

LONGHAM ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

Minutes of the meeting held at 7.30pm on Monday 17th May 2021 in the Village Hall.

The Chairman of the Parish Council, Sue Douglas, was present, together with D/Clrs Roger Atterwill and Richard Duffield and seven members of the public, including four parish councillors and the parish clerk.

1. Welcome and apologies for absence.

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting. Apologies were received from Cllr Phil Collins and County Cllr Mark Kiddle-Morris.

2. To confirm the minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on 20th May 2019.

The minutes of the previous meeting were accepted as a true record and were duly signed by the Chairman.

3. To receive reports from:

a) The Parish Council Chairman

The report from the Parish Council Chairman is attached.

b) District & County Councillors.

The report from D/Cllr Atterwill is attached.

D/Cllr Duffield reported that there had not been many issues in the village which came under District Council authority. It had been difficult to get hold of Breckland officers, most of whom had been working from home, particularly in respect of planning issues. However, Breckland staff had worked very hard to support any vulnerable people in the District.

The Chairman thanked both councillors for their hard work during what had been a challenging year for many.

The report from C/Cllr Kiddle-Morris is attached.

c) Village Hall Committee.

Mrs Douglas reported that the Hall had been shut during lockdown and had only just re-opened for small groups. The Covid grants had been gratefully received and would be put to good use in updating the hall.

The work on the football pitch had started although the wet weather had delayed things. The three Longham football teams will be welcomed back next year.

d) St Andrews & St Peters Church.

The report from Mrs Douglas is attached.

4. To receive a report on the Clay Pit Project.

In addition to the attached report, Cllr O'Brien gave a background to the project which related to the Clay Pits on Hoe Road, a site over 200 years old. The Parish Council had attempted to deal with this at least three times over the past ten years as it was a County Wildlife Site, important for both flora and fauna. Cllr O'Brien had volunteered to lead the project and, working in conjunction with the Mid Norfolk Conservation Volunteers and the Norfolk Wildlife Trust, will ensure it is restored to a safe and beneficial state and set up a system to keep it that way, going into the future.

After 13 days work, the volunteers had cleared the large amount of rubbish which had been dumped on the site and set out pathways around the three large and two temporary ponds, new steps have also been installed. For safety reasons, the site is not yet ready to open to the public. It is hoped to make it accessible and safe in the autumn/winter, as works have now stopped due to the breeding season.

It was hoped that all the Council reserve set aside for this project would not be required and funds could be obtained from grants, with possible sources being the National Lottery, Norfolk Community Foundation, Breckland Eco-Grants or Section 106 monies, Vattenfall was also suggested as a possible source.

The Chairman thanked Cllr O'Brien for his work on this project.

5. To discuss Parish Council forward-planning.

Cllr O'Brien suggested that the land around the Village Sign be planted with bulbs etc to brighten it up and NCC Highways will be approached to see if this is permitted.

A prospective new parish councillor who had recently retired to the village said they would like to see more events take place and was willing to help.

Another prospective new parish councillor suggested they would like to see litter picking groups organised on a regular basis and better footpaths, particularly circular routes.

6. Open Forum – an opportunity for residents of the parish to express their views on matters of interest or concern relating to the village and to suggest ideas for the future.

D/Cllr Atterwill spoke about the Dereham Planning Workshops which were currently consulting on future plans and reported he had suggested a proposed link road from the north of Dereham to the A47, better toilets and a bus station on Cowper Road. He encouraged everyone to submit their own views.

7. To note the date of the next Annual Parish Meeting – Monday 16th May 2022.

The date of the next meeting was noted.

The Chairman thanked everyone for attending and the meeting closed at 8.15pm.

Signed:

Date:

Longham Parish Council Chairman's Report 2021

What a strange time it has been for us all and it has made it difficult to carry on as normal in our daily and working lives.

However we have carried on and Parish Council meetings have been conducted via Zoom, which I think has highlighted just how important it is for faster broadband to be accessible for every area.

A great deal of information has been received from the County Council and Breckland Council regarding Covid and I have received several calls from the Breckland Covid team regarding help and support in the community. I set up a support group to help anyone requiring shopping or medication and 5 lovely people volunteered. The scheme was only used on a few occasions because people took it upon themselves to help neighbours or relatives with these tasks. Margret Dye and myself have phoned people that we knew might be vulnerable or on their own but I must say that the community spirit has been amazing and very glad that I live in such a lovely village.

