

Methwold Parish Council Meeting
Thursday 9th January 2025 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 Thomas, Cllr Rodriguez, Cllr B Horton

7 members of the public

Clerk

1. The Chairman welcomed all to the meeting and wished everyone a Happy New Year.
2. Members accepted apology for absence from Cllr. Senior.
3. Declarations of Interest (In accordance with S31 of the Localism Act 2011) and requests for dispensations - None.
4. Cllr Riches proposed to accept and approve the minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 12th December 2024, Cllr. O'Ware seconded the motion – Approved – Cllr. Horton abstained as not present at this meeting.
5. Matters arising from the Minutes not included on the agenda but for information only – Has there been a response to the Freedom of Information request regarding the scaffolding at the Old Chapel?
6. Open Forum for Public Participation
An opportunity to hear from members of the public, Borough, and County Councillor.
The Christmas lights were not on in front of the village hall over Christmas? A councillor who I on the Events Group responded - They were on for a number of nights, but the tree had to be set up inside due to the weather, the lights kept shorting out. The Trust will be asked to investigate the electrics.
What is happening Cock Corner –. Is this coming from the new solar farm at Northwold? This is an upgrade to the Quorn factory. Northwold Road is going to be closed from 20th January until 2nd March except for pedestrian access for works. Is this supplied from the new solar farm at Northwold?
How much extra in Precept is the parish getting for the additional houses that have been built in the parish?
Concern over retrospective planning application coming up later in the agenda.
Could the funds made available from the cancellation of the toilets to undertake a proper traffic survey in the parish, it would be a very good idea if the parish council could establish a base line traffic survey within the parish particularly on the B1112. This is being done through SAMs 2, but this does not differentiate between cars HGV's and motorbikes, proposed change in the set-up of councils – Unitary Authority - Hereford has changed the responsibility for highway maintenance to parish councils for them to decide what maintenance work is required for each road, concerns if the planning Cranswick application goes ahead there will be a very significant increase to vehicles and damage to highways, how will this be repaired, could end up with a lot of badly maintained roads because there are not the funds. Baseline HGV survey is required. Chairman suggested Open Spaces pick this up.
How does the parish council in Hereford identify work that needs to be done to the Highways, could the resident find out how Hereford do this? These are jobs which need qualified people to undertake. Concern the parish council has additional responsibilities thrust upon it without the necessary funds and expertise to undertake them.
Why suddenly are there are no cars parked in the bus stop? Residents are still parking there but not in the bus stop.
St Georges Hall car park gate is being locked randomly and cars reported to the Borough Council if they are left in there for longer periods of time.
Reported that when the car park gate is locked it is difficult to access the bottle bank and post a letter.
If there was an increase to the traffic causing damage to the roads could this be proved to be due to the Cranswick traffic?

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Vehicles coming from Old Feltwell Road are going the wrong way past the cross onto Crown Street, there will be an accident before too long, nothing to tell people to keep left and go round the cross when coming out of this junction – Ask Highways what can be done – Open Spaces.

Church View Road – not adopted/not a public highway – a piece of metal fencing has been removed from Storeys Meadow – understood some form of walkway would be installed here, the tarmac path has not been completed. Farmer will need access to the field. Ongoing construction of roadway to edge of boundary.

Will the footpath be reinstated through the kissing gate on to new road rather than running down the bank and through a piece of removed fence onto the recreation ground? Clerk will check with Developer.

25 years ago, 3 millennium trees were set in Methwold Methwold Hythe and Brookville, they were going to have plaques to say why they were planted, can the parish council instal the plaques? Location of trees need to be identified. To Open Spaces

Cllr. Ryves wished everyone a Happy New Year. Borough Council are looking at the proposed reorganisation Devolution - good thing to push decision making out to local areas.

Local Government re organisation, we already have a 2-tier system BC and NCC deemed to be bad and proposed to replace with a new 2 tier system - strategic authority – Norfolk and Suffolk combining and Unitary Authorities with a population of approx. 500,000, implication is that West Norfolk, Breckland and North Norfolk will come together in one Unitary Authority, this will save a lot of money, with less people employed. Huge backwards step, smallest voting unit will be 8,000-10,000 people, its difficult to see how individuals within communities will be able to contact the equivalent of Borough Councillors in the future. Also, there may not be County Councillors but Unitary Councillors.

