

Needham Parish Council.

Minutes of the Meeting of the Parish Council on 18th March 2024 at Needham Village Hall.

Present:

Parish Councillors: Georgina Frost, Robin Twigge, James McMillan, Belinda Della, Roger Dukes, Andrew Major and Gary Cropley.

3 members of the public.

District Councillors Trevor Graham and James Eddy

Clerk: Philip Freeman.

Public Forum:

Including any reports: County Councillor, District Councillor, and Village Organisations.

Report from County Councillor Martin Wilby:

New measures to slow down drivers and make roads safer for pedestrians are to be introduced to more than 100 towns and villages across Norfolk. Just over £1m is due to be spent on 118 highway schemes, including vehicle-activated speed signs, bus shelters and new footpaths. The changes will be made through Norfolk County Council's parish partnership initiative to make towns and villages safer. First launched in September 2011, the scheme invites communities to bid for cash to make much needed improvements. NCC will put in almost £470,000 and the Safety Camera Partnership £44,000. Town and Parish councils match fund that money to pay the remaining cost of all the schemes – a contribution of about £485,000. Locally I have supported bids from Pulham St. Mary, Redenhall with Harleston, Scole and Brockdish.

Norfolk County Council's Adult Learning service has been rated as 'Good' by Ofsted. The latest report praised the service for its high-quality teaching and its positive impact on learners lives and careers. With an annual income of over £5million, Adult Learning worked with more than 6,000 learners in the 2022-23 academic year – a 50% increase in just one year! This makes it one of the largest adult education providers in the country. Devolution will allow for greater local control over the courses offered by NCCs Adult Learning service. This means that courses can be better tailored to meet Norfolk's most in-demand skills. Enrol now on one of the many courses on offer at www.norfolk.gov.uk/adultlearning

With another tree-planting season coming to an end our One Million Trees for Norfolk project will reach the next major milestone of over 400,000 trees and hedges planted across the county by the end of March, increasing habitat for wildlife, helping flood alleviation and storing carbon. Planting is happening across the county, not just on large tracts of land but on small farms and in gardens – so everyone can take part.

Knowing where trees and hedges have been planted will help us to understand where Norfolk's coverage is growing and its future impact. If you have planted any trees or hedges this year (or since November 2019) then let us know by adding it to our online map at www.norfolk.gov.uk/planting

The Apprenticeships Norfolk scheme has recently hit the £1m milestone of levy transfers a year ahead of schedule. Through the scheme, 90 businesses in the county have started 180 apprenticeships, from Level 2 through to Level 7, using unspent funds in Norfolk that would otherwise been returned to HM Treasury.

The apprenticeship level is payable by organisations whose annual wage bill is more than £3m and equates to 0.5% of the bill. But if the business has undertaken all the apprenticeships that it has capacity to deliver, it can donate up to 25% of its annual apprenticeship levy to another organisation. Levy transfers are used to new apprentice starts, new recruits and existing employees. Businesses wanting to find out more about the scheme can visit the Apprenticeships Norfolk Website

A big Thank you to all local volunteers that have helped NCC with flooding issues throughout the winter especially recently in Harleston.

My next surgery will be on Saturday 6th April 10am at HIP

Report from Cllr Trevor Graham South Norfolk Council Member for Harleston

South Norfolk Council set the Council Tax for a Band D property at £170 for the coming year. This is an increase of £5 and means that the Council have maintained their record of keeping the increase below inflation. Since 2007, the SNC Council Tax has risen by about 30% less than inflation while investing in our infrastructure.

The Council received a one-off VAT refund of £854,452, due to HMRC accepting that local authority leisure services are provided under a statutory framework. This will be used together with money from additional in-year investment to reinforce a commitment to promoting an active lifestyle by providing £250,000 each year for the next four years to support the South Norfolk leisure centres.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

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The additional investment money was also allocated as: £355,000 into the 'Household Support Fund' to double the assistance to hard pressed families, £100,000 to support the Council's role in flood prevention; £30,000 to the Help Hub to support schemes for residents facing hardship; £70,000 to strengthen enforcement of planning conditions; and up to £50,000 to support design creation and community participation in public realm improvements for Wymondham.

The Council also allocated an extra £100,000 from an earmarked capital receipt resulting from the sale of former Council offices on Middleton Street into the Community Action Fund with an increase in the fund to £150,000 and an upper limit for an application to £20,000. This fund is open to all District Councillors, and I hope to help secure further CAF money for our Ward in the coming year following two successful applications in the current year.

In response to environmental concern and nuisance for residents across the district, the Council passed a Public Spaces Protection Order on vehicle-related anti-social behaviour. This will initially run for three years and operate across the whole of South Norfolk.

I contributed £300 from my Members Ward Funding to the Friends of Harleston Primary School to help create a safe environment around a previously derelict pond. When completed, the children will be able to interact with nature and enhance their knowledge of the natural world. This is further support for community nature recovery.

