

## **MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY THE 16<sup>TH</sup> APRIL 2024 AT THE WELLS-COLE COMMUNITY CENTRE**

Mr. J. Baldwin, Chairman of the Parish Council, presided over an assemble of 9 councillors and 19 parishioners. Mr. E. Connolly (County Councillor) and Ms. H. Crane and Mr. P. Bate (District Councillors) were also present.

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting and said that there would be reports from the Parish Council, the District and County Councillors and the various charities in the parish. There would also be reports from the Wells-Cole Community Centre and the Playing Field. There will be an opportunity to ask questions.

There will be an amendment to the Agenda. Whilst the Parish Council wanted to ensure that the Community Centre Accounts for 2023/24 were ready for tonight's meeting along with the 2022/23 missing account details, the 2023/24 accounts are not ready and need more time to discuss and approve. There have been elements that the Council cannot control and whilst we must understand that the roles carried out are voluntary, the work on the accounts needs more time. I propose that the Community Centre get 2 months to finalise the accounts ready for publication either in the Saga or at an Extraordinary meeting. This is not ideal but this is the situation presented to us. This was proposed by Mr. D. Freeman, seconded by Mr. D. Greenwood and unanimously agreed.

**1. Minutes of the Meeting held on the 18<sup>th</sup> April 2023:** Copies of the Minutes had been circulated to all those attending the meeting and a few minutes was allowed for parishioners to read. The adoption of the Minutes was proposed by Mrs. B. Harrold, seconded by Mr. N. Creek and unanimously agreed.

**2. Report from the County Councillor:** Mr. E. Connolly thanked the Chairman, Clerk and the Parish Council for all they do and he will continue to always be available when requested. Mr. Connolly said that he sits on the Norfolk Foster Panel and foster careers are needed. There is a drive in parishes to get people to take up fostering, it takes up time but improves the lives of some young children. If anyone knows of a family that could help, please look up Fostering on the NCC website. The full County Councillor report is attached to these Minutes.

**3. Report from District Councillor:** Ms. H Crane read her report as follows :-

I am very pleased to bring you the annual report from Breckland Council as I continue to serve the villages of Saham Toney, Carbrooke, Bradenham, Scoulton and Ovington.

A few key achievements from your council are as follows:

We have funded £25,000 to plant 2,400 trees at Oxburgh Hall for a Woodland of Thanks to recognise sacrifices made during the Covid pandemic. The trees will also help with biodiversity and removing greenhouse gases from the atmosphere.

To increase our tree canopy cover, we've secured, and have started to distribute, DEFRA funding of £26,400 for the planting of community orchards within our District.

To help reduce CO2 emissions, we have continued work to roll out electric vehicle charging points in our District and approved the installation of solar panels at Dereham Leisure Centre, saving 47,000 KG of CO2 per year.

We have agreed a New Green Tariff reducing our CO2 emissions for electric to zero and secured £530k in decarbonisation grants to reduce carbon emissions in our leisure facilities.

Replaced 1673 streetlights with energy efficient LED bulbs.

We are committed to reduce environmental crime and increased the maximum penalties for fly-tipping up to £1,000. There have been over 160 actions taken against fly tipping. Support for community litter picks continue and 30 groups have been supported to do this.

To enable composting, we now have over 25,818 residents subscribing to brown bins. This is nearly 40% of our households benefiting from the service, and together composting nearly 10,000 tonnes of garden waste each year.

We continue to offer a flexible, reliable, and cost-effective business waste collection and disposal service for Breckland, we've exceeded our customer growth target by 15%, now having more than 305 customers and £220k gross income.

To help reinvigorate our local market towns, we've launched our Love Your Market Town scheme, awarding £5k grants to support ideas and initiatives which will generate footfall and activity into local town centres in Breckland.

A new Business Support Scheme was launched for small businesses and community organisations. The funds helps businesses diversify or grow, bring more customers to the area or to support social economic and local growth through innovation.

The Queen Mother's Garden in Dereham was revamped and is a beautiful place and was awarded the British Association of Landscape Industries Regeneration Scheme Award.

Working together with The Wayland Partnership with funding from Norfolk County Council we are forming plans to develop a Digital and Creative Media Centre in Watton.

