

HARPLEY PARISH COUNCIL*Harpley Parish Council website: <https://www.harpleypc.info/>**Email: harpleypc@gmail.com*

Parish Clerk: Ms. Caroline Boyden, 2 Abbeyfields, Abbey Road, Great Massingham. PE32 2JE
 Chairman: Mr. Brian Chandler.

Minutes of the Annual Parish Council Meeting held, after due notice, on Thursday 20th May 2021 at 7.25 pm at the Village Hall.

036/21 Present: Cllrs B Chandler (Chairman), N Steed, T. Cable, A. Case, P Peak, J Pocklington, S. Rose Cllr Moriarity, and Clerk (C Boyden) with 3 members of the public.

037/21 Apologies: Cllrs, D. Burr. County Councillor M Chenery of Horsbrugh

038/21 a. Election of Chairman

Cllr Chandler duly proposed and approved as Chairman.

b. Election of Vice Chairman

Cllr Cable duly proposed and approved as Vice Chairman.

Declarations of acceptance of office signed and witnessed by the clerk.

039/21 Appointment of representatives to Village Organisations:

- a. Village Hall Committee – Cllr Chandler
- b. Harpley Primary School – Cllr Cable
- c. Parochial Church Council – Cllr Pocklington
- d. Community Car Scheme – Cllr Steed
- e. Playground – to be advised as soon as possible.

040/21 To receive declarations of interest from members in any item discussed.

Cllr Case on bird scarers

041/21 Minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 16th of May 2019 were confirmed as

being a true record of the proceedings and were signed by the Chairman.

Proposed: Cllr Steed . All present agreed.

042/21 Annual Governance and Accountability Return 20/21

a. To approve the appointment of Lloyd Mitchell as internal auditor @ £35 approved by all present.

b. To review and approve the Annual Governance Statement, Certificate of Exemption, and Accounting Statement for 20/21 – proposed Cllr Steed and agreed. Signed by Chairman.

043/21 Reaffirmation of eligibility for the General Power of Competence.

The Parish Council can continue with adopting the General Power of Competence with two thirds of councillors elected and the clerk having the CILCA qualification.

044/21 Reports from County and Borough Councillors -
General reports from Cllr Chenery had been received.

Cllr Moriarty:

Obviously, the pandemic has dictated all activities and decisions throughout the year. Initially, this District was the hardest hit in Norfolk and the ONS reported more deaths in West Norfolk than elsewhere across the County. Of particular concern was the testing regime and the transference of untested people to and from the QEH to care homes. The deprivation and poor health of people living in Kings Lynn was an obvious contributor to the underlying cause, but people throughout the District were affected.

Events improved after the first wave and through the first lockdown which gave time to bring in more testing of vulnerable people in hospitals and care homes to stem the tide until the next wave struck in November. By then, the Council were obviously better prepared, as were other bodies, but there was still an issue over testing, self-isolation and sick pay.

No full Council meetings were held in April and May 2020, but then they started again using the Zoom video conference system and this continued until this month.

Since highlighting the early issues with QEH, care homes and testing generally, Council Members received specific update briefings from the hospital top team and throughout the year, the Council, via a cabinet member specifically appointed to manage the issue, Cllr Stuart Dark MBE, has issued progress reports and information to all Parish and Town Councils; also via the web site.

The position in this area is now in line with other parts of East Anglia.

The Council also supplemented its LILY system with council officers and volunteers to support vulnerable, lonely and digitally isolated people.

FINANCE

The Borough Council has not had sufficient support from the Government to compensate for our lack of revenue. This is of course common across all sectors be they business, leisure etc, but a Council has statutory obligations to meet and the Government are not supporting them.

We have had to use a significant portion of our General Reserve Fund to ensure a balanced budget (a Council obligation) and remain a going concern. This situation will continue next year, but then there will be a black hole in the accounts, with no likelihood, on present trends, of this being filled in 2023/4 and beyond.

Notwithstanding this position, the Council kept the tax rise within designated limits and only raised a Band D property by £4.50.

However, there are a variety of funds available to the Council provided we can submit an attractive bid. Unfortunately, to date, the Borough has been unsuccessful. At present we have a Town Board consisting of some Cabinet members, local business leaders and Officers, (full details on Borough web site) to create a vision for Kings Lynn and submit bids for “Levelling Up” monies.

A bid is in against the ‘Future High Street Fund’ and we may expect to hear the result shortly.

Although small in comparison, we have been given grants for improving the look of the High Street through signage and benches etc. Monies for extra cleaning and COVID support in tourist areas, but, £600k, the majority of money received to date, has gone to ensuring the nurses training centre for the COWA and QEH comes to fruition.

There has also been a multitude of grants through the year to support smaller businesses and the Borough has processed over £60m to help keep these as going concerns and to support recovery.

‘EVERYONE IN’ INITIATIVE

Page 2 of 5

Signed

Date

This is also worthy of special note. Using a range of emergency accommodation options, including some new welfare cabins, we have ensured, as far as possible, that there are no rough sleepers in West Norfolk.

Districts across Norfolk have also joined a broader initiative for “no homeless in Norfolk”. Again, more Government money is needed and this initiative and our own ‘homeless strategy’, will be under threat when the moratorium on rent arrears is over.

