

SHELFANGER PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES of the Parish Council Meeting held on Thursday 7 March 2024 at 6.30 pm at Shelfanger Village Hall.

Councillors Present: Cllr S Groom (Chair), Cllr Marion Paines, Cllr M Hurst, Cllr Mick Paines, Cllr P Ross and Cllr P Chambers

In attendance: Elaine Tinsley (Clerk), County Cllr C Rowett and 1 members of the public

1. **Chairman's Welcome:** The Chair opened the meeting and welcomed everyone present, informing attendees that the meeting was being recorded as part of the Village Hall CCTV, although the Parish Council had been advised this was not an audio recording.
2. **To approve the Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on Monday 8 January 2024:**
The Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on 8 January previously circulated to all members, were proposed for approval by Cllr Mick Paines, seconded by Cllr Paul Chambers and unanimously agreed.
3. **To record declarations of interest and approve any requests for dispensations for disclosable pecuniary interests or other interests:** None were received
4. **To receive the reports from the County Councillor:**
County Cllr Rowett went through her report (attached). Setting the budgets for the year showed a huge shortfall from government funding and some emergency funding has been found by the Government. SG thanked County Cllr Rowett for her report.
5. **To hear from members of the public:**
 - A member of the public brought to the attention of the Parish Council their concerns with regard to the work being carried out on the Diocese land along Wash Lane (see Clerk report). The water was now being discharged into the ditch, which should drain through the small pipe into Frenze Beck, but concern was raised as to whether this would exacerbate the Wash Lane flooding? County Cllr Rowett suggested the clerk should contact the officer in charge of Riparian Rights to determine who should maintain the pipes. **Clerk to action.**
 - A discussion took place around the tree that had fallen on Wash Lane, which Highways had cut up to clear the road, but had left on the verge. Clerk reported photos had been sent to Highways to confirm their responsibility and was waiting a response. **Clerk to chase.**
 - SG commented on the height of the tree in the corner of the 4 acres, suggesting with the damp verge, this could cause undermining of the roots. **SG to discuss with Diocese when he meets them shortly.**
6. **To receive the Clerk's report: -**
The Clerk was asked where the portrait of King Charles would be located and it was agreed that the Village Hall would be a good location. **Clerk to action once portrait received.**

7. To receive Chairman's Report:

Cllr S Groom reported that the initial statement received from the Environment Agency concerning the recent flooding contained three viable solutions to the problem, but as always budget constraints would need to be considered before any action could be taken.

Cllr Groom also highlighted that the recent Saxon Drive development in the village had impacted on the flooding problems. Whilst the ditch immediately beside the development had been dug, the ditch it flowed into had not and was not able to cope with the flood waters and so overflowed. The barn development to the South was constantly overflowing. **Cllr Rowett to speak to Highways.**

8. To receive updates from individual Council members: It was reported that Highways had been in the village recently cleaning out the gulleys along the Diss road and also repairing the potholes around them.

9. Boyland Common Report - Cllr P Ross went through her report (attached), and when questioned confirmed the trees were to be cut back shortly to allow free access to the owl box. Cllr Ross handed to the Chair and Clerk, the balance sheet for the Shelfanger Charities, which should be displayed on the Noticeboard. **Clerk to action.**

10. Meetings in the Village Hall

The Clerk reported on her discussions with the Village Hall which allowed the Parish Council meetings to re-commence there. As per her report, even though the premises are licensed, this is permissible as long as the bar is not open and the charges are the more cost effective for the village. It was unanimously agreed that this was the right place for the meetings and should continue here.

11. Planning: There were no planning matters to report.

12. FINANCE REPORT

12.1. To approve payments (C):

PAY TYPE	PAYEE	DESCRIPTION	ACTUAL AMOUNT	VAT	PAYE
Online	Elaine Tinsley	Salary (March & April)	350.24	0.00	
Online	HMRC	Clerk's PAYE (March & April)	87.60	0.00	
Online	Shelfanger Church	2 x hire (04.12.23 & 08.01.24)	60.00	0.00	
		TOTAL £	497.84	0.00	

Payments proposed Cllr Marion Paines, seconded Cllr Mick Paines

13. Report on the Highways visit to Shelfanger: Cllr Marion Paynes reported on the visit to Shelfanger by Highway's Adam Mayo.

- He wants a report to be sent to him when the weedcatcher on Common Road is blocked, so although this is unlikely to help in the event of flooding, it will get it cleared when the water recedes. Cllr Rowett suggested the Parish Council may like to pay a contractor to ensure the weed catcher remains as clear as possible. This was rejected as the cost would be too onerous, plus it is the Highways responsibility. **Clerk to ensure Highways informed when weed catcher needs clearing.**

14. 2023/2024 Budget:

- Clerk reported that the budget for this year was coming in on plan which would result in a small surplus. Cllr Groom reported this needed to be set aside for our responsibilities, especially the clock, which although annually maintained, any repairs tended to be very costly.

