
Welney Parish Council

Minutes of the meeting of Welney Annual Parish Assembly, Tuesday 6th March 2024, 7.15pm at the William Marshall Centre

Committee Members: Cllr Goodger (Chair), Cllr Spears (Vice Chair), Cllr Gardiner, Cllr Lowry, Cllr Bombata, Cllr Gaylor.

Those Present: Cllr Goodger, Cllr Spears, Cllr Lowry, Cllr Bombata, Cllr Gaylor, BCllr Rose, CCllr Dawson, Clerk M Hilton.

Apologies: Cllr Gardiner, BCllr Spikings

Public: three

MINUTES

- 1. Welcome and to consider apologies:** apologies were accepted.
- 2. Declarations of Interest by Councillors:** none were given
- 3. Agree the Minutes of the meeting held on 7th March 2023:** these were agreed and signed by the Chair.

4. To receive a report from the Chairman of the Parish Council: Cllr Goodger

I firstly need to thank our previous Chair Dot Harvey who had steered the Council through the post covid years till recently when she retired due to family commitments. I was only recently elected as chair and want to thank my fellow Councillors for their support and the various individual commitments they all have, Cllr Gardiner and Bombata with the Sam2 cameras and speedwatch, Cllr Lowry with the defibrillators and testing of the hall equipment, Cllr Spears with his commitment to many items in particular looking after the playing field and hall, the Christmas tree and his many voluntary roles that many know little of and of course our clerk for keeping our affairs and us in order. Our Borough Councillors Spikings and Rose are always ready to help and advise our parish whenever the need arises and of course CCllr Dawson who takes a keen interest in all matters Welney especially in the issues with the wash road and signage. Floodwatch continues to keep the Parish and area updated on the flooded road situation and under the guidance of the Parish Council it now has permission to open and close the bridge barriers and signage when alerts are given. There has been and will be just next week another meeting with Norfolk highways, the Environmental Agency, Floodwatch and Parish Council, chaired by CCllr Dawson to discuss further improvements to signage, media, etc., when the Wash Road is flooded.

The Council is contributing £2000 of annual precept to the playing field charity to help maintain the field and hall to the level that parishioners expect as well as applying for funding from the Borough and Marshalls Charity to help in the tarmacking of the Hurn Drove to the hall, this will help with pedestrian, mobility scooters, cycles, and vehicles to access the hall better.

Speeding through the village continues to be a problem by some vehicles and the speedwatch and SAM2 team are collating data that can be presented to the police and council to try and get help to address this issue.

The footpath at Taymor place has recently been resurfaced having been on the radar for some time.

We remind parishioners that there is now a clothing bank at the village hall car park to recycle those unwanted items.

The Council continues to report potholes and highway issues when they are aware of them. A new defibrillator is located at the Centre and your council will be looking again at possible sites away from the village that could support those that are more rural.

After the local elections in early 2023 the council was not up to its full complement of members but recently welcomed Sarah Gaylor to its ranks and I am expecting two other villagers to join very shortly to bring us up to a full council.

Clerk to the Council; Melanie Hilton (CiLCA Qualified).

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5. To receive a report from our Borough Councillors:

- Borough Councillor Rose said there is nothing much to report from the Borough Council. He does now sit on the panel for Health and Safety across the whole of West Norfolk. BCllr Rose mentioned that a group of local champions to help victims of crime has been set up. The Borough Council has approved its budget recently. He also mentioned there is currently a grant available for insulation.

6. To receive a report from our County Councillor Chris Dawson: Dear Residents,

Progress has been frustratingly slow in delivering and supporting the projects desired for the village and surrounding area, however, we are moving forwards! Thanks to the patience and endeavor of our Parish Councillors, and both Dot & Ken through the last year, we are close to securing the resurfacing of Hurn Drove, from highway to car parking.

I have been delighted to support Anthony and Laura Gleave in the tea and cake coffee mornings at St Mary's, and am grateful to all the team for a warm welcome and delicious treats. Not only were funds secured to support in the short-term, but I will shortly be holding a meeting at the church to determine how we may both put the initiative on a secure financial footing in order to meet ambitions, but also to consider how we may reach those wishing to attend who may struggle with transport and/or mobility issues.

