

WICKLEWOOD PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held in Wicklewood Village Hall on Monday 8th April, 2024

Present: John Seville (JS) Chair, Nick Kemp (NK) Vice Chair, Richard Goodings (RG), Danny Clarke (DC), Stephen Brown (SB), Hilary Matthews (HM)

In attendance: Helen Frayer (HF) Parish Clerk, Margaret Dewsbury (MD) County Councillor

1. WELCOME AND APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE:

The Chair welcomed all to the meeting.

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON MONDAY 3rd APRIL 2023. NK proposed accepting Minutes as correct, SB seconded, all agreed.

3. CHAIRMAN'S REPORT:

The election on 04 May 2023 was uncontested and the following were duly elected Parish Councillors for Wicklewood – Stephen Brown, Richard Goodings, John Hipperson, Nick Kemp, Hilary Matthews, John Seville and leaving one vacant position. Danny Clarke put his name forward for nomination to the vacant position of Parish Councillors and was co-opted at the May 2023 meeting.

At the annual Parish Council meeting May 2023, the positions were elected as follows – John Seville - Chairman, Nick Kemp - Vice Chairman and Playing Field & Play Area Inspector and Richard Goodings -Allotments Inspector. At the June 2023 meeting Danny Clarke was elected to the role of Internal Finance Control Officer, a new position on the advice of our internal auditor.

I would like to thank our Parish Clerk Helen Frayer on behalf of myself and my fellow councillors for her work during the last year. Helen tendered her resignation in February 2024 as she now wishes to retire from all work and will finish early May 2024. Helen was appointed to the role of Parish Clerk in May 2018 and took over the role of Responsible Finance Officer in May 2019, and due to her dedicated hard work over the last 6 years has raised the level of governance of the Parish Council to a very high level. I would like to welcome our new Parish Clerk Gemma Creasey who will start in May.

Our Booking Clerk Tina Phillips resigned in January 2024. On behalf of myself and my fellow councillors I would like to thank Tina for her service. The vacancy was advertised, and Sophie Scott was appointed to the position in February 2024. On behalf of myself and my fellow councillors I would like to thank Sophie for her service to date.

The Council has continued through the year to maintain the Village Hall to a high standard. Repairs to damaged brickwork, which included some re-pointing and replacement bricks, and guttering repairs were carried out during January 2024 on the Village Hall. The cavity walls at the Village Hall were installed during February 2024.

A Government grant of £7,500 was secured in February 2024 under the Boiler Upgrade Scheme (BUS) for the installation of Air Source Heat Pump to replace the existing oil central heating boiler, which has already exceeded its expected life span, at the Village Hall. Following this an order was placed in March 2024 with the chosen successful contractor, Finn Geotherm UK Limited (a local firm). It is anticipated the work will be carried out during the spring. The total cost of the scheme is in the order of £23,000 of which £7,500 will be funded by the BUS grant, £6,000 already ringfenced for a replacement boiler and the balance will come from the Parish Council reserves, which will have to be paid back into the reserves over the next 2 years. This is only possible without raising the council tax precept because two current loans (flat roof replacement 5yr loan and disabled toilets 25yr loan) will be ending this year.

Dream Team Cleaning continues to provide cleaning services at the Village Hall and the licensee of the Buck Public House at Morley continues to provide a licenced bar at the Village Hall when required.

The letting income from the Village Hall is the major income stream for the Council. At the annual review of the hall hire rates in March 2023 a small inflationary increase was approved from April 2024. Despite the increases in hire rates, they continue to be some of the most reasonable in the area.

The Playing Field and the children's play area continues to be enjoyed by parishioners of all ages. At the November 2023 meeting it was agreed to form a sub-group consisting of 3 councillors, the Parish Clerk and a local resident to plan improvements to the play area and submit a bid to the National Lottery Awards for All scheme. On behalf of the parish, I would like to thank the sub-group for their work to date and look forward to their report.