15. Flooding: This had been discussed at length earlier in the meeting. It was confirmed that Adam Mayo had confirmed a definite no to the road closed signs being put up in the event of flooding. It was noted by Cllr Ross that the flooding at the top of Heywood Road was not receding as usual. **Clerk to report to Environment Agency.**

Cllr Groom highlighted again the problems at the new development at the north of the village and it was agreed that this should be highlighted to planning. **Clerk to action.**

County Cllr Rowett also suggested contacting the Riparian Officers at Norfolk County Council and Environment Agency. **Clerk to action.**

The member of the public asked what the Environment Agency Report suggested as a solution. Cllr Groom advised three options (holding water back, widening the Frenze Beck and householder works). **Clerk to request update from Environment Agency.**

16. Next meeting of the Parish Council is on Thursday 16 May 2024 at 6.30 pm at Shelfanger Village Hall.

Meeting closed at: 7.55 pm.

Clerk's Report – Meeting 7th March 2024

1. **Road Closed Signs** – Following the meeting in January, the Clerk contacted Highways regarding whether Road Closed signs could be erected in the event of flooding to stop vehicles getting stuck. Highways advised that due to the risk to personnel and health and safety, they would not erect signs in these circumstances and advised the Parish Council also not to do so.
2. **Footpath 9 & 10** – Communication was received from the local farmer. Once the land has dried out, these two footpaths will be re-instated. It was also requested dog owners kept their dogs on leads and mowing to cease (except on official footpaths) as the land is now under Countryside Stewardship Scheme and bird conservation.
3. **Old Chicken Shed Site** – Communication was received from D&S Developments regarding the naming of this site. Saxon Drive was suggested to the Parish Council and they agreed this was a good name, which was reported back to D&S Developments.
4. **Portrait of King Charles** – All Parish Councils have been offered a free portrait of King Charles, which has been ordered.
5. **Casual Vacancy** – Following Councillor Daniel Leeder stepping down, a casual vacancy was advertised. No applicants were received, so the Parish Council remains as current.
6. **Diocese** – The Diocese have been contacted with regard to two main areas:
 - The tree on the corner of the 4 acres on Wash Lane was reported by a member of the public as possibly unsafe – The Diocese are to re-evaluate, although at the last check all was well.
 - The ditch at the top of the same 4 acres has a blocked pipe which has caused garden flooding to some properties on Heywood Road. The Diocese confirmed a contractor had been assigned and the work would be carried out as soon as the field had dried sufficiently.
7. **Policies** – All the Parish Council policies (except the Flood Plan) had been checked and changed where appropriate. All were now signed and uploaded to the website. The Flood Plan was still waiting for one piece of information, and it was hoped this would be uploaded in the very near future.
8. **Overhanging Trees** – Communication was received from a member of the public regarding over hanging trees along Rectory Road. These have been cut back and the Diocese is expected to visit the village soon, when the others will be brought to their attention.
9. **Flooding** – various documents have been received from the Environment Agency, which have been uploaded to the website.
10. **Road Signs** – The road signs which have shown signs of wear were reported to Highways, but unfortunately, due to budget constraints, they are unable to do anything about them.

11. **Meetings at the Village Hall** – The Clerk contacted the Village Hall about re-commencing meetings there and is pleased to report that a time slot early on a Thursday evening has been secured. It was confirmed by NALC, that although it is licensed premises, the meetings can be held there as long as the bar is not open and this is the most cost-efficient premises. All Councillors were contacted and agreed.
12. **Bank Account as below:**

Shelfanger Parish Council Current Account

	Net	VAT	
Opening Balance			£3,078.70
Receipts			
UK Power Networks			£32.30
Total Receipts			£32.30
Payments			
Employer contribution (Dec)	£36.20	£0.00	£36.20
Clerk Wages (Nov & Dec)	£289.88	£0.00	£289.88
Employer contribution (Jan)	£43.80	£0.00	£43.80
Employer contribution (Feb)	£43.80	£0.00	£43.80
Clerk Wages (Jan & Feb)	£350.24	£0.00	£350.24
Clerk Expenses (Jun - Dec 23)	£59.59	£10.18	£69.77
Total Expenditure			£833.69
Bank Balance - 28.02.24			£2,277.31
Funds held for Friends of Boyland Common			£531.62

Parish Council Meeting Thursday 7th March 2024
Boyland Common Report

In our last report, it was mentioned that the South Norfolk and Broadland District Council Marketing and Communications Officer, Debbie Storey, had requested a meeting with members of the 'Friends of Boyland Common' in order to learn a little more about this historic site.