Regarding the Wash Road closures; it was long-established that there we could not currently expect to secure the degree of funding required to ensure that the road remain open continuously – although I still have a plan on the table for this, I picked up a 'Plan B', which I had been running with in tandem. With significant and valued assistance from Mr. Ken Goodger, and his Floodwatch team, we have arrived at a point whereby discussions will be held in Welney of 11th March to advance this.

Principally my ambition is to deliver 21st Century communications, telemetry and signage, in order that all be better informed of the closures, and that the road be closed AND opened as efficiently and effectively as possible. Whilst this does nothing to alleviate the cost and major inconvenience of any closure to local people and business, it could well reduce the numbers/durations of closures due to poor operation, from which there will be obvious benefit. It should also deliver benefit for those from outside of the area looking to travel via this route.

As you will appreciate this requires us working closely with the Environmental Agency, although Norfolk County Council will be principally funders for the proposals. In addition, I am looking to advance conversations with Cambridgeshire County Council to join in this initiative – clearly significant upgrade on the Norfolk side requires mirroring on the CCC side – without supporting infrastructure at the Littleport Roundabout, say, we will still be falling short.

I would like to take the opportunity to acknowledge all the community events which have been organised through the year, some of which it has been my great pleasure to attend, despite most of them requiring me to purchase raffle tickets (I never win), and to thank all of those involved for the hard work which goes into delivering so much for a small village. I am certain all appreciate.

As I said in opening, progress is frustratingly slow on some matters, and really does feel like a challenge at times; I am therefore most appreciative of the support and encouragement provided to me by the community, which certainly inspires me to drive on – so thank you to all for this.

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7. To receive a report from the William Marshall Centre: read by Cllr Spears.

The Trustees of the village hall have ensured that we are fully compliant with all services involved in the safe running of the hall.

We have several contracted suppliers whose work is monitored during the year, and we ensure that the hall receives value for money. The cost of running the hall has increased drastically over the year and we are now reviewing the hall hire rates to try and reduce our annual shortfall and we received a grant from the Parish Council to help mitigate this.

We now have four groups using the hall on a weekly basis the latest being the Welney Social Club organised by Peter Gardiner & Lanre Bombata, and the first session attracted 20 participants so I believe this will now be a fortnightly activity, this is in addition to ad-hoc bookings for meetings etc.

We would like to thank the Marshall Charity for their ongoing support, and this year we received another grant in order that the playing field fencing could be completed, this now ensures that users of the field have a safe and secure environment.

The Event Management Team have worked tirelessly to host events for the village, last year the village enjoyed a Night of Music with Danstar, the Summer Gala which attracted over four hundred visitors which is outstanding for our little village, and they finished off the year with the popular German Christmas Market.

In addition, they hosted two free events for the village children, the first celebrated the Coronation of King Charles, and secondly a Halloween Spooky Disco.

The team will be purchasing an outdoor table tennis table soon which will be located at the side of the building on a concrete pad kindly installed by John Langley and the new housing developers on Main Street.

Volunteers for assisting with the event will be gratefully received.

The team this year are already planning more events with another music night on 30th March, a Medium Night in June and then the Gala in August and a Christmas Fair.

The Trustees in conjunction with the Parish Council have plans in place to finally sort the Hurn Drove entrance to the hall, we have received 3 – quotes. and subsequently we have applied for grants from Parish Partnership and Cil, this will be in addition to funds already offered via our County Councillor and a favorable response in principle from the Marshalls Charity to help meet the shortfall, I am sure you will agree this is long overdue.

8. Open Forum – public opportunity for questions to Councillors or issues about matters in the Parish:

- A parishioner explained difficulties in being able to walk from her house at Sandgate Terrace near Sandgate Corner as there is no path either way. She had a few years ago contacted Highways and reported this but as at that time there were no serious injuries, they would not take the issue any further. Since this time there has been two fatalities although one of these was due to illness rather than the road. After a discussion on the issue Cllr Dawson and Cllr Goodger agreed to visit the site on Monday 13th March and explore solutions to the situation.

9. To Close: the meeting closed at 19.39pm

Signed by the Chairman Date

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