

RINGLAND PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

HELD IN RINGLAND VILLAGE HALL

7.30pm on Monday 16th May 2022

The meeting was called to order and presided over by Mr Nick Adams, Chairman of the Parish Council

THE CLERK TO THE COUNCIL ACTED AS MINUTE TAKER FOR THE MEETING

Present :

There were 18 Parishioners including all the current members of the parish council and Cllr Peter Bulman (BDC) in attendance. Apologies were received from Cllr Greg Peck (NCC)

Cllr Nick Adams opened the meeting and welcomed everyone at 7.30 p.m with the following Introduction:

1. Introduction-

Good Evening, and many thanks for taking the time to attend tonight's Annual Parish Meeting. This is not a Parish Council Meeting but a meeting of the parish electors and it must be held between 1st March and 1st June to comply with legislation. Ringland parishioners entitled to vote in local elections can contribute to the agenda, the purpose of the meeting being to discuss parish affairs. A simple agenda has already been produced however items for inclusion can be added tonight when we get to agenda item 4. Once we have taken all suggestions for subjects to be discussed we will work through them in the order recorded by the Parish Clerk. If any items require a vote of those present then all parishioners entitled to vote in a local election can do so.

This meeting will be followed immediately by our regular parish council meeting and you will see that the members of the parish council are sat amongst you for this annual PARISH meeting. Can I quickly introduce my vice chairman Lindy Cooper, Malcolm Turner, Jill Baker and Simon Addington. The councillors are all attending this meeting as members of the public, but I will of course refer to any of them and maybe ask them to address the meeting if any of the matters discussed are areas in which they specialise as a councillor. As a council we are permitted to have a

total of seven members, so there are two current vacancies should anyone from the parish wish to come on the council. We are particularly interested in getting someone on the council with a good understanding of websites and electronic communication media such as twitter and facebook, but anyone who cares for the villages future would be welcome. If you are interested in joining the council please let me know at the end of the meeting or phone me sometime and we can discuss what's involved.

While this meeting gives everyone a good opportunity to raise issues and to open discussions I would like to say that your attendance at the regular Parish Council Meetings is still greatly appreciated and offers the best way to both communicate with the council and keep up to date with progress on the various issues the council is dealing with.

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2. To approve the minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on 27th May 2021
– **The minutes were signed and approved by the Chair as a correct record**
 3. To receive a report from the Chair of the Parish Council, summarised below:
 - 2021 started with the world learning to adapt to the constraints imposed by the Covid-19 pandemic and ended with the beginnings of a return to something more like what we used to consider normal. In many ways Ringland was no different and I'm delighted to be able to say that life really has started to return to normal for most of us. We are once again able to meet face to face at Parish Council meetings and hopefully we will be able to enjoy some social meetings and events over the coming year.
 - 2021 saw little physical change in Ringland as a village but gradual progress continues to be made on the planning of three local major infra-structure projects, all of which will impact life in the village. These are of course the conversion of the local A47 to dual carriageway, the Norwich Western Link Road between the NDR and the A47 and the various projects to run underground power cables from the new Wind Farms off the North Norfolk coast to the Transformer Complex near Dunstan Hall.