The meeting was arranged for the morning of Wednesday 31st January, and four representatives of 'The Friends' braved a particularly chilly morning to welcome Debbie to the Common.

The resulting report was published in the Diss Express dated Friday 9th February, along with a picture of the four representatives at the gate to the Common. We know that Boyland Common does attract quite a few visitors, but it is always good to spread the word about this local asset whenever we get the chance.

Work to cut back the twigs and branches obscuring the South East facing entrance to the Owl box will be undertaken very soon, and a section of the Willow growth opposite Poplar Farm will be re-coppiced in the near future.

At present, following the persistent rain during February, the Common is quite waterlogged in places, but the first signs of Spring are beginning to show. A quick check confirmed that the Dyer's Greenweed is already showing re-growth, and it is hoped that the Green-winged Orchids will once again show an increase in number in the late Spring. The ground has been too wet to allow the cutting of paths over the Common but hopefully Ivan Lord will be back with this invaluable service when conditions improve.

Having been contacted by Soundyard, a not-for-profit audio production company, we have put up a poster advertising 'Chris Skinner's Countryside Podcast' on the notice board in the bus shelter. Hopefully people will tune in and learn a little more about the ways in which farming and wildlife can coexist harmoniously. A copy of the most recent Boyland Common Report for the Parish Council is also posted on that noticeboard.

Finally, we are hoping that, once again, Stella Taylor will be available to lead our annual Wildflower walk in late Spring or early Summer. These events have been very popular in the past, and Stella is able to draw from information gleaned over many years of studying our Common, enabling her to know where to look for the plants of particular interest.

Pam Ross
Chairperson of 'The Friends of Boyland Common'

Council budget

The main issue in February at County Council was setting the budget for 2024-25. There is a huge shortfall in the central grant from government (it's been cutting the grant to local authorities year on year, in real terms, ever since the Conservatives came to power). Initially the Council received a very disappointing settlement, worse even than their pessimistic expectation, putting at risk the very possibility of delivering even a basic level of statutory services required from a county council. The settlement wasn't enough to cover inflation, the increase in minimum wage, nor the extra burdens of a rural and aging population, nor the widespread deprivation caused by long-term illness after covid and by poverty, especially child poverty in many of our most deprived towns.

The problem was then mildly alleviated by additional emergency funding injected by the government, once it became apparent that many councils were likely to go bankrupt. The extra funding was ringfenced for social care, especially children's services (which are especially strained by the increasing child poverty and deprivation in working families who can't cover the cost of food and heat at home). There was also a boost to the rural services grant (which is helpful for Norfolk) but again the funding won't actually cover the extra costs of storm damage, flooding, coastal erosion, damage to the waterways from pollution from roads, fields and sewage. It's annoying that the government seems to think tax cuts for the wealthy are helpful, when everyone stands to suffer from the damaged roads, underfunded education systems, rising crime and ill health. In my view, we need better distribution of the country's wealth, and better funding of public services, not tax cuts for the rich.

At the budget meeting of the Council, opposition groups presented a variety of proposals to improve the outlook and to ensure that the most vulnerable people aren't the ones to lose out most from the cuts. The Green group proposed some amendments to address poverty, hunger and malnutrition among children in Norfolk, to restore the flexi bus provision for rural villages, and to recoup some money by raising revenue by imposing a small charge on companies that provide free parking for their workers in Norwich

Sadly the proposals were turned down, with, to my mind, some very disappointing misunderstandings and lack of vision from those who responded. More below on the MIG and the railways.

The MIG

The Minimum Income Guarantee is a way of subsidising the cost of care, including residential care, for severely disabled people who need to pay for care out of their allowance. It ensures that however much their care costs, they will have some income left to spend on basic necessities such as clothing, shoes, toiletries, outings and so on. The council is required to ensure that people have a certain level of income left, so even if their care costs more to provide, the council will cover the remaining cost so as to leave the person with a little income left over, and families will not be out of pocket if they have a disabled person living with them.

The Council are currently consulting on their plan to save money by reduce the MIG in Norfolk, which would mean that disabled people have to pay more for their residential or home care. This will have a considerable impact on the quality of life and personal dignity of young and working age disabled people given that we are facing considerable inflation in costs for clothing and other necessities. The consultation will open on 19th February.

I, together with my Green colleagues proposed an amendments to the budget for the Council to produce a budget that would keep the MIG at the level it has been at in recent years, and not to make these cuts at a time of such hardship in many families. Sadly the amendment was voted down by the Conservative group.

A new station for South Norfolk?

