

LONGHAM ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

Minutes of the meeting held at 7.30pm on Monday 15th May 2023 in the Village Hall. The Chairman of the Parish Council, Cllr Sue Douglas, was present together with District Cllr Richard Duffield, Cllr Paul O'Brien and five members of the public.

1. Welcome and apologies for absence.

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting and congratulated Councillors for being returned to office following the recent elections. Apologies were received from District Cllr Roger Atterwill and County Cllr Mark Kiddle-Morris and Donna McLeod.

2. To confirm the minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on 16th May 2022.

The minutes of the previous meeting were approved and duly signed by the Chairman.

3. To receive reports from:

a) The Parish Council Chairman.

The report presented by Cllr Douglas is attached.

b) District & County Councillors.

D/Cllr Duffield said that everyone had been re-elected which showed that Breckland must be working well. One important aim was to keep the Council Tax as low as possible.

In the absence of D/Cllr Atterwill, his report (attached) was presented by the Chairman.

In the absence of C/Cllr Kiddle-Morris his report (attached) was presented by the Chairman.

The Chairman thanked the councillors for all they do for the village.

c) Village Hall Committee.

The report presented by Cllr Douglas is attached.

d) St Andrews & St Peters Church.

The report presented by Cllr Douglas is attached.

e) The Hastings Charity Land.

There was nothing new to report.

f) The Parish Council Clay Pit Project.

The report presented by Cllr Paul O'Brien is attached.

The Chairman thanked Cllr O'Brien for his work at the Clay Pits.

- 4. 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.**

The Chairman was asked to update the meeting with regular events at the Village Hall.

She reported that the monthly farmers market was doing well with more stalls at the most recent event and a varied array of goods. It is being well advertised and well attended and the organisers have booked the hall for one year, after which they will review. The traders feel it is worthwhile and it should grow as word spreads. A suggestion to have signage on the Litcham Road was raised and the Chairman will pass this onto the organisers.

The coffee mornings are going well with up to 20 people now attending and it was hoped that improvements in the weather would bring more people out to the event.

- 5. To note the date of the next Annual Parish Meeting – Monday 20th May 2024.**

The date of the next meeting was noted and the Chairman closed the meeting at 8.52pm.

This meeting was followed by the Annual Council Meeting.

Signed:

Date:

Chairman's Report 2023

Thankfully things have gotten back to normal after the covid lockdowns and the council meets once again in the village hall.

This year we were pleased to co-opt Alan Farrell onto the Council, which means that we have the full 7 councillors

The Parish Council were asked to consider pieces of land for development in the village, after some consideration they put forward the site opposite the village hall and the triangle of land between the playing field and Hoe Road which are under consideration by Breckland Council.

The Council are pleased to say that D/Cllr Atterwill is continuing with his efforts to provide a regular bus service to Longham, albeit probably only a Tuesday and Friday bus initially. Both the coach provider and County Council appear positive and the D/Cllr will continue to push this ahead. The Council are very grateful for his efforts

Cllr O'Brien has continued managing the work on the Clay Pits (a county wildlife site). He reported that two days work had taken place, clearing the Himalayan Balsam and completing the boardwalk and small bridge. This now gave full access around the site, although, at present, not for anyone with mobility issues. Before moving onto the next stage, additional funding was required which Cllr O'Brien is pursuing.

It is planned to have three days maintenance work per year which will keep the site accessible. Many thanks to Paul, for all his hard work with this project.

The Parish Council has purchased two flowering Cherry trees to be planted on the play field to mark the late Queens 70th jubilee and King Charles III coronation.

.For the Great British Spring Clean 2023 we were delighted that 18 volunteers came forward and there was a lot of rubbish cleared from the ditches and roads around the village.

For our annual donations we gave £50 donation to the Norfolk Citizens Advice Bureau and £1000 towards the grass cutting of the playing field.

