

Methwold Parish Council Meeting
Thursday 14th November 2024 at 7.30pm
21 Room, St George's Hall Complex, Methwold

Present

Councillors: Cllr French (Chairman), Cllr Grassick, Cllr Riches, Cllr O'Ware, Cllr Minkler

Cllr. Ryves

Cllr. Storey

9 members of the public

Clerk

1. The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting, a pleasure and delight to see so many of you coming in to join the democratic process at its lowest level.

2. Members accepted apologies for absence from Cllr Rodriguez & Cllr. Horton.

3. Declarations of Interest (In accordance with S31 of the Localism Act 2011) and requests for dispensations – None.

4. Cllr Riches proposed to accept the minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 10th October 2024 as a true and accurate record of the meeting. Cllr Grassick seconded the motion, APPROVED – Cllr Thomas abstained as she was not present at this meeting.

5. Matters arising from the Minutes not included on the agenda but for information only – None.

6. Open Forum for Public Participation

Cllr Storey – As tasked at a previous meeting, NCC have clarified that the bus stop and area of yellow lines outside the Old Chapel are a police issue if there is any obstruction to the highway.

Hoarding around the Old Chapel – a licence is required for this – the licence may have run out if so, it is up to the owner to apply for another licence. Legal section of NCC is aware and will take steps accordingly. Chairman does not find this an acceptable answer from Highways.

If applied for can the parish council object to the renewing of the licence? No.

No response has been received by the parish council regarding the email sent to ask whether there is an extant hoarding licence, and could the parish council have its reference number, NCC will not answer these questions, can Cllr Storey ask these questions on behalf of the parish council?

NCC – there will be a Budget meeting in February 2025, NCC have to make £44.7m deficit, they have found £33.5m of savings. Residents have been asked for suggestions and a consultation is running until 16th December 2024, currently NCC are looking at raising council tax, streetlight usage, review of housing related support services. Email haveyoursay@norfolk.gov.uk or call 0344 800 8020.

<https://www.norfolk.gov.uk/article/38760/Setting-next-years-budget>

Winter fuel situation - over this coming winter the elderly and others may need some help, NCC have committed £1m to keeping people warm this winter, to support some of the most vulnerable this winter. NCC propose £1.15m allocated to the Household Support Fund. NCC will make sure payments make their way quickly to those who need it the most working with Age UK, Citizens Advice Bureau, and other partners. As a close community we will do our best to support our neighbours.

In Methwold there will be a Beat the Bills meeting on Tuesday December 10th between 10am and 12 noon in the Fenton Room St George's Hall Methwold where people can find out more information.

<https://www.norfolk.gov.uk/article/63031/Norfolk-County-Council-commits-over-1m-to-keep-people-warm-this-winter#:~:text=Norfolk%20County%20Council%20is%20looking,means%20tested%20from%20this%20winter>

Mr Robert Pratt is the contact for NCC regarding bus stops improvements.

£1m tree project 50% discount on tree packs, also limited number of Norfolk oak trees available.

A134 crossroads, 2 accidents in the past 2 weeks, there have been a number of accidents and fatalities at this spot over the years, Highways safety are looking at the junction again, there are suggestions put forward, but if they were to talk to local people, they may get some ideas as to how to solve the problem, peoples lives are more important than the cost and Cllr Storey stated he will do his best to make sure highways do their best to make this junction safer not just for road users but for local residents.

Leader of NCC - Kay Mason Billing at Octobers full council meeting, there is planning for solar panel farms covering 8k acres and another one at Gissing 5k acres, there are concerns about the amount of agricultural land being used for solar panels. It is stated that the land is grade 3 or 4 land, this is some of the most productive land there is, the only thing lacking is moisture and with farms having reservoirs, irrigation and bore holes it becomes productive land for growing a lot of vegetables, potatoes etc.

Grade 1 & 2 land is used for growing cereals.

Most concerned about all the solar panel and pylon applications coming in, disappointing that the power produced in Norfolk is not for Norfolk.

Norfolk schools, lathe and plaster ceilings issue – all surveyed 44 no immediate action, small follow up action and 15 schools need immediate work done, pupils won't be disturbed too much.

NCC last 2-3 days national news plight of local family farms hit with the inheritance tax, there is to be a mass demonstration in London, seemingly is the smaller family farms who are the backbone of agriculture, large institutions probably won't be affected as much, we wouldn't want to see smaller family farms disappear from the Norfolk countryside.

Chairman asked - Where have Norfolk CC found savings of £33m, Cllr Storey does not have this information, but the details will be in the budget.

Resident asked - NHS managers are being bought to task about what they do, who makes sure what NCC councillors are doing is right? Financial Officers look carefully on how and what money is spent on.