In our budget proposal we also suggested making capital purchases of two plots of land with a view to having the resources to reopen a rail station near Long Stratton, and, in due course, one near Cringleford. The land on which the old Fornsett station used to lie is currently available for purchase and much of it is effectively a brownfield site since it was formerly the station yard, sidings and other facilities at the junction with the old line that ran to Wymondham. You may have seen the report on my proposal getting this station reopened in the newspaper. I'm keen that communities that have a railway running nearby should have easy local access to speedy travel to Norwich and London. The plan was to hold the land as part of the County Farms portfolio, until such time as the plans for restoring the station were complete, and then recoup income from it by leasing it for the station and associated car park and businesses etc., while potentially retaining some (or selling it) as farm land. We are also concerned that huge amounts of council funding are being put at risk in plans for new roads that don't have adequate funding, while the condition of our ordinary county roads and small lanes is so dire that people's lives are at risk and the damage to verges and drainage are becoming irreversible. We need better priorities that favour access to good rail travel for everyone, rather than destructive road building that encourages more road traffic, more congestion and more carbon emissions. Sadly, this project was also rubbished by the Conservative councillors, with some particularly

impressive misunderstandings and misconceptions. Nevertheless there are many campaign groups who are keen to rebuild a good railway system, and to increase the ambitions of the county towards making that happen properly.

Road Safety Schemes:

Having had disappointing results from the road safety scheme, and no luck so far with my motion to review the speed management strategy, I'm now working with Adam to try to find other solutions for some villages. I have to spend my highways budget this Spring, and will then have next year's budget after the new financial year starts. I'm planning to get a feasibility study for a safe crossing point for the children in Bunwell, on the Turnpike, where we failed to get a lower speed limit. I'm also working on two places where we have problems with lorries taking unsuitable lanes and getting stuck, causing damage etc. So we're looking at new signage and potentially some bollards or other physical controls. I'm also in discussion with other villages about additional signs, paint etc for bends and junctions that are problematic or where people walk and ride horses.

This month, I'll have another go at putting my motion to Council for making it easier for villages to get safer speed limits where they want them. This involves revising the Norfolk Speed Management Strategy to prioritise safe speeds in rural areas, for proactively reducing accidents before they happen, not after.

Wet weather and floods

The wet weather and flooding problems have continued to afflict the county, not just in West Depwade but everywhere, with devastating effects on the resources we have to help everyone who has had problems. The officers have been working flat out, and have spend more than a year's budget on assistance and problem solving, so there has been a lot of activity to try to secure additional funding to help with the costs. I apologise to the many people who have been told that their problem isn't bad enough to merit intervention, but unfortunately it's been necessary to focus on situations where there is danger to life and flooding of properties, and that's meant many places where roads and gardens are getting blocked or inundated, because there simply isn't enough capacity to deal with it all. Do let me know if there are really serious problems you haven't been able to solve, and report road flooding or blocked roads to the County flood reporting site. [Report a flood - Norfolk County Council](#).

Anglian Water also needs to be held to account if there are sewage spills during wet weather. If this is a problem, I'm happy to attend public meetings if you invite Anglian Water to come and speak to us and explain what they are going to do to solve it.

Buses and active travel

I am pursuing some enquiries on behalf of some villages concerning the provision, or lack of it, of Flexibus and Borderhopper services, and the unsatisfactory timing of bus journeys (which are sometimes useless for the purposes one might travel for).

County Council campaigns this month:

Health -Pharmacy First

The government has introduced a new scheme to enable simple illnesses to be dealt with at the chemist's instead of at the doctor's. Unfortunately it coincides with record numbers of local chemists closing down, so it seems unlikely that it will help with anything. There seems to be no plan to save the local chemists.

The end of disposable vapes

The government is outlawing disposable vapes. This is good news not just for the sake of preventing the epidemic of vaping among children but also for the environment.

Dentistry

The lack of access to NHS dentistry is one of the main scandals of our time. The government has produced what it calls a "dental recovery plan". Disappointingly, it fails to address the root cause of the problem, which is the dental contract. The plan is mostly just sticking plaster, like everything in this country at the moment.

Contact me

You can contact me on Catherine.rowett.cllr@norfolk.gov.uk for Council-related business, and I look forward to helping with a range of issues that people have already brought to my attention. I'm always delighted to attend award ceremonies, events, centenaries, lectures, exhibitions, conferences, debates, litter picking parties, campaign events and protests, so don't hesitate to add me to your mailing lists! I also have a facebook page which includes updates on what I am working on, posts about events and opportunities relevant to residents, and a place where you can comment and leave your views on things I want to ask you about. The link is [here](#).

Catherine Rowett

4th March 2024