

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING HELD at 6.30pm on
WEDNESDAY 1st MAY 2024 IN THE VILLAGE HALL

Attendance: Mr Harris (Chairman), Mr Snelling, Mr Edwards, Mrs Jeffreys, Ms Johnson, Dr Harris, Mr Roberson, Mrs Briscoe, Dr Bacon, Mrs Plowman, Cllr Bayes (District Councillor), Mrs Cunningham (Clerk) and seven members of the public.

The meeting is being recorded for the purpose of producing the minutes.

Meeting started: 6.35pm

1. **To receive apologies for absences** – Apologies accepted and received from Mr Jordan.
2. **To approve the minutes as accurate from the Annual Parish Meeting 2023** - No objections raised from the PC or public. All Parish Councillors had seen and approved the Minutes. Chairman duly signed.
3. **Parish Council Chairman's Report inc. Financial Report** – Mr Harris reported; Following on from Ray Read's Chairmanship the Parish Council sees its primary task to be to listen to parishioners concerns and where possible to help them in presenting them to the relevant authorities principally Norfolk County Council and North Norfolk District Council. In this we have worked closely with our District and County Councillors, Matthew Taylor, Kevin Bayes and Richard Price respectively and we are most grateful for their help and steadfast support. At the beginning of the year we welcomed Polly Plowman, Scott Snelling and Ian Roberson as new Parish Councillors and during the year the whole Parish Council received professional training to help us do our job better.
During the year we have corresponded on a good number of issues with the relevant authorities including the future of Milestones mental facility, the development of the derelict part of the Mushroom site for housing, the site south of Lea Road, the gypsy site in Long Lane and other planning issues involving neighbours.
Although the Parish Council has consistently made the case for parishioners and the village forcefully and well, the Council has little real power other than as an influencer. Real authority on planning issues lies with North Norfolk planning and we have had concerns during the year about this department's efficiency particularly in answering correspondence and taking enforcement action. We shall continue to try to hold them to account.
The Parish Council does not just deal with planning issues it has also tackled practical issues like helping the school to deal with its flooding problems. When both the Church and North Norfolk declined to ensure that all the residents of Canon Wake Court had received their £200 compensation for the name change to Oak Tree Court a parish councillor stepped in and obtained the compensation for the around 25% who had not received it. The Council also focuses on highways and traffic issues and has twice during the year written to local farmers about the mess, damage to verges and potholes caused by their equipment. Unfortunately, these days farming equipment has got larger and heavier and the consequences are evident in the narrow lanes around Catfield. Dogs' messes and what to do about them have also taken up a lot of Parish Council time. We have also taken up the issue of light pollution from the Flogas site.
The Parish Council has been instrumental in obtaining 50% funding for a new bus shelter near the Village Hall so that schoolchildren will not have to stand in the rain as they do at present. Next year we are planning to spend some money on improving the playground and providing new notice boards as the present ones have come to the end of their life. We were grateful for the anonymous gift of a new bench at the Village Hall. Finally, we hope that the new allotments near Hickling Broad will prove a success.
Finance. The Parish Council donated £500 toward the Village Hall jubilee picnic celebrations and purchased souvenir coins for the children of Swallowtail School to celebrate the King's coronation. Income for year to 31st March 2024 was £16051.13. The expenditure was £15478.29, giving a balance carried forward of £17807.08. The precept was set at £13,400.

Finally, I would like to recognise and thank our Parish Clerk, Susie Cunningham, for her sterling work. She really has made a big difference!
No questions raised.

4. Catfield United Charities Report – Dr Harris reported; It feels like it has been a busy year for the CUC. We have entered an agreement with the Parish Council for some of the CUC land to be used for allotments and are hoping that this will be a valued resource for the community.

In anticipation of Laurie Bucks retirement and the management of the boatyard falling under the CUC the number of trustees was increased by two members and the term increased to four years to help with stability of trustees and management of the trust's assets.

We have been lucky enough to have a number of new applications to join the trust with two opportunities for the Parish Council to appoint trustees. The quality of applications was extremely high and it is gratifying to see such able and respected members of the community coming forward to help support our local community. It was with sadness that two of our trustees Keith Bacon and Steve Buckley who had given their time and expertise for many years leave us, but we thank them for all the years of service they have given the CUC.

As you all know we have made changes on eligibility criteria to receive money from the CUC whether that is related to grants or the annual distribution. The aim has been to make sure that the most needy within our community benefit. This includes all adults who have lived in Catfield for at least three years and find themselves in need.

