**MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING OF SOUTH WALSHAM**

Held on **Monday 9th May 2022 at 7.30pm** at South Walsham Village Hall

1. **ATTENDANCE**

Present: Mr R R Jones (Chair of South Walsham Parish Council) and Miss A Beck (Clerk)

5 members of the Parish, District Councillor Justine Thomas and County Councillor Fran Whymark

Apologies: none

1. **MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS ANNUAL PARISH MEETING HELD 12th APRIL 2021**

The minutes of the last Annual Parish Meeting held on 12th April 2021 signed by the Chair of the Parish Council as a true record.

1. **MATTERS ARISING FROM MINUTES OF 12th APRIL 2021**

None

1. **CHAIRMAN’S REPORT**

Cllr Jones reported that he was glad to see the end of lockdown and restrictions due to Covid-19 and that it was good to be back face-to-face around a table in person, rather than conducting meetings through Zoom.

Thanks were proffered to all councillors for their commitment and for dealing with issues affecting the village as they arise.

The clerk was also thanked for her hard work, as were Justine Thomas, the District Councillor and Fran Whymark the County Councillor for the village.

The retirement of former councillor Rod Russell was acknowledged with reference his dedication and commitment to the roles he held, including chair and more recently, vice-chair.

Special mention was made in respect of the work being carried out at the cemetery which is looking much better. It was a shame that the arrangements with the Parochial Church Council under the Joint Councils Baker Fund came to an end but it is hoped that the good relationship with the PCC can continue for the good of the churchyard.

1. **REPORT FROM THE POLICE**

Report received from Beat Managers PC Steve Godden and PC Jackie Chambers.

Crime in the South Walsham area remains relatively low with no recent concerns raised to the local Safer Neighbourhood team. Looking at the crime statistic Between the 1st February 2022 and the 1st May 2022 there has been 7 reported crimes;

Three Public order offences, where all person were known to each other

One common assault, and One Actual Bodily Harm, again, where all persons were known to each other.

Two thefts, one was a theft of a table from the water’s edge and the other was theft of heating oil.

Since the Oil prices have risen dramatically over the past couple of months, we have seen a rise in theft of both heating and cooking oil. The Safer Neighbourhood team would like to remind and encourage residents to ensure that their oil and their tanks are protected. Please consider screening off your oil tank from view of the main road and footpaths and having CCTV coverage of your tank. CCTV cameras are a great deterrent, and any footage will be of great value to any investigation for the police.

Jackie and Steve held their Priority setting meeting last month, which we do invite members of the public to attend. Our priorities this time around have been set as; Speeding and Antisocial behaviour, which we will focus on and tackle in the area. We will continue to hold this meeting via virtual teams meeting due to the large area we cover and to make it accessible for the vast majority. Our next Priority setting meeting will be held on the 28th June 2022 at 6pm. If you wish to join the meeting, please email the Acle SNT email address and a link to the meeting will be sent to you.

In the meantime, if anyone wishes to contact either Jackie or Steve, they can do by emailing the Acle SNT box at sntacle@norfolk.police.uk.

1. **PARISH COUNCIL FINANCE REPORT**

Aileen Beck, the Responsible Financial Officer for South Walsham Parish Council reported that Council’s financial year runs 1st April to 31st March each year and that the Annual Governance and Accountability Return 2021/22 has been prepared ready for submission to the Internal Auditor this month. Once audited, the Return and accompanying documents will be made available on the website for perusal by 1st July 2022.

The balance sheet shows funds of £58,106.54: £13,600 in general reserves, earmarked reserves for the churchyard and cemetery of £34,808,33 with the remainder being much smaller amounts for other functions the council undertakes.

The precept for 2022/23 has been requested as £22,031 which is proportioned between 337 properties, those living in band D properties paying £61.34 per year. However, the Council continues to be careful financially, with a necessary balance to cover unexpected costs.

1. **REPORT ON CEMETERY AND CHURCHYARD IMPROVEMENTS**

The “Friends of the Cemetery” group was formed in October 2021 with the aim of making the cemetery a better place for friends and relatives to visit their loved ones in peaceful, secluded surroundings that are kept to very high standards.

The following work has been carried out to date:

* Both the long and short hedges have been cut and levelled to an acceptable standard.
* The three trees just inside the entrance gate have been cut back ready to remove in the autumn.
* The bank has been removed.
* The hedge/trees alongside the playing field have been tided up.
* A number of graves that have sunk have been topped up.
* No parking signs have been produced and fitted.
* The growth on either side of the entry to the cemetery has been cut back and has provided good vision of oncoming traffic from either side.
* Grass seed sown where the soil from the bank has been spread.
* Steel work at the entrance to the cemetery has been painted.

The following work has still to be completed.

* Remove the three trees just inside the entrance gate and plant new shrubs.
* Fir tree stumps to be ground out later this week.