With grants and donations we have purchased and installed a Defibrillator at the White Horse Pub and I want to thank Mr. White for allowing us to install it on the outside of his premises and for providing a power source for the case. I hope we will never have to use it but it's good to know it's there should the occasion arise.

Due to ill health Anne Kerry stepped down as a councillor and I would like to thank her on behalf of the Parish Councillors for all her hard work and dedication during her time with us, Paul O'Brien agreed to fill this vacancy.

It was decided with Paul as the lead, we would restart the Clay Pits Project and The Conservation Volunteers have been on site and have made an amazing difference to the area. We hope to get grants to add a viewing platform and fencing with some seats so that people can enjoy the peace and quiet of the site and watch the flora and fauna. We also hope that when covid restrictions ease villagers will volunteer to help keep this area in good order.

The Parish Council used some of the money they receive from the recycling bins to purchase and install a couple of benches for the playing field and have given a grant to the Village Hall towards the cost of resurfacing the football pitch.

I would like to thank our County and District Councillors for their support and guidance over the last year and also my fellow Parish Councillors for all they do for the Village, thank you also to our Parish Clerk Sheryl Irving for all her hard work and guidance during this difficult time.

D/Cllr Atterwill's Report - 2021

Breckland Council, Elizabeth House, Walpole Loke, Dereham, Norfolk, NR19 1EE
www.breckland.gov.uk contactus@breckland.gov.uk 01362 656870

Longham Annual Parish Meeting 17th May 2021

Dear Resident,

The last year has been unprecedented in its affect on all our lives. The Covid 19 pandemic has placed a huge strain on our family lives and local businesses and it has made us do things differently. Breckland Council has also had to adapt very quickly with most staff working from home during the last year. I would like to pay tribute to them because they have worked very hard to not only provide the Council's normal services but also provide support for communities and businesses through both practical support and efficiently distributing business support grants to eligible businesses and organisations. As your ward member I have not visited Elizabeth House now for over a year as all council meetings have been carried out virtually using Zoom. As the year has gone on we have become very used to such meetings. In my view they have been advantageous because the public have had greater access to the meetings which are streamed live on Youtube. There is also the environmental benefit of not having 49 councillors regularly driving to Elizabeth House. It now looks like the Government will not be extending the emergency legislation which allowed such virtual meetings. In my view this is a mistake and councils should be given the flexibility to do either in person or virtual meetings going forward.

I am a member of the Planning Committee and our work has carried on throughout the last year. There is a great deal of uncertainty at the moment because the Government introduced its White Paper on the future of the planning system. The idea of this seems to be to make it easier for developers to get planning permission at the expense of local accountability. The Breckland Local Plan is supposed to be reviewed and updated but frustratingly the Breckland Council Cabinet seems to have been dragging its feet on this since August last year. They cite the White Paper as the excuse for this but I continue to push for a more proactive and transparent approach. My worry is that if the Local Plan is not reviewed and updated in a timely manner a number of key planning polices will cease to carry 'weight' and developers will find it much easier to obtain planning permission which will sometimes be to the detriment of local communities.

I am also the Leader of the Independent Group of Councillors and along with Labour and Green Councillors we form the opposition at Breckland Council. I try to work collaboratively and not oppose for the sake of it. An example of this is my support for the Council's 2021/22 budget and also its environmental sustainability strategy. I see my role as that of a critical friend trying to suggest improvements to policies, procedures, spending priorities and improving transparency in all areas of the Council's work. I believe that since being elected in 2019 I have garnered a constructive working relationship with officers and work hard with my colleagues to form a more effective opposition group. I recently provided the Parish Clerk with details of Breckland Council's 'Inspiring Communities Programme' grant funding scheme for local communities. If there is a project in the village which you think could benefit from up to £5,000 of match funding I would be delighted to hear about it and if it meets the scheme's criteria I would be only too pleased to write in support of an application.

As always, I am available to help residents where I can and would encourage anyone who needs assistance with a Breckland Council related matter to either call or email me.