These changes may affect parish councils, at present there are approx. 600 parish councils, one proposal is to put these together to have hubs of parish councils with fewer Clerks, should all be aware that changes are coming not necessarily for the better. You can contact your MP to have this explained, all being pushed through without any real consultation, no one has any idea what is going to happen.

If they do lump all parish councils together, might only have a couple of parish councillors to represent this community within a larger super parish council, might be no parish councillors representing the community. Huge changes are coming, probably in the next 2 years, no one really knows.

Cranswick planning application - many people fully appreciate the strong statement in objection to the planning application made by this parish council to the planning department, appreciate the attendance of the Chair at the Feltwell parish council meeting where 6 councillors objected and 1 did not.

Agree with resident that planning for the airfield will likely be rejected by the Planning Committee at Borough Council and Cranswick will take it to the state, hope for the best but plan for the worse, therefore a clear record of the HGV traffic will be a very good idea. Looking at going to committee end of March.

Independents like me will not have much of a chance in the new Council arrangement, if seat are with 8-10k more likely to be from the 2 major parties will have most of the seats, there may or may not be a mayoral solution no one really knows and there is minimal consultation, worthwhile writing to the MP asking what is going on. Certain things that do matter and money may or may not be saved but the cost is that we are a much less democratic society individuals don't have the opportunities to engage with the electorate.

Chairman stated he is concerned at parish level there is still a lot of work to do, and no one gets paid and the bigger the area this will become a full-time job for whoever is running the mega parish council.

Planning meeting on 12th December – the comments made by the parish council are on the Borough Council planning portal or a copy can be obtained from the Clerk.

7. Finance

7.1 Accounts Update – Bank Reconciliation

Current Account total on 30th December 2024	£26,759.11
Tracker Account total on 30th December 2024	£30,409.27
Saver Account (CIL & S 106) total on 30th December 2024	£61,914.20
Emergency Reserve Fund on 30th December 2024	£25,768.61
Total	£144,851.19

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Interest received for quarter = £448.39

7.2 For Approval of payments – Income & Invoice List

First payment to be made to new streetlight maintenance contractor.

Churchyard wall report

CIL funds have been transferred to the Trust account to pay for the new double door.

Cllr. Horton proposed approval of payments, Cllr Thomas seconded the motion – Approved.

7.3 Update from Finance meeting held on Tuesday 7th January 2025

Several costs have risen due to central government – NI & minimum wage will increase in April. There are projects which need to be undertaken, these have been paired back to essential works.

For the Precept there is no limit to the % increase that can be requested.

Projects – to undertake all projects that the members what to do would mean an increase to the Precept of 130% or an additional £13.76 per month for Band D houses, this is not thought to be affordable therefore projects have been cut back to essential work.

The Pound roof must be repaired, current quote to replace the roof is £9k, scaffolding will be required and there is a substation which is causing concerns. We are looking to see if there are other options.

Churchyard wall, £46,300.00 has been quoted to repair the wall. The wall was bought under the parish council remit in the early 1900's. The report that has been sent has work being undertaken in 12 month, we do not have the funds to do all of the work in a year, a request has been made to complete the work in 3 years, to make it more manageable. Some funds have already been allocated towards the repairs to the wall.

Playground equipment maintenance £1500 to be earmarked.

Streetlights to be changed to LEDs - this will save money in time; this is an unmetered supply based on the number of lights and type. Need to invest £5k to change all the lights to save on the electricity bill.

Projects have been prioritised, to ensure there is the money to do these,

If the Precept were to be increased by 130% this would be an additional £13.76 per month per Band D house. The recommendation from the finance committee is to increase the precept by 30%, this is £3.18 per month per Band D house for 11 months or £34.93 a year, there are 630.3 Band D houses in the Parish.

This increase is less than a cup of coffee from a well-known coffee chain which is £3.80.

Churchyard wall – of the £46,300 quoted for repairs, the proposed Precept covers a proportion of this cost not all the cost.

The Diocese will be asked to contribute towards the costs to repair the wall, but it is not expected that they will be willing.

A resident asked - what contribution have the new houses made to the Precept? There have been 167 new Band D houses since 2017/18 (figures supplied by the Borough Council). The Precept is worked out on what finances are required to be able to service the parish's needs, if the Precept had stayed the same since 2017/18 then each house would pay less but because costs increase, and projects are undertaken the council look at projected costs and work out how much is required to meet that cost.

Costs for services are increasing and these have been estimated in the Budget.

There is a small working group of councillors who are looking at grants to see what can be applied for, there are some really short time scales to obtain quotes and information together to be able to apply for grants.