Other tasks to be followed up as and when required.

* The mowing and hedge cutting being carried out by Garden Guardian will be monitored.
* Ensure that head stones have been cleaned after mowing.
* Submit a report to the SWPC on a monthly basis.
* Check that water is being drained from the cemetery and complies with the required regulations.
* The cemetery is tided up prior to a funeral taking place, with thanks to the Village Hall for their labour and use of their equipment.

Finally special thanks go out to Peter Crook and Paul Randall for the many hours spent making the cemetery a better place. M Steward

Several maintenance and improvement projects in the churchyard have been undertaken by a small, informal team of volunteers set up in 2021 and co-ordinated by the PCC. The north-west corner of the churchyard has been improved with graves reclaimed from overgrowth and new grass sown, the compost heap moved and a retaining stone wall built round the soil heap.

A further retaining wall was built round soil in the south west corner behind the Old Forge and a level pathway/boundary cut through untended piles of earth to clear and protect adjacent graves. Considerable weed clearance was also carried out, and metal waste removed.

Several levelled grave stones have been safely re-erected and footstones moved to make grass cutting easier. Some sunken graves have been levelled and others have been tidied up. This work is on-going.

Minor necessary canopy raising on a number of trees has been undertaken to enable free access to graves and movement around the churchyard. A clearance of an accumulation of fallen wood and some hedge clearance in the sacristan’s garden team was followed by a series of bonfires.

Areas of special wild flower interest identified by NWT have been established by the PCC and grass cutting has been halted, and weed control stopped in these areas.

A dead tree has recently been felled, a tomb renovated (and a further one to follow) and fortnightly grass cutting continues – all organised by the PC. The un-mulched grass left after rapid spells of growth still remains an issue, especially when weddings take place. It is hoped to find an early solution to this. Peter Crook/Amanda Miller

1. **REPORT FROM THE VILLAGE CHARITIES**

Trustees:

JOHN DEBBAGE. Appointed by South Walsham Parish Council.

IVAN BARNARD. Appointed by the Parochial Church Council.

DOROTHY DEAN. Appointed by the Parochial Church Council.

REVEREND KEVIN M BILLSON. . EX officio by default as the Minister for the village.

MALCOLM STEWARD. Appointed by South Walsham Parish Council.

PAULINE JAMES. Clerk.

RICHARD HARROLDS CHARITY.

This charity gave out grants to the total of £1,450. During the year to the 28th of February 2022to 11 students either at University or attending 6th form. The balance in the bank at 28/02/22 was £3,962 with investments valued at £96,498. Grants are given to South Walsham residents who are under the age of 25.

SOUTH WALSHAM PARISH CHARITY.

This charity has limited funds. No grants were paid out during the year to 31st of March 2022. The balance in the bank at 31/03/22 was £3,543 but investments were only £704. It helps parishioners with financial needs by issuing small grants only.

The meetings are currently held on Zoom. Meetings are advertised on the Parish Council notice boards and in the Mardler. Fairhaven Primary School as aware of the grants available to support students.

Details of both charities, including the clerk’s details, are available on the Charity commission website.

1. **REPORT FROM THE VILLAGE HALL**

The year ending December 2021 was again a challenging one as Covid19 has again played havoc with the running of the hall. So far, the only groups to return following the pandemic are the Preschool, SWIG and the WI. Other users have yet to do so, although some of them have now folded.

We have been awarded a small amount of grants from the government to help with our costs.

The bar, which is open on a Friday evening, continues to grow with various food vendors visiting each week.

Despite the challenges, we have still managed to completely refurbish the changing rooms with new showers, cubicles, benches and toilets in the home, away and referee rooms. This was achieved by grants from the football foundation, National Lottery, Norfolk Community Foundation and Snellings at Blofield.

We have also been successful in securing funding to purchase an additional defibrillator for the village from the Premier League which has been installed onto the front of the village hall and added onto the national database for emergency services are aware of its existence.

The Village Hall is financially sound at the moment although the roof will need attention within the next couple of years.

A request was made for the end of year accounts and minutes from the recent Annual General Meeting.

1. **REPORT FROM COUNTY COUNCILLOR FRAN WHYMARK**

The coronavirus has been an endemic, rather than a pandemic, but hospitalisations are now low, perhaps due to the 4th vaccinations that are now being administered.

Local residents have offered to help Ukraine nationals with the support of Norfolk County Council and Broadland District Council. Housing Standards and Committees team check properties and host families are made aware of the support available.

Norfolk County Council has 111 roadside nature reserves to support growth of common but rare flowers, such as on Plumstead Road.

Entrepreneurs can obtain help and support from the British Library Business Intellectual Property Centre (BPIC) Norfolk based at the Norfolk and Norwich Millennium Library but information available from all libraries. Broadland District Council are offering set up grants of up to £300 for new community groups and its Help Hub continues to help all residents especially with cost of living schemes and the Norfolk Assistance Scheme.