I attended a meeting in Needham to discuss ideas for nature recovery. I was delighted with the interest. I look forwards to working with the group to delivery for the parish. I gave a presentation at Wortwell based on community nature recovery. Both villages are now setting up community groups and developing their own delivery plans. Our ward is truly leading from the front on this internationally important topic.

I recently attended the first meeting of the groups creating the Friendly Invasion play, the 60th birthday party for the Harleston Library, and the unveiling of an impressive mechanical scythe bought by the Waveney Volunteers for Nature using a CAF grant awarded from South Norfolk Council. Being able to help our community is one of the very rewarding aspects of the role of a District Councillor.

James and I worked together, contributing £400 each to the Wortwell Bowls Club for new equipment. I spent all my allocation for the year and look forwards to a new allocation to be able to help even more people.

South Norfolk Council approved in principle funding for the Harleston Leisure Centre Feasibility Study and the Wortwell Village Hall solar installation. Also, the River Waveney Trust to facilitate increased engagement with the Waveney Valley community, the river, and its catchment.

John Fuller, Leader of South Norfolk Council became Lord Fuller of Gorleston-on-Sea on 12 March. John has served South Norfolk for many years, first being elected in 2003 and serving as Leader since 2007.

John will be standing down from his role as Leader. I hope you join me in offering our best wishes to Lord Fuller in his new role in the House of Lords.

I will hold my next surgery on 13 April at Harleston Information Plus on Exchange Street in Harleston between 10:00 and 11:00. I hope to see you there. Would you like me to be available within Needham instead of just at Harleston?

Report from District Cllr Eddy:

I recently took part in the South Norfolk Council meeting to agree the budget for the next year. Naturally, the headline news that came out of this was the rise in Council Tax that was in line with most local authorities around the country.

It must be said that there was a certain inevitability to that particular choice and decision. I think most of us are aware of the pressures that have increasingly been imposed upon local budgets by central government. This is the reason why so many district and borough councils are struggling, with the inevitable outcome that we are often expected to pay more for less.

South Norfolk Council has not been immune from this and there are obvious shortfalls in a number of areas. However, I am happy to say that the council was able to find some money to help support struggling families through the Household Support Fund for the next two years.

Additionally, I am pleased that proposals for improvements and funding for planning enforcement and for an additional £100,000 to be directed towards the council's work on flood prevention were also agreed. While far from perfect, I can say that effort was made on all sides to find ways to help people facing financial difficulties, dealing with flooding or with the impact of local housing developments.

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Last week, I took part in a Question Time style panel at the High School alongside representatives of the other major political parties. This was a fun and challenging experience filled with insightful and challenging questions from the year 11 students. My hope is that these students got as much out of the experience as I did. After all, it can only be a good thing for children to enjoy the event and hopefully it will help them to engage with politics on a local if not national or international level.

As usual, my Councillor surgery will be taking place at Harleston Information Plus on the last Saturday of the Month and I can also be contacted by email at James.Eddy@southnorfolkandbroadland.gov.uk

The following points arose during the discussion of the report:

- There may be a Councillor's Surgery in Needham in the near future.
 - There is additional funding for planning enforcement, and this is to ensure conditions of planning applications are followed by a developer.
 - The Clerk raised the problem of enforcement in Needham where a current enforcement case has dragged on for 10 months. It was pointed out that enforcement cases may take a long time to resolve but this may be improved by additional funding.
 - The Clerk will send Councillor Graham details of the current enforcement issue that the Parish Council is pursuing. **Action: The Clerk.**
1. Apologies for Absence.
 - Councillor Wilby.
 2. Councillor's Declaration of Interests in Agenda Items.
 - None.
 3. Minutes of the Previous Meeting.
 - The minutes of the last meeting were agreed as a true record and were signed by the Chair.
 4. Matters Arising:
Updates in red font.
 - The Clerk will contact Mr Ogden and arrange a meeting to discuss what can be done to resolve the problem of flooding in Needham. This will include the need for a map of adopted ditches following the building of the bypass. **Action: The Clerk. Completed.**
 - The Clerk will send the precept form to South Norfolk Council. **Action: The Clerk. Completed.**
 - The Parish Council agreed that it is concerned about the accidents at the Needham roundabout and Gary Cropley will liaise with Michael Hardy about future action. **Action: Gary Copley. Completed.**
 - Robin Twigge reported a problem with sewage from the factory in Needham. He will follow it up with the Environment Agency. **Action: Robin Twigge. This is ongoing.**
 5. Reports from Committees.
 - a. Report from the Village Hall Committee.
 - The Village Hall is being used for many activities and the income from them is more than covering the costs of running the Hall.
 - Vacancy for Chair of the Committee.
 - Ms Harte may be standing down as Chair and it may be necessary for the Parish Council to step in to help in this situation.
 - There are issues with the use of the car park at the Village Hall.
 - The local bridge club praised the Village Hall when they hired it for an event.
 - b. Community Environment Initiative.
 - There are plans for events in the future which will include a meeting and an activity on the same day.
 - This may include a wild garden this year and open gardens next year.
 6. Finances and Financial Support:
 - a. RFO's Report:
 - i. Unity Trust Bank account balance on 13th March 2024 £15,708.83 (Village Hall: £13,087.88 and Parish Council: £2,620.95)
 - ii. Ns&i: £2,300.24p.