7.4 Approval of Draft Budget 2025/26 – Finance committee have been through the Budget for 2025/26 and recommend that this is accepted by members – Cllr Grassick proposed to accept 2025/26 Budget, Cllr O'Ware seconded the motion – Approved.

7.5 Cllr Riches proposed a 30% increase in the Precept, Cllr. Grassick seconded the motion – Approved.

8. Planning

8.1 To receive planning decisions:

24/01844/F British Sugar PLC Wissington Sugar Factory College Road Wissington Wereham KINGS LYNN Norfolk PE33 9QG - Installation of 2 x Steam Drying Installation Units. Application Permitted December 2024 Delegated Decision

24/01781/F Blackberry Barn 49H Main Road Brookville THETFORD Norfolk IP26 4RB - Single Storey Extension to dwelling Application Permitted 13 December 2024 Delegated Decision

8.2 To receive planning applications:

24/02190/F Variation of Conditions 1 and 4 of Planning Permission 24/00302/F: Replacement of existing bungalow with chalet dwelling and detached garage/annexe Land Between 12 And 16 The Avenue Brookville Norfolk- Retrospective planning application - Methwold Parish Council have discussed this retrospective planning application and strongly OBJECT. It was patently obvious from the outset of the build that there was no intention of complying with the initial planning permission that was granted, this has been brought to the planning departments attention by the parish council previously. The entire building project has been based upon the granting of this retrospective planning application and not the planning application that you as the planning authority had granted at the outset.

Cllr Ryves has been asked to 'call this in' which we feel as a parish council is the way to resolve this matter.

8.3 To consider planning applications received after the agenda was published:

24/02251/F Installation of solar panel canopies within the school car parks for the purposes of electric vehicle charging. at Icen Academy Stoke Road Methwold Thetford Norfolk IP26 4PE - fully SUPPORT this application as part of a green initiative.

9. Items received for the agenda:

9.1 SAMS2 Report – Two locations for the SAM2 sign since the last meeting:

Brookville from Stoke Ferry - 11th Dec to 31st Dec 40.2% over limit. Comparison to 7th - 18th November 40.6% over limit.

Methwold Road from The Hythe - 1st Jan to 9th Jan 32% over limit. Comparison to 1st November to 11th November 56% over limit 10 vehicle have been over 60mph going past the sign.

Speed watch session today Hythe Road Methwold 8 vehicles is 45 mins caught.

A resident has asked whether the speed can be reduced past the school and on High Street/Crown Street to 20mph, Highways will be asked if the SAMs2 unit can be placed here - take to Open Spaces.

20mph limit outside the school has been asked for many times, this would need a Traffic Order, Highways have quoted £15k to do this.

9.2 Update on Churchyard wall – The report on the condition of the wall has been received, this has been broken down in to 30 sections, the work has been identified as B – to be completed in 12 months, 1 item to remove ivy is C.

The amount guessed to carry out the repairs is £46,300.00 this is far higher than previously anticipated.

It does not include the cost to remove and re-site the gravestones or the GPR - ground x-ray which is required to identify any remains in the area, this is estimated to be £5,000 a day.

The work will need to be carried out in conjunction with the Conservation Officer, who will be contacted by the Clerk.

The report is stage 1 in the process, a meeting will be held with the Churchwarden and the Open Spaces group to plan the stages.

10. Correspondence

Traffic Report Order - Northwold Road opposite the Cemetery to Northwold closed to all except pedestrians from January 20th to March 2nd 2025

Police – emerging crimes across Norfolk & Suffolk to cemetery buildings – be pro active

Blackberry Lane Methwold – gate removed – this was completed by the land owner following a complaint, will chase to level the resultant surface.

Email – can anything be done about the icy road at the junction of Old Feltwell Road and Crown Street? Can there be a salt box on the junction of Old Feltwell Road and Crown Street? To Open Spaces.

11. Chairman's Report - None

12. Further reports and items for the next meeting agenda – 13th February 2025

Clerk to ask Planning Department to clarify - what is the criteria for a planning application for a delegated decision and to call in a planning application?

The 30mph signpost in Methwold Hythe is still broken, when will this be replaced? This and the Hemplands sign have been reported to Highways and we are told they are on the list to be done.

There have been complaints that the gate has been locked so the bottle bank is inaccessible if in a vehicle – To the Trust.

13. 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: None

Meeting ended: 21.10.

DRAFT