Because the church has closed for regular services the Parish Council agreed to take on the grass cutting costs of the churchyard so that it's tidy for people to visit their loved ones graves.

Cllr Margaret Dye decided that she would not stand again as a Parish Council in the recent elections. Margaret, who was born and brought up in the village, has been a Parish Councillor for 52 years. Her local knowledge has been invaluable to the Parish Council over the years. The Parish Council wish Margaret all the best for the future.

I was surprised and delighted to be nominated and given a special award by Breckland for outstanding community service.

I would like to thank County Councillor Mark Kiddle-Morris, District Councillors Roger Attewell and Richard Duffield, my fellow Parish Councillors and our hard working Parish Clerk, Sheryl Irving, for all their support and hard work on behalf of the Village.

**District Councillor Roger Atterwill – Annual Report
Longham - Annual Parish Meeting 15th May 2023**

Dear Resident,

The last year has once again been a busy one. Having got past the worst of the Covid19 pandemic a sense of normality returned to Council proceedings.

The review of Breckland Council's Local Plan is now well under way. When complete this will contain a number of development policies which will be used to determine planning applications for many years to come. It is important that residents engage with any public consultations which will take place during this review period to ensure that their voices are heard.

As part of its Inspiring Communities work, Breckland Council has funded training for volunteers across the district for mental health awareness. This has created a network of people who can provide initial support before signposting people suffering from mental health issues to qualified healthcare professionals. Thetford became the first Mindful town and Swanton Morley became the first Mindful village with individuals who have completed a programme of training for this. I have undertaken this training myself which includes Mental health Awareness, Mental Health First Aid and Suicide Awareness.

In the grip of the cost of living crisis Breckland Council has, with Government support, provided hardship and family support funding for those most in need. As part of my casework I have managed to help a number of families receive additional financial support and I have signposted them to other professional bodies where they can receive additional financial help and guidance. As part of my work in this area I have tried to promote the good work of Credit Unions and was interviewed on radio Norfolk about this.

I remain concerned that there is a lack of funding available to provide Disabled Facilities Grants for all those people who have been assessed as needing adaptations to their homes. I recently supported a motion at Breckland which proposed an additional £200,000 to ensure that all applicants who have been assessed and costed get the help they need in this financial year. The proposal was to use money Breckland receives from the New Homes Bonus.

Unfortunately, this motion was defeated. The Cabinet say that they are lobbying Government for more money and I and others will keep pursuing this.

You will probably have seen in the press that I have strongly objected to spending £35,000 on painting murals in Dereham town centre. I am of the view that this cannot be justified when so many families are having their household budgets squeezed. I sincerely hope that the Breckland's Cabinet will scrap this idea.

Finally, I want to say a big thank you to everyone who voted for me in the recent local elections.

I have been overwhelmed by the level of support I received. I will do my very best to try and serve ALL residents during the next four years.

Yours Sincerely

Roger Atterwill
Ward member – Lincoln Ward
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County Councillor for Necton and Launditch
Annual Report April 2022- April 2023

Budget and Council Tax:

The Council Tax and budget for 22-23 was set at a meeting of the Council in February 2022. An increase in council tax of 1.99% in the general precept and an increase of 1% for additional adult social care. However, even before the start of the financial year in April 2022 work was begun to tackle the budget for 23-24. There was projected to be a shortfall of some £60m for the year from April 2023 which had to be addressed. A strategic review of the council, “doing things better for less”, was initiated to address the shortfall.

A balanced budget, for 23-24, was set in February which maintained all the council services at the previous level and included a net spending increase of £29.6m to meet rising costs. The government had increased the referendum limit from 2% to 3% for 23-24 so the hard decision was taken to increase the level of council tax to the maximum allowed. This will increase the County Council’s share of band D bills from £1516.95 to £1592.64.