The allotments continue to be enjoyed by parishioners, with all plots let. The two Council owned agricultural fields continue to be let for commercial use under a farm business agreement.

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 Speed Awareness Monitor (SAM 2) (flashing speed sign) continues to be moved around the pre-approved locations to record speeds and flash when vehicles are over 30mph. The readings generated are recorded on the village website. Councillor Nick Kemp and Stephen Brown assist with the SAM2. A Community Speed Watch consisting of a group of parish volunteers continue to carry out speed watches at the police approved locations. On behalf of the parish, I would like to thank the Community Speed Watch volunteer for their work and look forward to their report.

The parish Council continued to hold Anglian Water to account regarding their foul water pumping station and emergency sewage discharge to the river. The standby generator was finally installed during October 2024, but the Council continues to express concerns that they are still not able to provide sufficient retention time, which they admitted to, during all situations to avoid emergency sewage discharge to the river.

The Parish Council made representations to the Village Clusters Housing Allocations Plan - Alternative Sites & Focused Changes (Reg. 18) objecting to the proposal to take new allocations in Wicklewood to 52 dwellings, surrounding the school. A large number of parishioners also objected to this allocation, which was only locally supported by the landowners. Therefore, due to the strength of local opposition the Parish Council raised this with George Freeman MP who attended a meeting with the Parish Council and visited the proposed site, and following this he formally highlighted his own concern at such proposals, as well as drawing attention to the wider local opposition.

The Parish Council also raised concerns to South Norfolk Council Planning during the year about the retrospective application for the combined heat and power (CHP) generator at Whitehall Farm, Crownthorpe and the change of use of land to a residential travellers site on Green Lane – both applications had been a cause of concern for local residents. i.e., noise from the CHP Generator and the unsuitability of Green Lane for further development due to highways risk.

I will let the Clerk go through the financial details of the year, but I am pleased to say through careful management the Parish Council has been able to maintain the parish precept for 2024/25 at the same level.

I would like to thank my fellow Councillors for all their hard work during the year, particularly those who have special responsibilities. Richard Goodings and Nick Kemp for carrying out their regular safety inspections, Stephen Brown for the SAM2 speed sign and Danny Clarke for Internal Finance Control Officer.

I would also like to thank John Hipperson and Hilary Matthews who have actively contributed to discussions and the working of the council during the year.

4. OBSERVATIONS ON PARISH COUNCIL ACCOUNTS FOR YEAR ENDED 31ST MARCH 2023:

HF went through the figures, see report accompanying these minutes. End of year balance £38,802.42

5. REPORTS FROM:

5.1 County Councillor – MD had provided a written report, attached and circulated

5.2 District Councillor – RE provided a written report, attached and circulated

5.3 Wicklewood Support Fund (Poors Charity) – Mike Gamble reported the charity's income was £216.84. Xmas grants totalling £225 had been given to 6 applicants. The qualifying criteria had been widened to enable more to apply so please let them know of anyone who could benefit. Balance in COIF account is £7,898.31.

5.4 Old Village Hall Trust: Peter Woodrow reported that in August 2023 Janice Plunkett (co-opted trustee) had sadly died. Carole Sidwell was co-opted in her place. Current Trustees are: Parish Council Nominated Trustees - Richard Goodings (currently Chairman) nominated until Sept 2024. John Lowe, nominated until July 2026. Co-operative Trustees: Rev James Lynch (until June 2026), Carole Sidwell (until December 2027). Ex-Officio Trustee: Rev Mrs Shirley Holt (representing Priest in Charge of High Oak Benefice).

During the year the charity made grants totalling £255. The balance carried forward at 1.4.24 is £17.88. Five community groups benefitted: Wicklewood Brownies and Guides, the

Village Sign Garden Group, Village Christmas Santa Event and Wicklewood Community Allotment.

5.5 Wicklewood Primary School: HF reported that again she had received no response from the school to her request for a member of staff to attend. This is the third year the invitation has been ignored.

6. ANY OTHER BUSINESS: None