

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING HELD at 6.30pm on
WEDNESDAY 29th MAY 2025 IN THE VILLAGE HALL

Attendance: Mr Harris (Chairman), Mr Edwards, Mr Snelling, Dr Harris, Mrs Briscoe, Mr Roberson, Dr Bacon, Mrs Plowman, Ms Johnson, Mrs Cunningham (Clerk), District Cllr Taylor and five 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 and Cllr Price.
2. **To approve the minutes as accurate from the Annual Parish Meeting 2024** - No objections raised from the PC or public. Mrs Briscoe proposed approval of the Minutes. Mr Snelling seconded. All in favour and the Chairman duly signed.
3. **Parish Council Chairman's Report inc. Financial Report** – Mr Harris reported; The Parish Council meets in the Village Hall on the last Wednesday of each month at 7pm and Catfield residents are most welcome to attend. Following a longstanding practice the public can speak freely at our meetings and in that way contribute to our discussion. We have had 11 members throughout the year until Nicky Jefferys resigned in March. I would like to take this opportunity to thank her for the great contribution she has made during her time as a parish councillor.
The PC sees its primary function to be to listen to parishioners' concerns and where possible to help them in presenting them to the relevant authorities principally North Norfolk District Council and Norfolk County Council. To this end the PC has been proactive in recent years particularly in writing the appropriate letters and on occasion presenting the village's case in person in Cromer. We also work closely with our District and County Councillors, Matthew Taylor, Kevin Bayes and Richard Price respectively. Realistically the PC has little real power but there have been a number of recent successes which demonstrate what its influence can do. The real power in planning lies with North Norfolk District Council and the PC has been concerned for some time that it does not always get a prompt and professional response from NNDC Planning. A particular concern is that NNDC's enforcement of planning breaches seems slow and ineffective. This is relevant because all too often, as anyone reading our minutes will see, much of the PC's time is taken up in considering retrospective planning applications when the applicant has simply gone ahead without approval. The long-running gypsy site in Long Lane is a good example. Recently we have conducted a survey of the other NNDC's parish councils and it is clear that we are far from the only PC with our concerns.
But local government in East Anglia is changing and the national government seems set on creating a much larger unitary council, or possibly 3 unitary councils, for Norfolk thereby combining the functions of NNDC with Norfolk County Council and introducing a mayor for a combined Norfolk and Suffolk. It seems to be a "done deal" but apparently after the event, we have been consulted for our views. We have emphasised our particular concern about the future role of our district councillors, who we believe now do an excellent job, and how in future they will be able to represent local issues effectively in a much bigger entity. We have not supported the appointment of a mayor.
The national government has created another current issue by rejecting NNDC's Local Plan in its push for more housing. While recognising Catfield as a Small Growth village it is seeking to increase the village's housing growth target until 2036 by 9% from 27 to 39 new houses. In April we gave detailed evidence to the Inspector at the hearings in Cromer that Catfield should be recognised as an "environmentally constrained small growth village" because of its critical role on top of the small water catchment supporting Catfield and Sutton Fens and Hickling Broad which are recognised as among the very best wetland sites in Britain. We also argued that any calculation of housing in Catfield should include the 21 units in Milestones for which there is planning permission but have yet to be built. It remains to be seen how effective our arguments have been with the Inspector.

On a more practical level we have renewed the parish noticeboard and work has started on the new bus shelter at the Village Hall. This year we are planning a substantial upgrading of the playground. A PC subcommittee has been liaising closely with the Village Hall Committee who are beginning a new maintenance programme by renewing the Village Hall roof. For clarity the Village Hall is owned by the PC but operated by a separate, Village Hall committee.

Other preoccupations during the year have been the perils of nighttime deer culling and constant concern about potholes, mud on the roads and other traffic issues.

Finance. The PC was very grateful to CAT for its contribution toward the cost of the new Parish notice board, which now enables both groups to have space to post important information, in addition to the website. The precept increase to £24000 was carefully considered but also essential at this time, as I have already mentioned, the PC are in the process of planning an overdue upgrade to the playground and a new bus shelter and VH disabled parking bay are currently being installed.

For the years finances, the income to 31st March 2025 was £29,771.04. The expenditure was £15,462.89, giving a balance carried forward of £32,115.23.

Finally, I would like to recognise and thank the great work of our Parish Clerk. Anyone who wants to know what we have been doing only has to read her minutes which summarise accurately what the PC does. We would be lost without her.