- The project to upgrade the A47 between Easton and North Tuddenham to dual carriageway remains pretty much on its original schedule, with the Development Consent Order (DCO) now in examination. The outcome of that examination will be a recommendation to the Secretary of State on how to proceed. That recommendation is due imminently and once it has been made the SoS has 6 months to make a decision on whether the project will proceed or not. It seems likely that approval will be granted and in that case the physical works are expected to begin in early 2023. The main impact this project will have on Ringland will be the changes in traffic flow along the local roads as a consequence of the removal of the roundabout at Easton and the creation of a new grade-separated junction at the junction with Taverham Road. We have, after consulting with the villagers campaigned for the temporary closure of Honingham Lane, which runs from the crossroads by Merryhill Country Park to St. Peters Church. This will prevent traffic that currently runs through the Ringland Hills taking a short-cut through the village from the Church to the junction by the Swan. I am pleased to say that this has now been formally included in the DCO increasing the chances that it will happen. The A47 project is now included in the regular Local Liaison Group meetings where both this and the NWL projects are reviewed by representatives of Norfolk County Council, National Highways and local parish councils including Ringland.
- The progress of the NWL project has been slower than originally planned, with issues around the environmental impact of the scheme and the pandemic being major factors in its delay. The Outline Business Case for the scheme has been completed and has now been submitted to the Department for Transport for their review and approval. There are plans for a further public consultation over the finer details of the scheme later this year but exact dates and details have yet to be announced. The NWL forms a central part of the Local Transport Plan recently approved and published by Norfolk County Council. There are concerns in some quarters about how the plan was consulted on and approved and there is a possibility that the plan may be called to Judicial Review, which could further delay or even halt the NWL project. If that doesn't happen then there is still a strong possibility that the NWL DCO will be called into review given the contentious nature of the project and that could equally result in a delay or cancellation of the project. Should the planned A47 changes go ahead without the NWL then traffic flow across the Wensum valley will be even more restricted than it is currently once the Easton

roundabout is removed. In this case our successful campaign for the temporary closure of Honingham Lane to all but farm traffic will at least protect the centre of the village from what would otherwise be a massive increase in traffic. It should however be born in mind that this closure is not supported by Weston Longville Parish Council as it will lead to an increase in traffic through their village and there is a risk that the closure could be rescinded if it was felt this might relieve congestion elsewhere. The consequences for the village would be catastrophic. Overall, the position of the Parish Council remains one of reluctant acceptance that, with no viable alternatives having been presented, the NWL is a necessary evil. As such, engaging with the team promoting the road via the LLG provides us with the best chance of mitigating the impact on the village.

- As part of the LLG, Ringland Parish Council is now getting involved in discussions around the finer design aspects of the NWL such as noise mitigation and the control of construction traffic. The project officers have confirmed to the LLG that the entire length of the NWL will use noise reducing road surfacing, which has been shown on other local projects to have a very significant effect on the noise radiated from the road. This combined with the use of noise screens on the viaduct, careful design of noise deflecting earth bunds adjacent to the road and tree planting will hopefully minimise the noise impact of the road on Ringland. We are also pressing as part of the local road changes associated with the introduction of the NWL for the implementation of a 20mph speed limit throughout the village and for a ban on vehicles over 7.5 tonnes through the village, although deliveries to the village and agricultural vehicles will have to be exempt from this.
- The Sheringham and Dudgeon power cable projects are also likely to be breaking ground in 2023. These only skirt the very boundaries of the parish to the west and south and are likely to have minimal impact on the village directly, especially as it has been agreed that no construction traffic will route through Ringland and all road crossing will be done using a horizontal drilling technique which does not disrupt traffic on the roads. The impact on the environment does not seem to be attracting as much attention as that of the road projects, but with a 20+m wide ditch running from the North Norfolk Coast to Dunstan Hall one suspects that the impact will be significant. Attempts by a large group of parish councils including Ringland to oppose the project and encourage the use of an offshore cable network to take the power

round to the East Coast where the run inshore would be much shorter have failed due to the renewable energy timescales targets set by the Government. Once again, we remain in contact with the developers and are trying to ensure that the impact on our village and its environment are minimised.

- Over the past year the Parish Council have continued reviewing and improving our procedures and compliance with new and emerging regulations. Whilst this will remain an on-going process it has identified a number of areas where action was needed and this has been taken or is in progress.
- The village hall working group led by Margaret George has been active in improving the facilities within the Hall with the hope of increasing the income generated by rental. The improvements made under the control of Councillor Turner to the parking and driveway area should help with this. Currently the hall costs the village much more than it earns and we have to continue to try and reverse this situation if we are to avoid further increases in the precept.
- In the past, maintenance of the villages grasslands and common land has been performed by a stalwart group of volunteers including Graham Kidd, David Sparkes and George Crayston. Sadly, they are no longer able to continue this work and we have been unable to find sufficient volunteers from the village to create a new team. We have therefore sold the village lawnmower and engaged a professional contractor to maintain the grass around the village. They started about a month ago, and will continue to cut every two weeks until September.
- I would like to make a point of thanking David Sparkes, George Crayston and Graham Kidd in particular for their hard work cutting the grass over the years.
- The grass in the larger commons was also maintained by these gentlemen, but the cost of using the contractor to do this is prohibitive and so we have reached an informal agreement with Ian Alston of the Ringland Estate that they will cut the grass on Church Hill Common for us free of charge once or twice a year on request. We currently have no means of getting the grass area on the Ringland Hills cut, but we are actively looking for a solution.