Cllr Ryves – The parish council has the opportunity to participate on the environment agency consultation on the Cranswick application, was originally going to close last Tuesday but the deadline has been extended to 19th November. This is for a permit as opposed to planning. Information has been provided to the parish council.

Finances – impact on increase of national insurance and minimum wage, this will impact on the parish council and include services and increases which need to be considered when planning the budget/Precept.

Beat the Bills meeting.

Chairman – consultation on the EA permit is very much more technical than planning, bearing in mind the Borough Council will spend many £'s engaging experts to look at it, not convinced we as the pc have the technical expertise to comment effectively. Individual parish councillors can make comment if they wish to. All paperwork sent from Cllr Ryves has been circulated to the members.

Cllr Ryves understands that there is concern when hosting the public meeting when the latest Cranswick planning application is received, there may be disruption, the Borough Council are aware of this. The parish council promised to hold a public meeting but there is no point holding this if representatives from Cranswick are not there.

Cllr Ryves has spoken to the local MP Terry Jermy and is hopeful that if the parish council wishes he will attend this meeting, he has been appointed patron of the Cranswick Objection Group. If the parish council do hold the meeting it is an open debate.

As a parish council, we have no agenda or taking one side or the other we are totally independent. If it is a forum where the public can talk to a representative from Cranswick it might be helpful but the only topic for discussion will be based around planning issues and absolutely nothing else.

The amended application is with the Borough Council who are looking at it, when they have got to the point where they ask for the parish councils comments they will let us know.

Would the Borough Council take note of the previous comments submitted or do people have to re submit their comments? As it is a re-submission it is worth doing this again rather than assume that comments made some months ago have been considered.

Any chance the footpath between Methwold & Brookville can be cut back, this has been chased this week and has been reported on www.fixmystreet Highways have confirmed that this is already planned in.

Methwold to Methwold Hythe Trod – can this be cut back? This has been done recently but the overgrown verges are encroaching on the actual hard surface of the Trod, pedestrians are unable to walk along here, and must walk in the road.

Dog fouling Eldens Lane – there has been a visit to residents in Eldens Lane from the Borough Council who have taken statements and spoken to those who are thought to be responsible.

Can't find the draft minutes online for October. This will be checked by the Clerk and rectified if needs be.

Suggestion months ago, to purchase a bench to dedicate to Colin Neville, would the bench on Fair Hill which is opposite the bench already dedicated to Brian Merrick be a better place to have a plaque, Mr Neville and Mr Merrick were very good friends and this may be more appropriate. If the parish really want a memorial to Mr Neville, resident believes the Neville pavilion on the recreation ground would be the most appropriate memorial for a gentleman who put a great deal into the village over many years.

Reading Augusts minutes, I noted numbers quoted for the SAMs signs which didn't make sense to me, please can I have clarification on this? Is some of the speeding at night?

Community Speedwatch is not part of the parish council, perhaps should be discussed in the open forum or open up the parish council meeting during discussions on SAMs signs and Community Speedwatch, Chairman responded - although separate they are symbiotic and work together. Cllr Minker always open to comments from public. Some of the requests made to Highways at the last meeting with them have already been implemented.

Cllr Minkler didn't have the figures with him, but some speeding is at night, can get now get speeding per hour over a 24-hour period. There is a facebook group site for the Community Speedwatch where statistics are posted, or Cllr Minkler can bring them to the next meeting.

Speed sign outside Cemetery – Highways have taken away to be repaired but not returned yet.

Is there an update on the churchyard wall? Waiting for the report to be sent from the Diocese architect.

Not heard anything that the parish has done to mark the passing of the queen, did anything ever get done? Suggest an oak tree. It was suggested that trees were planted in each of the villages in the parish but it was difficult to identify suitable sites. To Open Spaces.

If you put any more seats in do they have to be so high? I find them too tall. – To Open Spaces.

The old and new Cemetery is separated by a pathway, there is an old bench tucked in here which is falling apart, resident reported they have moved it to one side, can this be removed. To Open Spaces.

7. Reports: Update and Report from the Open Spaces Working Party to consider the recommendations made at the Open Spaces Working Group on 24th October 2024 to include:

7.1 Streetlight Electricity Quote & 7.2 Streetlight Maintenance Quote. A full report has been circulated to all members before the meeting. Streetlights are on an unmetered supply, cannot meter every streetlight.

Clerk went through the streetlight electricity contract, the streetlight maintenance contract and a project to change all streetlights to LED's.

Cllr Minkler proposed that electricity supply contract with current supplier is continued, Quote B is accepted for streetlight maintenance and Quote B accepted to change the streetlights to LEDs as soon as possible. Cllr Riches seconded the motion – APPROVED with the caveat to change to LEDs as soon as they can.

7.3 High Street - Bus Stop – to Open Spaces

7.4 Play Equipment Update – waiting for more quotes, including a rebound board. – to Open Spaces

Churchyard wall, the Architect has carried out the survey, the parish council are waiting for the report to arrive.