No questions were raised.

4. **Catfield United Charities Report** – Dr Harris reported; The last year has been a busy one for Catfield United Charities. With the boatyard now being managed in-house to maximise income for the charity a lot of our focus has been on making significant improvements to it. These changes have now addressed significant concerns regarding the safety of some of the moorings which had deteriorated over a number of years. The work done involved contractors as well as lots of work by our trustees whom I would like to thank. Neil, Ray, Michael and Nicky are regularly visiting the boatyard cutting grass, replacing and repairing gates, clearing debris and even cleaning toilets and they have even roped me in for a few odd jobs! The boatyard looks a million dollars and we have received many compliments and thanks regarding the work done. We have even developed a newsletter to mooring holders to keep them up to date about developments and enhance communication.

The website for the charity is kept live and up to date, thank you Michael. Over the last year we have worked on a number of policies as per charity commission guidance. Our key documents including the constitution and policies available for people to access on the website to enhance transparency.

The annual accounts were submitted in a timely manner to the charity commission.

We have had a successful and much appreciated annual distribution as well as several grants to Catfield residents to help those in financial need.

We continue to let out a patch of land to enable the Parish Council to provide allotments for Catfield residents. The CUC provided a skip and Neil kindly donated his time to help clear waste from the allotment site.

The fishing club continues to run and membership has significantly increased providing a provision for local people which hopefully improves the wellbeing of local residents.

And finally, and most importantly over the last year we have had the privilege of having Mick Briscoe join our ranks. Although he was only with us for a short period, he had significant inputs on legal issues as well policies and advice on contracts that we have. He was also very active with practical tasks and always willing to get stuck in. He was a helpful, kind and giving trustee with a keen sense of humour. It was a great sadness to us when he died suddenly.

When asked if there was a significant number of non-elderly apply for the annual distribution, Dr Harris said although they do not specifically confirm the applicants ages, there was a significant number apply and they encourage anyone in need to contact them.

5. **Village Hall Report** – Mrs Briscoe read a report supplied by Barry Mobbs, VHMC Chairman, which read; During the last year we have maintained a closer relationship with the Parish Council thanks to the presence of a councillor on our committee. This has been further enhanced by the attendance of some of the PC village hall sub-committee members.

The Village Hall has continued to be used for regular meetings by various groups although we have lost one user who had a weekly booking. As partial compensation we have an additional monthly booking for a musical group.

We have decided that the priority for the hall is to replace the roof. This means that the existing fragile asbestos cement sheets must be removed and replaced by insulated composite panel sheets. We have obtained a budget quotation for this work which indicates that we will need to spend a large proportion of our funds to carry it out. However, if the price when we receive a formal quotation is similar, we will proceed with the roof replacement. The removal of the existing roof and its replacement should be carried out by one contractor in one operation to minimise the hall shutdown period necessary.

When the roof has been replaced, we will evaluate the remaining funds with a view to replacing some of the windows and both doors.

We have ordered some smaller tables which will be more suitable for those users that currently have difficulty with the large tables.

The lack of storage space is an ongoing issue which results in the hall's capacity being reduced for some events because user's equipment such as exercise bicycles and tennis tables must be stored in it.

The management committee have raised funds by running a Murder Mystery play and intend to do the same this year.

I thank the committee members and PC representatives for their help and support, together with Rachel our treasurer and Elaine who manages the hall bookings.

6. **Magazine Report** – Mr Harris read a report supplied by Steve Beckley, Chairman of Catfield News, who was unable to attend. It read;

My thanks go to the magazine team and all the other volunteers, distributors and contributors who make the magazine work.

This year The Catfield News, in its current format, has been published for over 21 years.

The magazine costs in the region of £4000 to produce each year and the money for this comes from the advertisers who place adverts with us.

The amount of advertisers that we have has been steadily declining since the Covid pandemic and has now reached the level that we do not receive enough income to cover the costs of producing the magazine.

We have enough funds to continue this year but next year we will have to consider the future of the magazine if we have not increased our income.

There are some options open to us including producing the magazine less often, reducing the size of the magazine or ceasing publication of the magazine.

