted before – it is unclear why planning officers have not requested a thorough traffic impact assessment – which would seem appropriate for a significant new tourist facility. As far as the Council can ascertain the only detail submitted on vehicle access provision is that there will be an additional 17 parking places provided on site. As the Council has previously noted - guests at the 32 log cabins might reasonably be anticipated to make one or two trips off site every day – potentially generating well over 30,000 or more vehicle movements a year (return journeys) on the very narrow unadopted road that is School Lane. Although it is noted that the Club House is presently only being proposed for the use of guests – it would seem likely that there will be economic pressure to maximise use of this large facility in time, by opening to others, therefore generating more traffic.

In addition the Council assumes considerable construction traffic impacts, operational service requirements, staff vehicles and emergency and waste management vehicles. All of these will add to traffic on the small village access roads.

A village survey (2012) already found the principal concerns for residents living along New Road were the adverse effects of traffic – through numbers, speeding and large freight vehicles. Rat running through the village (A47-A10) to avoid the Hardwick roundabout is a current problem that we anticipate will grow if the proposed Hopkins Homes development proceeds. An additional 30,000 vehicles a year on these adopted roads will be a significant increase. However, it is the unadopted roads that the Council feels are most problematic. The Council would anticipate that pedestrian and cycle traffic would also increase. The traffic would impact on our key community facilities – the village meeting place, church and cricket/tennis club. Part of the route will pass along restricted byway NR RB 6, which is a popular bridleway and footpath.

The Council cannot envisage how a development of this size and nature can be developed sustainably with the presently proposed arrangement. The Council would suggest the applicant needs to investigate direct access from the A47 to achieve an acceptable entrance to the site.

The Council notes that NCC in its correspondence of 04/12/2013 has suggested that a widening of the junction of School Lane where it meets New Road will be required. The Council highlights that this area is all within the village green which is registered common land and the grass and road are both owned by the Parish Council. Road widening would impact on the historic arrangement of the green, the setting of the Grade I listed All Saints church, and a mature beech tree.

The above comments relate solely to the planning application and do not consider any access agreement / arrangement that may be required across The Green as per the *Vehicular access across common and other*

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land (England) regulations 2002. It is anticipated that an agreement (or agreements) may be required regarding future maintenance and management of that roadway.

Outline Application: development of up to 1,110 residential units (Class C3); primary school (Class D1); local centre (Class A1, B1, D1, D2); public open space, landscaping and highway access onto A47 and A10 at Land West of Constitution Hill Constitution Hill North Runcton Norfolk PE33 0QP

The Council noted that a time extension had been requested for this application to give the Council enough time to compile a reasonable response.

- b) Decisions received from BCKLWN / NCC
N/A
- c) Any applications considered between meetings.
N/A

19. Finance

Mrs K Senter	Clerk's salary	BACS	£	203.89
HMRC	PAYE	BACS	£	51.00
KVT BusinessCare	1/3 phone bill	BACS	£	17.32
			£	272.21

Cllr F Leamon proposed that the payments be agreed and paid. This was seconded by Cllr Morrish and agreed by all.

20. Items for report of future agenda only.

It was noted that a letter of thanks for the gravel provided was sent to Peter Lemmon.

It was agreed to discuss risk management, the war memorial repairs and village sign maintenance at the next meeting.

It was noted that the byway beside Beech Farm is in a very bad state, but this is within Middleton's Parish so can be passed on to Middleton Parish Council.

21. Dates of forthcoming meetings in 2013: -

The following meeting dates were agreed: - 14th January 2014.

There being no further business the meeting closed.

Signed

14th January 2014