Yours Sincerely

Roger Atterwill
Ward member – Lincoln Ward
Email: roger.atterwill@breckland.gov.uk
Tel: 07841 488860 / 01362 637383

County Councillor for Necton & Launditch - Annual Report 2020/21

The whole year has been dominated by the Covid-19 pandemic and the introduction of measures to prevent the spread of the virus. Virtual meetings have been the norm using either MS Teams or Zoom. In the whole year from April '20 to April '21 I have attended only 4 parish council meetings in person which were conducted with strict social distancing measures in place. No committee meetings of the County Council have been held other than by MS Teams during the year.

The majority of NCC staff (around 98%) and all members have been working from home for the entire year. All members of staff were allowed £250 to set up a home office and the laptops provided allowed phone calls to be made via the internet. Staff whose service were necessarily shot down such as libraries, catering, museums etc were redeployed to help with the delivery of the Covid response. Members were allocated a support role to vulnerable residents who were contacted by telephone.

In October 2019, the Council carried out an exercise to test the resilience of the Council to a major incident, all staff were told to work from home for the day to test the IT system and its ability to support remote working. This was mainly to try out the new IT software and hardware but proved to be fortuitous as by the time of the first lockdown any lessons from the exercise had been learned and the transition to working from home in March 2020 was seamless.

Governance: In May 2019, the Council moved from a committee system to an executive form of governance. The Cabinet (Executive) is responsible for the day-to-day decisions in the Council and is made up of the Leader of the Council and 9 other elected members.

The Cabinet is held to account by a Scrutiny Committee, which can review decisions that member wish to debate or question by "calling in" a Cabinet decision that has not yet been implemented. There are 3 Select Committees which were originally formed to recommend policy to Cabinet but recently have had their remit expanded to include a wider scrutiny role. The 3 Select Committees are the Corporate Select Committee, the People and Communities Select Committee and the Infrastructure and Development Select Committee. All committees are politically balanced (in proportion to the number of seats held by each party) with the Scrutiny Committee chaired by a member of the main opposition group. The following is a brief overview of the work of the Committees.

Scrutiny Committee: the events of the Covid 19 pandemic have brought into focus the important role that the Committee could have in supporting emergency and recovery planning in the Council, feeding into current and future planning regarding lessons learnt. In May 2020, the Committee considered a revised work programme identifying several areas of priority and focus within the Council relating to the pandemic.

Children's Services – return to school; the response from Children's Services has been far reaching and scrutiny has been focussed on the key challenges facing the service.

- Support for education settings
- Children's social care
- Children with special educational needs and disabilities
- School attendance and vulnerable children

Support for shielded and vulnerable people; this has been a key area of scrutiny for the Committee considering a wide range of areas such as:

- Social care
- Safeguarding
- Delivering essential support and supplies to those to those in need
- Hospital discharges
- Residential care

Norfolk Economy and support for businesses; the economy of Norfolk, as with the rest of the country, has been severely affected by the pandemic. The Committee focused on the immediate impact of the support offered by the Council and the New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership (NALEP) put in place to support the economy and local employment.

Councils' internal processes: The Committee considered the Councils own internal support processes particularly around IT support for staff working remotely and ensuring the Council maintained open and transparent decision making in virtual committee meetings.

Wider Scrutiny Activities:

Strategic and Financial Planning; the Committee has an important role in holding the executive to account especially in financial and strategic planning. The Committee has had regular updates throughout the year recognising that financial scrutiny needs to be ongoing rather than happening late in the budget setting process.

Early Childhood and Family Service (ECFS): in January 2019, the County Council decided to transform Norfolk's offer for families with children aged 0-5 with as significant amount of work undertaken to secure the new ECFS. The ECFS was launched in October 2019 and the Committee have monitored the impact of the new service and will continue to do so through its Children's Services Scrutiny Sub Committee.

Response to the December 2020 Flooding Event; in 2020 Norfolk was hit by a major flooding event in December. The Committee were keen to ensure that those residents who had suffered hardship were made aware of sources of support and information that was available to them. Investigation of the December flooding is still ongoing. A previous event in August was investigated and report issued. As a result of the 2 events causing widespread damage the Council have formed Norfolk Flood Alliance to coordinate the response of stakeholders to flooding events and to formulate measures to prevent further major occurrences.

Corporate Select Committee: The Committee usually meets 6 times a year but the meeting for May 2020 was missed due to pandemic restrictions.

Strategies and Policies: the Committee has the key role of developing and reviewing the Councils strategies and policies. The following major policies and strategies were shaped by the Committee during the year.