We have given out grants to help people at times of financial need and supported households at Christmas time all of whom had to reapply and confirm that they were in financial need to try and ensure it is those who need it who are receiving CUC money. We spoke to all recipients to ensure that they know that the annual distribution needs to be applied for each year if residents are in financial need as circumstances change from year to year.

The future holds exciting opportunities with the boatyard coming under CUC management. Mr Cousens and Mrs Jeffrey's have been very active sorting out all the running details and arranging surveys which show the lack of planning permission for some mooring areas and a shed erected there. Contact has been made to the appropriate bodies to make sure this is rectified as soon as possible. We are anticipating a substantial investment to bring the boatyard into good condition but are hopeful, that despite these costs, the extra money this brings the CUC will further help our community.

Other changes include a new website with links for the Parish Council, information about the trust, trustees, land owned by trust as well as how to apply for grants and much more has been set up and it looks great - many thanks Michael. A central telephone number that calls around all trustees has been set up alongside a email to help reduce confusion when trustees change.

In summary lots of changes.

The Trustees are; Neil Jordan, Nicky Jeffreys, Ray Read, Jennifer Harris, Dina Croft, Rev Gary Noyes
To contact the Trust, email enquiries@catfieldunitedcharities.uk, Telephone 01692 660250 or google Catfield United Charities

A parishioner questioned why there are only five trustees on the Charities Commission website. Dr Harris and Mrs Jeffreys said they have evidence which shows the difficulties they have had in resolving this with the Commission, so they are fully aware of this and are trying to resolve.

Dr Bacon asked if they knew about the oil pollution on Fenside, as tape and signs have been erected. Mrs Jeffreys confirmed the trustees did not do this, but they were trying to find out more.

A parishioner, who was a former trustee, said on leaving the Charity, he left a comprehensive list of jobs that needed actioning, these being to remove his name from the bank, drainage board and insurance company, however, his name is still on the bank account. Dr Harris said they have had communication with the bank and because of difficulties in changing the details, as experienced by the Parish Council, they are now opening a new bank account with the intention of closing the existing account. Mr Harris summarised that the parishioner's comments be noted as the Charity is trying to resolve the issue.

5. Village Hall Report – An interim report supplied by Barry Mobbs, the Village Hall Management Committee Chairman was provided which Mrs Jeffreys read; The hall has continued to see regular use

throughout the year by various groups. In addition, the hall has been hired by other groups for fund raising events such as bingo and dancing. The income from hall hire has exceeded expenditure so far this year and funds remain at a healthy level.

In March, this year the Village Hall Management Committee organised their first fund raising event for some time. This was in the form of a murder mystery play: which was very well received by an audience of more than sixty. There have since been requests for us to stage more events. During the last year we have had better contact with the Parish Council as we have had one of their members on our committee. As asked by the PC we have put the idea of enlarging the village hall to one side and have started to make Improvements to the existing building instead.

The work done so far includes:

Repairing the leaking roof, repairing the leaking downpipes, replacing the flooring in the kitchen, replacing the flooring in the entrance area and toilets, cleaning and re-surfacing the cork flooring in the hall area, the addition of an external timer-controlled light.

An electrical safety test has been carried out and a small amount of remedial work was done by the contractor to achieve certification.

We still have the ongoing problem of a lack of storage space which means that hirers equipment is being stored in the main hall. This reduces the hall's capacity, which reduces the number people able to attend the most popular events.

A parishioner said he looked at the Village Hall Management Committee on the Charities Commission website and questioned the number of trustees, as this shows just two and the contact details appear incorrect, and Mr Harris added the accounts are also three years out of date. Mrs Jeffreys said she is a representative of the PC to help communication between the VHMC and PC and she is not a trustee but will bring this to their attention at the next VHMC meeting.

6. **Magazine Report** – Steve Beckley reported; Another year has passed with us producing a village magazine and delivering it free of charge to every household within the parish. As in past years I would like to record my thanks to Heather and Judith for doing the bulk of the work in producing the magazine, our regular contributors, our proofreaders and to the army of distributors who deliver the magazine for us every month. My thanks also go to the advertisers who support us by advertising in the magazine. It is the income from advertising that allows us to continue to publish the magazine cost free to our parishioners. We have seen a drop in the number of advertisers over the past couple of years and while we are still able to fund the costs of production, if the trend continues, we will have to rethink our production runs. At the moment there are just three of us who produce the magazine and we would welcome anybody who would like to join us. We meet once a month to agree the format of the next issue and then proofread online before it goes to the printer.