We've completed the restoration of four of Swaffham's historic buildings with funding from the Heritage Action Zone

To provide individuals and families who are homeless with a safe and secure place to stay, we've purchased new temporary accommodation units within our District.

Acknowledging our exceptional care and dog warden services, we received the RSPCA Platinum Paw Prints award; the only Council in Norfolk to receive this accolade.

Ensuring residents have a say in how the land within Breckland should be used in the future, we've successfully adopted an update to the District's Local Plan and we continue to work on the new Local Plan.

We were nominated for a Norfolk Flourish Award, hosted by the Children and Young People's Strategic Alliance (CYP SA) acknowledging the impactful work in delivering mental health youth projects.

In recognition for supporting the health and well-being of residents, we won the Health and Social Care Award at the 2023 Local Government Chronicle Awards. The award recognised work by the council, NHS, charities and partners to tackle health inequalities in Breckland.

To support survivors of domestic abuse in the local community we have committed to continue to support and fund the Daisy Programme until 2026.

We continue to grow our Mindful District Programme by adding a third village and a new training partner and trained over 300 mental health champions.

Aimed at fostering well-being among young people in the district, we've begun to deliver a new youth mental health programme through the Breckland Mindful District Partnership.

Providing access to fresh and affordable food options for our community-the model of the food bus will change but will continue.

To continue to deliver services which support people who have experienced domestic abuse, declining mental health or financial hardship, we've invested £1.1M of council funding over the next 3 years.

To help local groups commemorate the upcoming 80th anniversary of D-Day, we've made a total of £25,000 available to celebrate and mark this historic event.

In addition to our annual contribution to Citizens Advice, we've strengthened our partnership by funding two Debt Advisors, further supporting their vital debt assistance services.

There were no questions.

**4. Report of the Parish Council:** Mr. J. Baldwin read his report.

During the year a new councillor – Alistair Wilson - was co-opted to the Council. Over the course of the year the Council has been busy.

- We have had the completion of the windows in the hall, bar a few tweaks.
- There are 3 new plastic benches located at the bottom of Hills Road, the front of the Wells -Cole and at the playing field along with a replacement backless bench in the children's play area.
- There are new dog signs for the playing field and the Wells Cole, which is ongoing on my part.
- There has been the creation of the emergency plan and the household leaflet to help aid parishioners in times of crisis. Thanks to Trevor Bunce and Kathy Avery for its creation.

The Neighbourhood Plan remains in place, monitored by Andrew Walmsley, Trevor Bunce and Chris Blow, who I thank for their continued effort. It is hard to say what the future of the Breckland local plan has for the village and the surrounding area, but we will continue to monitor.

The Bird Sanctuary has seen a group of volunteers clear pathways to allow better access around the area, and with thanks to the Fuel Trustees there has also been the creation of a new access for vehicles, allowing easier access for work to be carried out, and with future plans to reinstate the original pedestrian entrance and allow limited access for parishioners once the necessary work is complete. This will have no timestamp as the phrase goes "How long is a piece of string?" to which I often reply with "If you buy 2 metre..."

The grounds at the Community Centre have seen work carried out along the car park to tidy the area and there is

future work planned for the back of the area. Two main grass areas (bottom of Hills Road and Bell Lane/Richmond Road junction) are being maintained by the Parish Council due to Highways' cutbacks and to prevent these areas looking untidy for 3/4 of the year.

Overgrown paths have been cleared to make walking on them easier, all these jobs are continuous and will be for the next year, with more to be added on I'm sure as time goes on.

The last year has brought concerns about the issue of flooding to the top of village and we as a Council have been doing what we can with the LLFA and the Watton and Saham Flood Action Group. We have alerted parishioners with ditches to their responsibilities as riparian owners and continue to make note of photos and videos of every incident of flooding in the hope that problem areas can be sorted in the future. There is the issue of speeding where there is little we can do. We have invested in a new speed awareness sign but there is no easy solution to these problems but we as a council are doing our best. We had hoped our local MP Mr G. Freeman would have given more support.

This first year has been an incredible learning experience, I thank Councillor Creek, the previous chair, for all his work before I became Chairman and to the members of the Parish Council and the Clerk for giving me a chance to showcase my will to lead and learn.