A reminder; local government cash is divided between revenue (broadly what we receive in income) and capital (normally capital grants from government and money borrowed to fund capital projects). Any goods and services and routine maintenance are paid for out of revenue and new projects, major refurbishments, and new equipment are paid for out of capital.

The projected revenue spend for 23-24 is as follows:

- Adult Social Services £249.5m
- Children’s Services £232.6m
- Community and Environmental Services £177.1m
- Strategy and Transformation £12.8m
- Finance and Commercial Services £35.8m

The capital budget for 23-24 is £956.5m. The highlight schemes include the Yarmouth 3rd River Crossing and the building of new SEND schools in places nearer to where pupils live. Other projects include:

- County Farms (refurbishments and carbon reduction) £9.4m
- Technology improvement Programme £8.2m
- Scottow Enterprise Park £8.6m
- Highway Improvements £2.5m

- New Fire and Rescue Equipment £1.2m

6.

County Deal for Norfolk:

The County Council has entered negotiations with government on a “County Deal” for Norfolk and signed an “in-principle” deal in December 2022. The deal would see a grant of £600m paid over 30 years to fund economic development, infrastructure projects and skills training. As a condition of the deal the government require a directly elected leader, in addition to the 84 elected members, to take control of the budget. The governance model proposed requires legislation and this will not be passed until late in 2023 after which the changes required to NCC’s constitution will be debated at a meeting of Council in December 2023.

Bus Service Improvements:

During 2022 the County Council negotiated with government for an allocation from the Bus Service Improvement Fund and received an allocation of £50m, one of the largest in the country. The first £10m phase of this funding was received in November 2022. Since then, NCC have worked closely with bus service operators to implement enhanced routes and services as well as reviewing infrastructure and fares to encourage passenger growth and improve bus service reliability and sustainability. The revised and improved bus timetables will come into use on the 3rd July, 2023.

Social Infrastructure Fund:

The 2022 was the third year that Social Infrastructure funding has provided capital grants to improve facilities for communities and boost the level of community services. £775,000 was awarded to communities to fund individual projects and £225,000 awarded to Norfolk Community Foundation to expand their Nourishing Norfolk food hubs across the county. Look out for this year’s funding to go live.

Major Infrastructure:

Norfolk county Council are working to deliver 2 major road improvement projects; the Long Stratton bypass on the A140 and the much discussed Norwich Western Link (NWL) which will join the A47 to the A1067 effectively completing an outer ring road to Norwich (The greater Norwich Local Plan envisages 49,000 homes being built during the plan period to 2038). Improvements to the A47 being brought forward by National Highways should also help the economic development of Norfolk by allowing better connectivity and slightly shorter journey times for commuters. The NWL and the A47 improvements should divert traffic currently using the B1145 (through Brisley, Stanfield, Mileham,

Litcham, Lexham and Rougham) to use the new improved routes to access Kings Lynn and the east Midlands.

Necton and Launditch Division:

I represent some 8,600+ electors in the Necton and Launditch division which covers approximately 80 square miles and has 22 parishes within its boundaries. 19 parishes have parish councils, there are 2 parish meetings, and one parish is administered by the district councillor. 5 parish councils meet monthly, the rest on a bi-monthly basis (except Rougham), the parish meetings are only obliged to meet once a year.

Your Councillor:

I have, in the past year, been a member of the following committees/working groups at County Hall, all meetings are held during the working day usually commencing at 10:00:

Full Council, the ultimate decision-making body for policy and governance which meets 6 times in a year (plus extra-ordinary meetings).

Scrutiny Committee, which meets every month to scrutinise internal policy and to hear “call ins” of executive decisions from members. Can call in external organisations that serve the residents of Norfolk.

Norfolk Countywide Community Safety Partnership Scrutiny Sub Panel: chairman of this committee which scrutinises the progress of the Norfolk Countywide Community Safety Partnership in delivering the aims of the Partnership. Reports to the Scrutiny Committee.

Audit and Governance Committee; meets every 3 months or so to monitor the financial performance of the Council, now has responsibility for the members code of conduct.