- Norfolk Digital Strategy: The strategy roadmap explains how the Council will continue to build on past and current successes to improve connectivity in Norfolk. The Council were awarded Connected Britain digital council of the Year 2020.
- NCC Customer Experience Strategy 2021-26: The Committee supported and shaped the strategy and on 15th March 2021 recommended the Strategy and a Customer Charter to Cabinet
- NCC Performance Management Framework: The Committee shaped the new framework which aligns Cabinet outcomes and departmental objectives with the corporate plan “Together, for Norfolk”.
- NCC Recruitment: The Committee has agreed the key priorities for recruitment to Council posts including a targeted approach with campaigns, reaching out to underrepresented groups, reducing the time to hire and improving the internal recruitment process.
- Review of the Councils Constitution: The Committee has been overseeing a fundamental review of the Councils constitution including the Members Code of Conduct. The revised constitution was presented to Council in April '21.
- The business and Smarter Working: this programme was established to drive forward a range of plans and activities to modernise the Council, drive efficiencies and implement new ways of working making the best use of technology. Covid accelerated some of these changes with the roll-out of remote working to over 6000 staff by March 2020.

Infrastructure and Development Committee: the Select Committee contributed to the development of the following new and existing policies and strategies.

- Enforcement Policy: the enforcement policy has been developed into a framework for a number of services to ensure that when undertaking regulatory activities and law enforcement the work is carried out in an equitable and consistent manner across all departments.
- Environmental Policy: This policy set out sets out the areas that the Council sees as key to protecting and maintaining the health of Norfolk’s distinctive environment and its occupants. One year after it was approved by Council the Committee reviewed the progress to date in delivering the objectives of the policy.
- Local Flood Risk Strategy: since this strategy was first written 5 years ago Norfolk has experienced some extreme weather events, there has been significant growth and development and the legislative landscape has changed. A review of the policy was carried out to ensure it remained consistent and relevant.

Additionally, the Committee a number of discussion and update papers were brought to the Committee including: -

- The Norfolk Economy
- Performance of key highway contracts
- Performance of the highway network
- Waste disposal
- Library and Information Service
- Rights of Way Improvement

- Budget planning
- Policy and Strategy Framework annual review

People and Communities Committee: The Select Committee played a role in the development and shaping of the following new strategies and policies: -

- **Adult Social Services Winter Resilience Planning:** The Committee supported the emerging winter planning by asking for focus on the work of unpaid carers, ensuring mechanisms were in place to accept feedback from frontline staff about lessons learnt during the first wave of the pandemic and raised concern around the testing of home carers.
- **SEND Educational Needs Improvement Planning:** The Committee provided oversight to the development of specific action planning following the inspection of services for children with Special Educational Needs in early 2020.

The Select Committee also reviewed the following existing strategy to ensure it remained fit for purpose:

- **Children’s Services Transformation Programme:** The Committee commented on the specific new ways of working and changes of approach highlighted to help steer the direction of the work. This included particular focus on emerging proposals for support for children with disabilities.

To support the Select Committee in carrying out its activities, and to support all Select Committee Members with a good background of the relevant services a number of discussion and update papers were also brought to Committee, including: -

- Educational achievement of boys – Report
- Children and young people’s mental health transformation
- Special educational needs performance framework report
- Quarterly children’s services report
- Cares charter progress report
- Post 16 education
- Covid 19 experience in care homes

Your County Councillor: During the year I have continued to attend meetings of the 18 parish councils in my division of Necton and Launditch, although between March 2020 and this March I have only attended 4 in person parish council meetings the remainder being held virtually under the coronavirus regulations.

The absence of a highway engineer and other staff shortages in the local highways office over the winter severely hampered any but the most urgent highway defects being addressed. I am happy to say that the new engineer is doing a sterling job in reducing the backlog of work.

There were 2 major flooding events in the division one in August and the other in Christmas Eve. At my request both have been investigated by the Local Lead Flood Authority. The County Council has set up a Norfolk Flood Alliance chaired by Lord Dannatt. The priority will be to set up a single point of contact for the reporting of serious flooding events. The forum will coordinate the responses of the 36 flood risk management authorities in Norfolk.

Of the committees mentioned above I am member of the Infrastructure and Development Committee and have sat as a substitute on the Corporate Select Committee.