As the magazine is regarded as an important part of the Village, the PC were concerned to hear of potential cuts or the potential loss of the magazine. Following a discussion, Mr Harris summarised that the PC would like to see the magazine continue and the PC will add to their agenda to discuss further. **ACTION: Clerk to add to PC agenda.**

7. **All Saints Church Report** - As Churchwarden, Dr Keith Bacon reported; The annual parish church meeting took place on 14th May. Judith Gardiner and Keith Bacon were re-elected to be churchwardens and John Ware was re-elected as secretary and fabric officer. The Rev Gary Noyes continues as our part-time priest in charge of the Waterside benefice of Catfield, Ludham and Potter Heigham. Catfield and Potter Heigham have joint services alternating between the two churches.

We struggle to raise enough money to keep going with our biggest expenses being £7500 as our 'parish share' which goes to the running of the Norwich diocese, with insurance being another large expense.

The churchyard continues to be maintained by volunteers John Ware, Keith Bacon and Alan Nicholson; we would be pleased to see other volunteers join us. The Parish Council contributes to the cost of the ride-on mower. We get favourable comments in the visitors' book, people like the church and churchyard and find them welcoming. Many people in our regular congregation of about twenty are not residents of Catfield, which is a sign of a welcoming church, but we would love to see more Catfield parishioners attending.

8. **Catfield Action Team Report** - As Secretary for CAT, Edwina Simpson reported; It has been another busy and successful year, and we have continued to work towards the aims set out in our constitution;

To improve and maintain the environment and community in the village.

To increase and maintain biodiversity in the natural environment.

To engage people of all ages in Catfield in taking care of and improving their surroundings.

April 2024 started with a group workshop and from that we discovered two things. One, we wanted to work more collaboratively with other groups in the village and two that we needed to change our name to reflect the direction the group was heading in, i.e. to be more community-based, with an emphasis on our natural surroundings where possible. So, from May 2024, Catfield Environmental Group became Catfield Action Team.

Our first collaborative event was with David Hyams and Richard Skipper, organisers of the Catfield Garage Sale, with CAT organising the Plant Sale in the village hall and providing refreshments.

May also saw CAT make a donation to Catfield Parish Council towards a new noticeboard at the junction of New Road/The Street. We carried out many planting and maintenance sessions on that site over the year, including mowing and general tidying, and in September 2024 we planted wildflowers and spring bulbs including crocus, camassia and alliums to create prolonged colour and interest.

Between May and August, we held four maintenance sessions on the playing field, managing the hedge by cutting back encroaching bracken, brambles and grass to help the hedge breathe and thrive.

Early June saw a small group visit Catfield Fen at the kind invitation of Tim and Geli Harris, a very enjoyable and informative follow-up to an evening slide presentation the previous year.

During the year, we have tried to offer a mix of new events that the whole Catfield Community can take part in. In June we scheduled a visit to How Hill for an evening picnic, in July set up an evening trail starting and finishing at The Crown, and in October we invited Friends of Horsey Seals to come and talk about the work they do to protect the grey sea colony. We also organised footpath and Ancient Tree walks

The monthly Bingo Nights – nine held in the past year - have continued to prove popular with many regular faces returning for a blend of fun, banter and prizes and the events make a big contribution to our fundraising.

Keeping our village today has been one of our aims from the outset and last year we ran three litter picks, including one in November that included children from the Catfield Primary's School Council. Ten children helped pick up litter around the village hall.

CAT has also run work parties at the school helping to maintain their garden. We worked on the garden last April and July, bringing the garden and pond into shape. In mid-November, we replaced one of the surrounds to a raised bed. In the Easter holidays this year we dug over the beds, added compost and planted lots of new perennials. We also topped up and tidied the shingle pathways. The children have been helping to water their new plants and we have just (May 2025) bought them a hose to make it easier. We talked to Catfield United Charities about a community orchard project at Catfield Staithe but decided not to go ahead due to difficult location and access and the demands on a very small pool of volunteers. In the autumn we planted a further 6,000 daffodil bulbs in four village locations and ran a well-attended quiz night. We set out to cut a path along the Rond to link both of Catfield's western staithes but will need paid help to make this a reality.

We have continued to monitor Sandholes with a hands-off approach, but some felling was carried out in the autumn followed by debris clearance and sycamore sapling pulling in February and March of this year. In December we paid Chris Cook of Green Gardens to plant a screening hedge to fill in a gap along Trend's perimeter fence on Sutton Road. A new event this year, Christmas wreath-making, proved so popular that we had to run two sessions. Catfield Does Christmas followed, this time an evening event only in collaboration with All Saints Church, with food, a quiz, live music and dance.

January saw another new event, a Burns Night Quiz, complete with haggis, tatties and neaps and a wee dram.