I'd like to thank -

- the Wells Cole Committee for their continuous effort in providing a place to gather and socialize on a Wednesday and Friday.
- the Playing Field committee for providing rugby and cricket when it's in season and aiding the Orchard Goup with maintaining their area.
- To the Saga team and their deliverers, to all our village groups
- To our unsung litter pickers who keep the village clean
- Bowls, Coffee morning, Bridge, the WI, the church, the methodist chapel and various fitness groups
- And our local facilities – Broom Hall, Su-Bridge and the Old Bell pub (personal favourite). You all provide places for parishioners to go and meet people, whether paid or voluntary. Thank you

On a final note, I'd like to give my most utter gratitude and thanks to our Clerk Jill Glenn, who for 30 years has kept the council in order, seen numerous chairs, sent thousands of emails and letters, attended every meeting possible and to this day I cannot read her short hand writing. Jill has decided to hang up the pen in August-ish and pass over the reins to the next person, Jill did say she might volunteer her time once a month. I suggested first Monday of the month at 7:30pm.... but from the Parish Council and the village.

Thank you.

**5. Report on the Wells-Cole Trust Fund:** Mr. R. Harrold said just to reply to questions from parishioners, the Wells-Cole Trust Fund is completely separate from the Wells-Cole Community

Centre. Mr. Harrold outlined money spent during the year on replacement doors and windows for the Community Centre - £21,933 and parish seating £1392.60. Spire Solicitors had presented an invoice for £5874.80 but a reduction of £1392.60 had been given as the final invoice far exceeded the original quote. The money is paid to the Parish Council who settle the invoices and are then able to reclaim the VAT. The closing balance in the account ended 31<sup>st</sup> December 2023 was £35,608.68. There is still an outstanding amount of £47,686 to come from the transfer of an M&G investment. There is also a £10 share investment in Norwich City Football Club but the share certificate has been returned as it was issued in the individual names of the Trustees rather than the Trust Fund. The current balance in the Fund is £43,448.68.

As payments from the Management Fund were irregular, it was agreed with the Financial Adviser that regular payments of £2,500 a month would be paid into the Account which is a total yearly income of £30,000. The capital is invested in a medium to high-risk portfolio and is monitored by the Financial Adviser.

Any village organisation that meets the terms of the Trust is welcome to apply. The organisation must enhance recreational facilities in the parish to be eligible.

A parishioner asked if it was the intention of the Trust Fund to repay the money taken from the capital last year to pay for the Community Centre Car Park. Mr. Harrold replied that this had been an exception as if the grant from NCC for the car park had not been taken up by March 2023, we would have lost it. At the discretion of the Trustees some of this might be reinvested from the £47,686 when it is transferred to the Fund.

Mr. R. Baldwin thanked Mr. Harrold and the Trustees for their voluntary work with the Charity and for Mr. Neville Wells-Cole's foresight in leaving this legacy to Saham Toney.

**6. Report and Accounts of the Saham Toney Fuel Allotment and Perkins Charity:** Mrs. J. Glenn, the Clerk to the Trustees, presented the Accounts which were proposed by Mrs. B. Harrold, seconded by Mr. D. Greenwood and unanimously agreed. The number of parishioners claiming a grant had fallen to about 30 a year and if anyone knows anyone who is eligible, please ask them to claim. Last year there were 8 grants of £150 and 20 grants of £120 totalling £3600 paid out.

**7. Report on the Ella Roberts Memorial Trust:** Mrs. J. Glenn, Chair of the Trust, said that the Charity was set up 1993 by the Reverend Roberts in memory of his wife, Ella, with an initial deposit of £25,000. The money is now held in Barclays Bank after the Management Company of the fund went into liquidation in 2022. The Charity is open for applications from anyone living in the parish of Saham for grants towards any health costs that are not covered by the NHS e.g. dentist, optician and physio.

Mrs. B. Harrold thanked the Parish Council for all their work for the benefit of the parish.

Mr. J. Baldwin thanked everyone for attending the meeting which closed at 8.10 p.m.

The AGM of the Wells-Cole Community Centre and a Report on the Playing Field Committee were now held.