CLIMATE EMERGENCY

This is one area where the Council has not come up to scratch. We started the year with Extinction Rebellion protesting in the Town Hall and daubing paint on the Council offices. A Cabinet member resigned and there was a vacuum for a few months. Following a reshuffle, Cllr Kunes was appointed as Cabinet Member for carbon reduction. A policy was agreed by Council, but with no strategy for aspects such as air quality, biodiversity, tree planting, refits for residents to make houses more energy efficient etc. etc. Furthermore, unlike many other Councils, a climate emergency has yet to be declared and most of West Norfolk is vulnerable to flooding. A cross party team of Councillors and Officers is currently looking to propose some goals, but I know of no timescale for this.

However, we have received £2.84m from the Government to decarbonize Council buildings. Received with thanks and the scheme should be finished by end-September.

WASTE REMOVAL

North, Breckland and West Norfolk combined to secure a more efficient arrangement with Serco who, thankfully, TUPEd the existing crews. As a result, we should retain at least the level of service we have enjoyed so far and from the teams who have been working through COVID. Also, we will have newer trucks with lower emissions, better fuel consumption, together with some hybrid vehicles. Waste food collection is due to resume on 21st June.

HOUSING AND PLANNING

As you would expect, house completions are down this year and are running about half the previous year; 300 compared to 600. Planning Applications have been suppressed but are now being submitted at a pace.

The Local Plan review has been completed and a series of briefings and presentations is starting. Representatives from Parish and Town Councils will be offered the opportunity to review the process to date and advised on the future programme.

However, the process of planning approvals for Council’s own development applications on council land has been brought into question following disputes on 2 cases. Kings Lynn Parkway and Hunstanton South End Car Park. For a start, these and similar applications have been considered in camera when they should have been open to public scrutiny. This has now been corrected, but damage has been done. There is also the suspicion of predetermination by the Administration once significant sums have been spent through the planning process. Very often this expenditure is part of a Government Grant which has to be repaid if the plans are not approved, therefore, there is pressure to ensure the “right” decision is made. Members of the Planning Committee on scrutiny panels also have a difficult decision to make which damages effective scrutiny. More will be heard of this. There is a Standards case under consideration.

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY

There is a change of leadership imminent at the Council with Stuart Dark being appointed the new leader. I hope there will be a more open dialogue in the future for the net benefit of the Borough and its people.

The new Mayor of the Borough was sworn in today, Cllr Harry Humphry. He was a County Councillor in 2011 as well as a Borough Councillor and was in the cabinet at Norfolk County Council and voted for the incinerator which ended up costing rate payers over £20 million pounds. I haven't forgotten.

Lastly, the QEH Building is in dire straits. Although there is high level lobbying, all of us should get behind the various initiatives for a replacement hospital building." Cllr Moriarty gave out information regarding the hospital.

045/21 To receive questions and comments from members of the public

The round robin was working well and to be opened up for other items/events.

This would also relate to the website and the clerk is keen to promote any items of interest or information.

The drains on Church Lane are now very blocked and overgrown and Clerk to ask the Rangers to clear when they are next in the area, along with the white "gates" cleaning coming into the village.

046/21 To review and approve the Parish Council meeting held on the 18th of March

These were confirmed as being a true record of the proceedings and were signed by the Chairman. Proposed: Cllr Pocklington . All present agreed.

Matters arising:

- a. Queens Platinum Jubilee Celebrations taking place next June. Clerk to include in the round robin for ideas and volunteers.
- b. Noticeboard. Cllr Chandler had received a quote for a new board for £250.00 and this was agreed by all.

047/21 Correspondence and Communications

a. Cllr Pocklington re Playground – the use of the playground by non-locals who are eating takeaways, drinking, and smoking is raising concern as putting off the locals using the area. It was suggested that a large notice is set up advising:

- No Adults unless accompanied by children
- No children over 12
- No eating or drinking
- No smoking
- Take litter home

Clerk to source this signage and also contact the Rose and Crown to advise them of the situation.

b. Cllr Steed – Brickyard Lane hedging – this needs a professional to cut it back and Cllr Pocklington advised that the refuse collectors had kindly cut back the offending branch. Clerk to find details of local landscapers.

Cllr Steed also gave an update on the Community Car Scheme – not many drivers or requests for journeys at present with only 21 drivers available. Some are awaiting 2nd jabs, but requests are now starting to pick up.

c. Email received from a parishioner regarding the bird scarer being used in the field by Old Post Office Court and the constant noise. Cllr Case and the clerk will respond.

047/21 Planning Matters: No new applications and the tennis court is still awaiting a decision.

It was noted that the Planning Department has a staffing problem, and this is causing some delays.

048/21 Finance

Accounts presented:

Bank Reconciliations to 30.4.21 presented and accepted.

Financial report to year end 20/21 accepted.

Insurance quote was same as last year and accepted.

A payment of £20 agreed for the upkeep of the “tyre” shrubs and flowers.

Payments due:

1. CGM grass cutting	£ 72.00
2. Ewing annual PAYE	£ 36.00
3. Steward Safety Supplies - signage	£ 43.92
4. Came & Co – insurance 21/22	£218.00

Acceptance proposed by Cllr Case. All present agreed.

049/21 Matters for inclusion on the agenda for the next meeting

- Queens Platinum Jubilee Celebrations update
- Regular checks on the playground equipment
- Signage for playground

050/21 Date of next meeting

The next Parish Council meeting will take place on **29th July** at 7.30pm, in the Village Hall (subject to Covid restrictions)

There being no further business the Chairman thanked all present for attending and declared the meeting closed at 19.58 hrs.