

WICKLEWOOD PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

Held via Zoom on 12th April 2021 at 7.00

Present: John Seville (JS) Chair, Nick Kemp (NK) Vice Chair, Joel Pailes (JP), Louise Downton (LD), Richard Goodings (RG), Alan Goodings (AG), John Hipperson (JH)

In attendance: Richard Elliot (RE), Helen Frayer (HF) Parish Clerk, Rachael Mold (RM) Bookings Clerk

1. WELCOME AND APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE:

Apologies received Margaret Dewsbury. The Chair welcomed all to the meeting. Following the recent death of Prince Philip the Duke of Edinburgh, there was a minutes silence before the meeting.

2. MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING HELD 1ST APRIL 2019: Resolved, to agree these as correct – RG proposed, NK seconded, all agreed.

3. CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

During this year we have all had to live and work with the uncertainty and challenges presented by the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

Announcing the first lockdown on 23 March 2020, Prime Minister Boris Johnson told the UK public that they will only be allowed to leave their homes for limited reasons. For the Parish Council this meant that we had to close the Village Hall, play area and cancel Parish Council meetings.

After two months with no meetings, temporary legislation was brought in, permitting that parish council meetings could take place via Zoom video conferencing. The first Zoom meeting was in June and all subsequent meetings to date have been held this way. This has worked well although unfortunately it has restricted the attendance of two councillors who do not use the internet.

Due to the annual council meeting May 20 being cancelled it was agreed to roll the position of Chairman and Officers over for another year. John Seville - Chairman, Nick Kemp - Vice Chairman and Playing Field Officer and Joel Pailes - Highways Officer.

The COVID-19 pandemic rules and regulations brought an exponential increase in work for our Clerk Helen Frayer and me as Chairman during the first half of the year. In addition to COVID-19 changing the workload a new company had to be found for the maintenance of the playing field due to Norse closing their rural Grounds Division, urgent repairs were needed to the village hall flat roof and we had deal with an undetectable intermittent fault with the fire alarm system – I will refer to these again later in my report.

I would like to thank Helen on behalf of myself and my fellow Councillors for all the dedicated hard work she has put in during this exceptional year and for the unpaid hours she has done.

Our Booking Clerk Rachael Mold was furloughed under the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, but I would like to thank Rachel for her efforts during the year when she has been in work.

When the Village Hall was able to reopen after the first lockdown all our regular groups decided to suspended their return apart from the dance classes, which took place during the summer and autumn under COVID secure conditions. The remainder of year saw no income from the Village Hall, which is a major income stream for the Parish Council and thus keep the 'precept' tax low. (*The Precept is a tax that Parish Council's charge their local electors to meet their budget requirements*).

During the summer the ceiling in the gents toilets collapsed, due to water ingress following heavy rain, exposing serious long term water damage. There was also evidence of further water damage in other areas. Therefore, due to the long history of small leaks and patching up the decision was made to completely replace the flat roof and internal ceilings. This was put out to tender and was completed in September with a 20 year guarantee on the roof covering material and a 10 year insurance backed workmanship warranty. As this was an unforeseen event and had not been budgeted for and the income from the hall had been seriously impacted by the COVID -19 lockdown, the Parish Council put in a bid to South Norfolk Council for a five year, interest free, loan against the precept, to pay for this work.

We then had an undetectable intermittent fault with the fire alarm system, which was finally resolved by taking the decision to replace all the manual call points.

The Council has continued through the year to and maintain the Village Hall to a high standard. It was agreed to take the opportunity to replace the poor quality lighting in the flat roof areas with new more efficient brighter LED lighting. This seemed an ideal time to replace them as the electrician needed to remove the light fittings for the new ceilings to be installed. In addition to redecoration the water damaged areas it was decided to completely redecorate the hall, replace the stage carpet and refurbish the bar area during the lockdown. Some of this had been planned, but only became possible because the work on the flat roof came in under budget.

Grant applications for a renewable heat technology system and cavity wall insulation for the Village Hall were submitted during the year, but unfortunately both were unsuccessful. The existing oil boiler is nearing the end of its expected life, so money will need to be set aside for its replacement should it fail.

Dream Team Cleaning continues to provide excellent cleaning services at the Village Hall.

The licensee of the Buck Public House at Morley continues to provide a licenced bar at the Village Hall when required.

The Village Hall annual rent review, approved by the Council, recommended that the hire rates should be increased from April 21 and to remove the two tier hourly pricing system over a two

year period resulting in a single price by 2022. Despite the increase the hire rates continue to be some of the most reasonable in the area.