I am chairman of the Council's Standard Committee and have recently reviewed the members Code of Conduct and other parts of the Councils constitution relevant to members conduct. This will implement the recommendations from the Committee on Standards in Public Life and the new LGA model code of conduct.

I have also been elected to chair the Norfolk Community Safety Scrutiny Sub Panel which was set up to be a critical friend on the progress of the Community Safety Partnership Plan. The sub-committee meets regularly and reports directly to the main Scrutiny Committee.

Mark Kiddle-Morris

Member for Necton and Launditch

Norfolk County Council.

May 1st 2021

Longham Church Report 2021

The church like everything else has been closed during the pandemic, so the buildings have been remained empty apart from funeral services. Despite the buildings being closed services have still taken place via Zoom and the ministry team have noticed an increase in attendance.

The ministry team and the PCC's have carried out tasks throughout the villages during this time, making sure people in the community are taken care of and help given if needed.

The new Bishop of Norwich has been going through the books and has said that there need to be cuts in the number of clergy in the diocese, as the money collected from parish share does not cover the present cost of clergy, their houses and pensions.

Our ministry team of 3 look after 17 churches with the help of retired or lay preachers and readers but have been told that they need to cut 1 post. After due consideration, the Rev. Julia Hemp decided to take early retirement and left the team at the end of April.

So what does this mean for Longham church, at present we don't know what changes will be taking place for us, the worst case scenario will be that the church no longer has services every month, and will only hold services for christenings, weddings , funerals and festivals such as Easter, Harvest and Christmas.

The building is in a good state of repair with further remedial work having been carried out on the tower during the pandemic, so is therefore weather tight.

The church yard is also in a good state, thanks mostly to the grant from the Parish Council towards grass cutting, for which we are very grateful.

It is hoped that we can have at least 1 service a month and there will also be some fund raising events to help cover any costs incurred to keep the church building in a good state of repair.

Longham Clay Pits – Restoration Project Update May 2021

The Project aims to restore the site to its most beneficial and manageable level, and make it safe and accessible for the public as well as ensuring its Flora and Fauna are protected. It is estimated this could take 2/3 years.

It is being managed by Mid-Norfolk Wildlife Trust through The Conservation Volunteers (TCV). Advice and support is being given by Norfolk Wildlife Trust.

The first stages of the clearance and preparation work has now been completed. Work has now stopped as it is nesting season.

A significant amount of fallen vegetation and trees has been removed from the three ponds. Large tree trunks and branches have been cut up on site, and used to create 'log piles' for wildlife. Excess vegetation has been burned. All ash has been removed from site. Two of the ponds are completely clear, allowing natural vegetation to flourish. There is currently a Moorhen nesting in the middle of the East pond. The third pond needs further work in the Autumn/Winter.

The vegetation next to Hoe Road has been cleared to allow a better view of the site from the road.

The final task of this stage has been to install a new set of steps down into the pits, near to the Hoe Road at the North Western corner. These steps are now in place. These will eventually allow much safer access to the site.

The site is still not safe for public access, but is well prepared for the next stage of work which is expected to take place in Autumn/Winter 2021/22.

Further works will include:

- Boardwalks, allowing access to ponds from both sides
- A viewing platform with disabled access near Hoe Road access point
- Parking/Pull-in on Hoe Road (costs met by Breckland DC)
- Improve fencing/access from Howe Road
- Site 'story board' and map

- Planning for annual maintenance

Costs so far are as follows:

- TCV costs 12 days @ £250 - £3000 (plus VAT)
- (1 additional day given free)
- Skip hire - £170 (inc VAT)
- 1 tonne 10mm gravel – donation from R O’Neill, local builder.
- Materials for steps - £177.72 (inc VAT)

Estimated costs of Stage 2:

- 30 metres of boardwalk @ £70 per metre - £2100
- 10m² platform @ £100 per square metre - £1000
- Site Board - £250
- TVC days – 5/6 @ £250 - £1250-1500
- Fencing costs unknown as linked with pull-in
- Annual maintenance – TCV and volunteer days – unknown as yet

The majority of Stage 2 costs can only be met by accessing support grants through routes such as Awards for All (National Lottery funded), Breckland DC and Notts CC. A small amount of funding has already been offered by the Norfolk Wildlife Trust, which is likely to cover the cost of the information boards.

Paul O’Brien,
Longham Parish Council