1. **REPORT FROM DISTRICT COUNCILLOR JUSTINE THOMAS**

The year 2021-2022 has still been a difficult one for many. Covid continues to have an impact in our community and many of us have either lost someone to covid or know someone who has. The impact on people’s Mental Health and Wellbeing due to covid should not be underestimated, and I'm pleased that Broadland was able to launch a new service launched over the summer 2021 for young people and children in South Norfolk. It offered up to 20 hours of personalised support to young people aged 5-25 years.

We have all seen the impact on local businesses and also on public services. Officers at Broadland District Council have done a wonderful job of administering Covid grant funding for businesses, ensuring it reached the intended recipients as fast as possible. Residents are facing rising inflation, food and fuel prices so I was very pleased to have been able to vote in February 2022 to agree to freeze Council Tax for the coming year. The result of the Council’s decision is that a band D property remains at £129.91, among the lowest Council Tax levels in Norfolk.

The Council leads the Norfolk Warm Homes Partnership which provides heating and insulation grants to help people keep warm in winter. The Council also led a successful bid for £3.85 million in government funding to provide energy efficiency improvements for people living in low-income households across Norfolk.

There is a new digital engagement service to help residents keep on top of their Council Tax payments. It means Council Tax payers who fall into arrears will now be sent a text, email or voice message reminder before taking further recovery action. It is all about making it as convenient as possible for residents to pay for services that we provide, and to help prevent customers from falling further into arrears.

The council was able to extended the geographical reach and opening hours of “The Help Hub”, which offers practical help, advice and guidance via its “Community Connectors” . They can put residents in touch with activities and groups where they live, or support people to start their own project, group or event. They are to help residents are available to help with any issues that may be causing residents concern and they really do a fantastic job.

On a personal note the last year has been difficult for me to get to Parish meetings in person due to work commitments in other time zones. However, I have kept up to date by reading minutes of meetings and am always ready to make myself available if residents need me. I am actively involved in the Council and I am a member of; the Appeals Panel, Place Shaping Policy Panel, Licensing & Regulatory Committee. I chair the Service Improvement & Efficiency Committee, which has been involved in a number of transformation projects such as IT infrastructure changes and the accommodation review in relation to a potential move of the One Team” to the Horizon Building, Broadland Business Park. That committee was also involved in the work relating to the new Customer Charter, launched in October 2021, which sets out the service that residents can expect to receive and outlines the councils’ dedication to delivering exceptional customer service.

Across the Parishes I serve, the most frequent issues I have assisted with are of planning and dog mess, however there is other work to undertake for example I have also been helping a resident promote an interesting recycling project to the Council.

I was delighted to have been asked to attend the Broadland Community at Heart Awards held on 15 October 2021. The awards recognise and celebrate the outstanding achievements of residents from across Broadland who go above and beyond to support others or complete incredible achievements. I was so pleased that Marcus Pearcey from Blofield Farm Shop won the award for Business Community Support of the Year. At the Broadland and South Norfolk Business Awards, another Blofield Based business, SNAP, won the award for business resilience. I am sure we are all proud to have these and other thriving businesses in the Parish.

I'm very conscious that a good waste collection service is high on residents’ agendas. Following a stringent procurement process Veolia was awarded a 10-year contract starting in April 2022 with the option for Broadland to extend for another 10 years. Veolia will use HVO fuel (hydrotreated vegetable oil) in all vehicles (apart from electric vehicles) thus reducing CO2 emissions from the waste vehicles by 90% a major contribution to our Environmental Strategy.

The latest recycling figures for our Council at 49% are the best in Norfolk. Other District and city figures range from 29.2% to 42.1%. I am sure I am not alone in the Parish in thinking that the new electrical, battery and textile service for residents will be most helpful. I am planning a clear out this weekend! There will also be a roll out of food waste collection across the District in October 2022.

In a further excellent environmental initiative launched last year, The Community Tree Planting scheme will help to improve public outdoor spaces for people and nature and forms part of our overall aim to plant one tree for every resident, as set out in their environmental strategy. Grant funding was available of up to £500 and is for the tree planting season November 2021 to March 2022.

The Council’s Community at Heart lottery which has been in place for a year now has raised more than £46,500 for the local community. Friends of Hemblington Primary School have raised £598 at the last count. As we enter the second year it would be great to see more groups in South Walsham benefiting, more information about the lottery can be found here <https://www.communityatheartlottery.com/>

It has been my pleasure to serve local residents in this last year and I look forward to providing you with more updates in the coming months.

1. **PARISHIONERS QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS**

None.

1. **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

A parishioner thanked everyone for their efforts throughout the year.

The Annual Parish Meeting closed at 20.08 and was followed by May’s meeting of South Walsham Parish Council.