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- Councillors noted the bank balances.
 - iii. Accounts and bank account reconciliation.
 - Detailed accounts had been given to Councillors, which recorded all items of income and expenditure, and compared them to the budget. The spreadsheet also showed both as a percentage of the budget.
 - The accounts were to the date of this meeting and included a bank reconciliation.
 - There were no questions.
 - The Clerk has made further efforts to obtain back from the internal auditor the Parish Council documents but without success. The external auditors are now working through the papers that are available.
 - The Clerk raised the issue of the cost of emptying the dog waste bins by South Norfolk Council and he will send Councillor Graham details of the charges by Mid Suffolk District Council. **Action: The Clerk.**
 - There was a discussion of whether it would be more cost-effective to link the insurance of the Village Hall and the Parish Council. This will be considered in the future.
 - b. Cheques for Signature:
 - i. Clerk's pay and expenses: £448.18.
 - ii. HMRC: £112.00
 - iii. ICO GDPR renewal: £40.00p
 - iv. Zurich Municipal – Insurance renewal: £448.00
 - It was agreed to pay the invoices listed above, proposed by Andrew Major and seconded by James Macmillan.
 - c. Receipts: none.
 - d. Request for donation:
 - i. Request for Continued Support: Car Parking Contributions for Harleston. It was agreed to make a donation of £100, proposed by Georgina Frost and seconded by James Macmillan.
7. River Waveney Trust Strategy.
- Nothing to report.
8. Flooding in Needham – update.
- The recent meeting to discuss the problem of flooding in Needham was well attended and Mark Ogden, Flood and Water Manager, was present.
 - The responsibilities for dealing with the flooding problems are not clear-cut.
 - The bypass has increased the problem of water run-off into Needham.
 - Following the meeting the only area of concern that has been addressed is Wells Road as this is the responsibility of Norfolk County Council.
 - Additional documentary evidence has been found and made available to Mr Ogden.
 - It was agreed to keep Councillor Wilby informed of the situation.
 - The Clerk will follow up with Mr Ogden, Flood and Water Manager, the actions needed to reduce the problem of flooding in Needham. He will copy all correspondence to Councillor Wilby. **Action: The Clerk.**
 - There is a flood management conference in May 2024.
9. Use of Clean Up and Bloom Grant.
- The grant was used to support the litter pick in Needham.
10. Graveyard (Robin Twigge.)
- It may be necessary to close the church graveyard in Needham and there is a suggestion that this then become the responsibility of the Parish Council.
 - Councillor Eddy will follow up who has responsibility for a cemetery/graveyard once a church no longer takes responsibility for it. **Action: Councillor Eddy.**

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11. Highway/footpath matters.

- a. Accidents at the Needham Roundabout on the A143. Report from Gary Copley.
 - There have been at the significant number of accidents at the roundabout and Gary Copley has contacted both the police and Harleston Town Council about this problem.
 - The police are reluctant to take any action.
 - Gary Copley will continue to follow this matter up with the support of Harleston Town Council. This will include contacting Highways, the police again and Councillor Wilby.
 - The Clerk will report the broken handrail on the steps on the footpath adjacent to the A143. **Action: The Clerk.**
 - The Clerk will report the problems that people with pushchairs, prams or wheelchairs experience using the footpath to Harleston because soil from the bank has reduced its width. **Action: The Clerk.**
 - There is a fallen tree on High Road in Needham which has been reported to the Parish Council. It is a hazard to traffic and the Clerk will report it to the Highways Department of Norfolk County Council. **Action: The Clerk.**

12. Planning:

- a. Tree Preservation Order:
 - The South Norfolk District Council Needham Tree Preservation Order 2023 No. SN0633 Tree(s) at : Land North East Of Starston Lane Needham Norfolk Easting : 623481 Northing : 282527
- b. Application: none.
- c. Decision:
 - i. No decision: none.
 - ii. Approved with Conditions: none.
 - iii. Refused: none.
- iv. Discharge of condition: none.
- v. Withdrawn: none.
- vi. Appeal: none.

13. Play area:

- a. To receive Play Area Inspection Report.
 - There was a discussion of the equipment in the play area and how long before it will need to be replaced.
 - If replacement is needed the Parish Council will not have sufficient funds to meet the cost and grants will be needed to pay for the equipment.
 - It was noted that the play equipment is used at weekends.
- b. The Nook.

14. Correspondence.

- a. Correspondence:
 - i. Arthritis Action.

15. AOB - items for inclusion at next meeting.

- The Annual Parish Meeting will take place before the Annual Meeting of the Parish Council on 13 May 2024.:
- It was agreed that information about the Parish Council should be published in the Link. **Action: The Clerk.**

Meeting closed at 9:20 p.m.