We held an open day with free afternoon tea in early March inviting Catfield residents and CAT members to hear about what CAT had been doing and what we had planned for the future. Four new members were welcomed into the group as a result and we plan to run a similar event in July.

Our thanks to all members and helpers for their hard work and to everyone who has supported our events and activities during the year.

9. **School Report** – Ms Johnson reported; We have 83 children in school including pre-school. We are in a federation of three schools including Sutton and Hickling – aptly named Swallowtail Federation. The Federation is part of St Benets Multi Academy Trust which provides education for children and young people in Norfolk and the Waveney Valley. Each school keeps its own distinctive character, but all operate within the Christian ethos and values of the Diocese of Norwich and the Trust. All benefit from the support and development opportunities the Trust provides. Being part of the St Benets Trust allows all staff to access wider CPD. This year we have been able to access training on exploratory talk and meta talk within maths and how to best support our children. This has led to the introduction of discovery boards - supporting reasoning and problem-solving skills. A number of teaching staff access subject networks across the year allowing good practice and moderation to take place.

We hold joint Federation days that are themed and on 2nd April we came together as a Federation to celebrate Writing (part of development plan focus). Years 1 to 6 carousel around activities based upon non-fiction writing, poetry, fiction and instructional writing. EYFS explored activities such as labelling, card writing and mark making. A fabulous day and all who participated benefited from the experience in many ways.

Recently it was that time again for assessments – Annual SATs – the children worked very hard and were really focused. No results yet as they will not be available for some time but we, and they, are very proud of their work and efforts. Governors supported the week by assisting in the invigilation.

As part of our PSHE (personal, social, health and economic) learning, KS1 are taking part in the Archbishops Young Leaders Award (AYLA). The award focuses on the key concepts of kindness, perseverance and teamwork. Each concept includes teaching activities, application and references to a bible story with reflection opportunities. As part of the award, children will plan and undertake an action project within the local community where they can apply the skills they have learnt.

During the past year we have also been involved in a community litter pick at the village hall and look forward to other opportunities to work with the village and parishioners.

The Federation also offers the opportunity to link up with the other two school to attend a range of school trips. This gives the children the opportunity to spend time with Hickling and Sutton. EYFS across the federation have been to Gressenhall to experience a Fairytale Day and will be going to Banham Zoo. KS1 children have been to Nortons Dairy and an extra Federation Day. KS2 have been to Castle Museum and the Norfolk Show. A highlight was taking all the children to Norwich Theatre Royal to watch the pantomime.

We are also grateful to all our parents for their support. We do encourage parent participation and have held several events. On World Book Day we held a cafe where parents engaged in book related activities. Another date was a Maths Cafe where parents engaged in maths related activities, seeing how we use manipulatives and solve problems in class. The annual Easter Bonnet craft parade where parents helped to make Easter Bonnets which the children paraded and a child from each class won a prize. Sports day is always one of our key family events of the year with a picnic to start the races. It is lovely to see the interaction between all in the school.

We have also planned a Swallowtail Arts Festival on 16th July - We are coming together as a Federation to celebrate the Arts. We will be having a large art exhibition, a dance show, poetry performance and singing. This will be at the school and all welcome. More details will follow.

Our final event this year is the Leavers Service & Celebration which is being held at the Old Rectory. We are very excited about having a picnic, animals, crafts and music all provided by the church. There is also a short service where the Bishop of Thetford will present the year 6 leaving cohort with Bibles. We pray for good weather and are so looking forward to the event and we thank the members of the church for organising this event. It will provide a wonderful memory of penultimate days in the school before High School awaits.

We would also like to thank the Catfield Action Team for their support and the work completed to bring our garden up to an amazing array of plants and bushes. This gives the children the opportunity to learn how to nurture the plants and think about the wildlife they encourage. We are so grateful for the donation in time and money to achieve the splendid results and in particular for the water hose set to help with the watering tasks.

Thank you for listening and we hope to see you all at one of the school events.

I would like to thank Lucy Ames for her overview of the year in Catfield and I am so proud to be a governor at the federation and watch all the Children and Staff flourish and work so hard together to give the children the best opportunities possible. With friendship, trust and kindness we fly.

10. Any other reports – Mr Harris advised Cllr Richard Price has provided a detailed report and this is on the Parish website.

Meeting finished at 7.11 pm.

Chairman Signature: _____

Date: _____

Chairman Name: _____