A parishioner asked why contributions should be just 400 words when the farmer is allowed more. Mr Beckley explained the 400 words are just a guide, as this equates to around a page but anyone could contribute more, if they wished.

7. **All Saints Church Report** – As Churchwarden, Dr Keith Bacon reported; The Annual Parochial Church Meeting will take place on Wednesday 8th May at 6.45pm, when officers will be appointed.

Currently the churchwardens are Keith Bacon and Judith Gardiner, while John Ware is secretary and fabric officer.

The church continues to be part of the Waterside Benefice along with Ludham and Potter Heigham; Hickling has left this benefice and is now part of the Coastal benefice.

The Reverend Gary Noyes is our part-time priest-in-charge, and he has agreed to extend his time with us.

Catfield and Potter Heigham continue to alternate joint services. Our congregation has grown and usually we have over 20 at services. This church, like most others, struggles to raise the necessary finances to pay our outgoings, notably our 'parish share' of over £7000 per year which we have to pay to the diocese.

Judith Gardiner has successfully completed her training to become a Licenced Lay Minister (LLM) and can now take church services here and elsewhere (except Holy Communion).

The churchyard continues to be maintained by three volunteers, John Ware, Keith Bacon and Alan Nicholson, with the ride-on mower financed by the parish council. More volunteers will be very welcome. When asked, Dr Bacon explained Catfield's congregation is usually around 20, plus around 5 from Potter Heigham. Dr Harris asked how long the Reverend's term has been extended for, with which Dr Bacon advised it is indefinite as long as everyone is happy with the situation.

8. **Environmental Group Report** – As Secretary for CEG, Edwina Simpson reported; This report covers a second successful year of activity for our group, which had 23 paid-up members at the end of March 2023.

A highlight of the year was the installation, at long last, of a bench and two planters in place at the corner of New Road and The Street in July and August last year. Some interim planting of surplus stock from members' gardens provided a splash of colour in the autumn, subsequently replaced by spring bulbs including purple and yellow tulips. We now await delivery of some insect-friendly wildflower plug-plants for the wider site and summer flowers for the planters.

Also in July and August, we spent several mornings at the playing field maintaining the hedge that we had planted there the previous winter. At the time of writing, every single hedge plant was still alive, and we look forward to seeing it grow and become a haven for wildlife.

We continued to plant daffodil bulbs to brighten up the village, with three planting sessions in September and October adding to the extending display this spring. To complement our bulb-planting we have approached businesses and site owners on Sutton Road to see if we can work together to make the northern entrance to our village more attractive for visitors and customers alike.

We held two litter picks, one in September last year and the second in March this year and aim to continue this pattern in the coming years. In November, we also collaborated with our District Councillors on their community clean-up.

We organised four footpath walks in the year, both within and outside the parish, with the aim of reporting any problems with access and signage to the County Council, resulting in the promise of one replacement signpost. In early June, we visited Common Road Smee nature reserve, which is managed for Martham Parish Council by a group of volunteers.

Work to identify natural species at the Sandholes site has been undertaken throughout the seasons by one dedicated member experienced in recording. We have started planning an interpretation board with information on the history and wildlife of the site.

The group ran a very successful programme of fundraising events, including seven bingo evenings in the village hall between April 2023 and March 2024, and a second plant sale in May last year. We also set up and ran a village fete on one of the hottest days of the year, 25th June, and a day and evening Christmas event on 2nd December.

We have been reviewing our aims and activities recently and hope to be able to broaden our remit and collaborate more with other local groups for the wider benefit of the village.

We had an enormous amount of support from individual residents and other local groups and would like to thank everyone who has helped us during the year, in particular individual councillors who are not members of the group themselves.

A parishioner said how fantastically run the group is and how active they are.

9. **School Report** – Ms Johnson advised she did not have a formal report from the school but said the important thing for them was that they are part of the St Benet's Academy, and the transition was a smooth process. They have been to visit the school and they were delighted with the children at all three schools. They found the children polite. Looking forward, they hope to use more of the facilities, and they hope children from Hickling and Sutton will attend the school in future. Ms Johnson thanked the Environmental Group for helping around the playground and small garden area. When asked how many children attend, Ms Johnson did not have the exact numbers but said Catfield had increased from 57 to around 70-75, but this could be more as there is also the pre-school, as they now take in 2-year-olds, which they hope to do at Sutton. Sutton is low and Hickling remains the same.

10. **Any other reports** – None raised.

Meeting finished at 7.25 pm.

Chairman Signature: _____

Date: _____

Chairman Name: _____