Finance

8.1 Accounts Update – Bank Reconciliation

Accounts Update – Bank Reconciliation

Current Account total on 30th October 2024 £39,843.50

Tracker Account total on 30th October 2024 £30,295.97

Saver Account (CIL & S 106) total on 30th October 2024 £63,931.32

Emergency Reserve Fund on 30th October 2024 £25,672.60

Total £159,743.39

8.2 Income & Invoice list – The Clerk went through payments, the play equipment report invoice has not been received but is included for payment.

Late invoices to be added to the list of payments –

Tree Survey £897.00 incl. VAT

Cllr. O'Ware proposed to accept invoices for payment, seconded by Cllr Riches – APPROVED

9. Planning

9.1 To receive planning decisions.

24/01462/F 64B High Street Methwold THETFORD Norfolk IP26 4NX - Single storey extension and garage

Application Permitted 16 October 2024 Delegated Decision

24/01455/F Lancaster Park 33 Stoke Road Methwold Thetford Norfolk IP26 4PE - Open fronted shed for gathering sheep, handling storage of feed stuff and associated equipment. (RETROSPECTIVE) Application Permitted 9 October 2024 Delegated Decision

9.2 To receive planning applications.

24/01844/F Installation of 2 x Steam Drying Installation Units at British Sugar PLC Wissington Sugar Factory College Road Wissington Wereham KINGS LYNN – SUPPORT.

24/01781/F Single Storey Extension to dwelling at Blackberry Barn 49H Main Road Brookville THETFORD Norfolk IP26 4RB – SUPPORT.

9.3 To consider planning applications received after the agenda was published – None.

10. Items received for the agenda:

10.1SAMS2 & Community Speedwatch Report – Cllr Minkler showed photos of three sites in the parish.

The SAM sign has been in 3 locations since the last meeting. Brookville, Methwold at the Crossroads and Methwold Hythe Road.

Although speeding remains a high percentage, in comparison to when the sign was at those locations previously, the percentage of speeders has dropped by 1 %.

Some 30 mph roundels have been painted near the school, we are now just waiting for the rest of the parish to be done and will write to Highways to chase up.

10.2 Eldens Lane dog fouling – letters received from residents have been forwarded to the Community Safety Manager at the Borough Council who has visited and taken statements. It is believed that the situation has improved but will be monitored.

10.3 Car Parking – this is a joint initiative with the Trust, local resident is thought to be parking several vehicles in the car park for significant lengths of time, the proposal is to shut and padlock the gate on occasions, this could mean more vehicles parking on the road. There have also been incidents where vehicles are doing doughnuts in the car park, if allowed to happen may cause damage to the surface of the car park which will have a cost to repair.

The car parks will be monitored to see who is using them. To Open Spaces and Trust

11. Correspondence –

Final revised documents have been added to the planning portal for Cranswick, planning references are 22/00866/FM and 22/00860/FM. Environmental Permit consultation period for permit, EPR/XP3632QE/V003

Dog fouling – Borough Council requires anyone wishing to report this needs to have the following information Name and address of person if known, or description of the person or dog: Male/Female, Ethnicity, Age, Height, Hair colour, Glasses if worn, clothing, breed of dog, colour of coat, colour/style of collar and evidence of why they believe they could be responsible.

Beat your Bills – Tuesday 10th December in the Fenton Room St George's Hall Methwold from 10am to 12pm advice on accessing benefits, grants, discounts and more to keep your income up and outgoings down.

Voluntary Norfolk – are you interesting in volunteering? www.voluntarynorfolk.org.uk
volunteering@voluntarynorfolk.org.uk or call 01603 614474

From 1st November all residents using Crimplesham recycling site will have to go online and book a slot, or by telephone if you do not have the technology. What is the cost of clearing up from Highways and the forest will be because of the waste dumped by those frustrated at being prevented from using a facility they pay for and until now, being able to use albeit for limited times but at their own convenience?

12. Chairman's Report – none this month.

13. Further reports and items for the next meeting agenda – 12th December 2024

Council tax increases have been spoken about - can the Police Commissioners position be justified?

Why can't NCC/BC stop the land being used for solar and pylons? Can't industrial sites, new builds etc be used instead of agricultural land? Food security should come before energy.

Cllr Rodwell has resigned, the Chairman thanked Cllr. Rodwell for all she has done during her time on the parish council. This takes the number of parish council vacancies up to 5.

14. To pass a resolution (under the Public Admission to Meetings Act 1960 to exclude members of the public and press for the following confidential items:

14.1 To note the Local Government services pay agreement 2024 and agree the backdated pay owed to the Clerk from April 2024 – Noted and agreed.

Meeting ended: 21.15