People and Communities Select Committee; (until July 2022) reviews and formulates policy relating to community matters. Meets every 6 weeks.

Standards Committee as Chairman (until subsumed into the Audit and Governance Committee). Monitored the effectiveness of the Members Code of Conduct.

Adult Social Care Performance Review Panel (meetings held via Teams); monitors the progress of adult social care reforms, working towards an inspection from government.

Planning (Regulatory) Committee; substitute member (must maintain training and be available on each day a meeting is called).

Parish Councils; attended as many of the scheduled 18 meetings as possible, usually bi-monthly. These are always evening meetings as they cannot be convened before 6:00pm.

Mark Kiddle-Morris,
Member for Necton and Launditch Division,
Norfolk County Council.

2023 report on

Longham Village Hall

Covid caused a lot of problems for the hall; a couple of the regular hirers had to stop because the members of their groups didn't come back after lockdown.

Without the Covid grant money the hall could have closed, the committee have worked really hard promoting the hall and it is beginning to pay off.

We now have another Zumba group each week, as well as keep fit and 2 dog training classes.

Once a month we hold a farmers market, which promotes local produce and is proving popular.

Also once a month we have started a coffee morning and knit and natter get together, which is growing and is proving a great way for people to get out and have a chat with other villagers.

It is hoped to hold a mini fete in the summer and a Christmas craft fair to raise money for the hall.

The football pitch has been resurfaced but the work wasn't satisfactory and remedial work is being carried out to make it fit to meet the FA's inspection so that the team can start to play on again.

It is hoped that if the pitch is alright by the autumn, we shall have a football team using it; the manager is also hoping to setup a woman's team.

The committee are grateful to the Parish Council for the grant towards the cost of grass cutting and the football pitch.

2023 report on

St Andrews Church Longham

From Easter 2022 the church has been closed for normal services and the PCC have been trying to hand the building over to the Diocese in a proper manner.

The Diocese has no procedures in place for when a church closes and the PCC have had a great deal of trouble trying to find a way forward.

Recently we managed to have meeting with the new Archdeacon of Lynn, who sympathized with the PCC and has promised to try and move things forward. She is keen that the church remains open for occasional services, so that if in the future it should be need again, it can re-open.

The present PCC, which is made up of 4 people, want to resign but feel that they have to find a way of handing the building over properly, before they do.

There have been some occasional services, such as Christenings, Weddings and Funerals and the PCC hope this can continue.

The PCC are very grateful to the Parish Council for taking on the cost of the grass cutting in the churchyard.

Longham Clay Pits – Restoration Project Update May 2023

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 second stage of the project involved the creation of boardwalk and gravel pathways around the site. TCV volunteers, led by Mark Webster, have cut through a circular path round the edge of the site, and laid 30 metres of boardwalk. The boardwalk is made of reconstituted plastic called Plaswood, and has a longer life expectancy than wood. It is estimated to last at least 50 years. The volunteers have also so far laid 4 tonnes of 10mm gravel on 50metres of pathway.

The site is not yet completely safe for public access.

Further maintenance and clearance work has taken place on 3 days in Autumn/Winter 2022/23. No further maintenance work will take place until Autumn 2023. The work is being funded by monies set aside by the Parish Council.

Further works envisaged include:

- A viewing platform with disabled access near Hoe Road access point
- Improve fencing/access from Hoe Road
- Site 'story board' and map
- Annual maintenance

Further grant monies are needed to fund Stage 3 works. So far grant applications to Breckland Council, and the Alpkit Foundation have not been successful. Applications to Vattenfall, and the Norfolk Community Foundation are under consideration.

Estimated costs of Stage 3:

- 10m2 platform @ £100 per square metre - £1000
- Site Board - £250
- TVC days – 5/6 @ £300 + VAT

Paul O'Brien,
Longham Parish Council
May 2023