A formal agreement between the Parish Council and Wicklewood Bowls Club regarding shared facilities/utilities at the Village Hall / Bowls Club site was prepared by the Clerk and signed by both parties. The Bowls Club was founded in 1973 and is situated behind the Village Hall, but no formal agreement existed regarding shared facilities with the Village Hall.

The Playing Field and the children's play area continues to be enjoyed by parishioners of all ages. Over the year we have seen an increased use of the football goals, but some of the users are leaving behind plastic drinking bottles and other litter. Please can I remind everyone to clear up their litter.

A new ground maintenance contractor for the Playing Field started this year and to date TTRS Ltd have provided a very good service.

The Parish Council applied for and received a free tree pack (135 trees) from the Woodland Trust. 4 rows were planted at the northern end of the Playing Field, some were used to infilling gaps in the existing tree line around the Playing Field and the remainder were planted on the allotment and around the parish owned agricultural field.

The allotments continue to be enjoyed by parishioners, including the community plot. They are all let and to fulfil recent requests 3 new plots will be created using part of the large plot near Wymondham Road, currently vacated by the previous tenant. Negotiations are in process to let the remainder of the large plot.

The agricultural field continues to be cultivated for commercial use and it is proposed to negotiate with the tenant to provide a permissive footpath around the perimeter to make a circular walk for the benefit of the local community. The field lies between Wymondham Road and Hospital Road / The Green near St Georges (previously the old hospital) and will be accessible from the village via the allotment gardens and near St Georges.

The Council once again undertook the verge cutting in the parish, together with the areas of grass which are maintained within the village, with the County Council paying the Parish Council for taking responsibility for these activities.

The SAM2 flashing speed sign, has been moved around the pre-approved locations to record speeds and flash when vehicles are over 30mph and information is shared with local police.

The £15,000 payment was approved by the Parish Council in January to extend the footpath provided by the new development in High Street to its junction with Wymondham / Hackford Rd. This is a 50/50 funded scheme provided by Norfolk County Council (NCC) under the Parish Partnership Scheme and is now in the hands of NCC Highways to deliver.

I will let the Clerk go through the financial details of the year but I am pleased to say that despite the financial difficulties this year, we have been able to maintain the parish precept for 2021/22 at the same level.

I would like to thank my fellow Councillors for all their hard work during this exceptional year, particularly those who have special responsibilities. Nick Kemp for overseeing the Playing

Field and carrying out the regular safety inspections, Joel Pailes for overseeing Highways and moving the SAM2 sign around. I would also like to thank Richard Goodings, Louise Downton, John Hipperson and Alan Goodings who have contributed to discussions and the working of the council during the year. I would also like to pay particular thanks to a local resident, Alan Coombs for his work in setting up and running a team of volunteers to support the village during the periods of lockdown, ensuring that vulnerable residents received the help they needed. I would also like to thank him for his work in litter picking up in the playing field and emptying the bins during the periods the cleaners were not working during the first lockdown.

- 4. OBSERVATIONS ON PARISH COUNCIL ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST MARCH 2021**
HF delivered the report, full details attached. End of year balance £28,184.86. She thanked JS for his work during the year project managing the roof replacement and ensuring the hall was checked regularly whilst closed and for his help and support with the budget.
- 5. REPORTS FROM:**
 - 5.1 County Councillor** – In her absence, MD had provided a written report, attached.
 - 5.2 District Councillor** – RE had provided a written report, attached. He briefly outlined some of the highlights about the amount of support and assistance that had been provided within the District, particularly to those requiring support due to Covid both practical and financial to individuals and businesses.
 - 5.3 Poors Firing Charity** – Mike Gamble, Secretary and Treasurer of the charity reported:
 - The Income of the charity in 2020 was £206.37
 - At Christmas 2020 the charity made grants of £100 each to two applicants.
 - The charity's assets are held in 398 COIF Charities Investment Fund Income units which at 30th June 2020 had a value of £6659.38
 - Mr Gerald Neeve stood down as chairman and as a trustee in December 2020.
 - Mr John Gray was elected chairman at the December meeting.
 - The Trustees are actively seeking a replacement trustee.
 - As the number of elderly applicants keeps decreasing the trustees are considering as to whether applications can be broadened to help families in the village who are in need of financial help.
 - The trustees would welcome the views of the parish council on this matter.
 - 5.4 Old Village Hall Trust** – Peter Woodrow reported income of £282.06. 5 grants to local organisations of £275. Full report and financial statement attached
 - 5.5 Wicklewood Primary School** – Headteacher Julia Brooks sent a report that was read by HF – attached
- 6. ANY OTHER BUSINESS:** None raised