- Another recent change has been the creation of additional parking for visitors to the River Green, once again under the watchful eye of Councillor Turner. It is hoped that this will, in conjunction with changes to the layout of the railings at the bridge stop the issues we have had in recent years with people parking at the side of the road on the approach to the bridge.
- Increases in the Annual Precept over the past few years have allowed us to bring the budget much closer to breaking even than on the past, while successful use of local government grant processes have allowed us to reclaim some of the costs associated with the improvements made around the village. Despite this we had little option but to increase the precept once more this year in order to cover the additional costs of getting the grass areas around the village cut by a contractor. The council continues to work to increasing income from other sources as well as looking for further savings on expenditure.
- In terms of councillors the parish council has seen some change this year. Sadly, Louise Cooper and Sophie Baker both stood down early in the year due to the pressures of work and young families. I would like to formally offer the villages heartfelt thanks for their work on the council. I'm also pleased to say that Simon Addington has joined the council and has taken responsibility for all matters relating to the commons administered by the village. This means the council currently has 5 councillors, leaving two council seats vacant if anyone else fancies joining our happy band. We are particularly interested in attracting a councillor with knowledge of websites and electronic communications media such as Twitter and Facebook as we need to improve our communications with the village as a whole.
- Finally, we have also welcomed a new professional parish clerk, Andrea Hendrick, who started with us just before Xmas and is still coming to terms with my chaotic style of chairmanship! Andrea should be your first point of contact if you have any need to contact the Parish Council; her contact details are on all Parish Communications, the parish council noticeboards and the website.

Many Thanks for your attention.

4. To invite the Public to raise matters for discussion –

4.1 Residents have been adversely affected by the smell of the Pigs being kept on the field adjacent to the 53 The Street. Long term residents stated categorically that this field has never been used previously for Animal Husbandry contrary to claims made by the Ringland Estate.

- **NA to speak to Mr Alston of the Ringland Estate to try and resolve the problem.**

4.2 Residents are concerned about Mud deposits on the Local Roads caused by fall off from the fields. When dry this causes large quantities of dust which is kicked up by HGV's and Farm Machinery (particularly tractors) driving too quickly for the conditions.

According to NA Mr Alston has already agreed to lay rubble traps to reduce the mud carried from the fields by tractors and has instructed that all agricultural vehicles Tractors keep to a 15mph speed limit.

- **NA to request a road scrape from the Highways Dept.**
- **Residents to notify the Parish Clerk of the road, date, time and registration number of any Farm Vehicle exceeding the 15mph speed limit so it can be brought to the attention of Mr Alston**

4.3 Mr David Pett a Resident of the Parish spoke strongly against the Norwich Western Link. His primary concerns are the impact of noise and pollution from the link road on the village and the environmental damage which could be caused by the building of the viaduct to cross the River Wensum.

He is of the opinion that the Parish Council should either have done more to stop the NWL being built or addressed the finding of alternative solutions.

Cllr Adams explained that Ringland is a small Council with a limited budget that lacks the resources, skill and knowledge to challenge National Transport Policy. As such our best chance of protecting the village is to engage with the developers (NCC) and work with them to seek the best compromise solutions. Examples of successes achieved by this approach include the adoption of Route C which affects the smallest number of households of all the four routes considered and the commitment by NCC to use low noise road surfacing along the whole length of the road.

The NWL Local Liaison Group (on which Councillor Adams represents RPC) have been working over the past years to mitigate the detrimental effects of the NWL on the Villages situated on the Wensum and the local environment. Ringland Parish Councils stance on the LLG has been one of regarding the NWL as a necessary evil since no viable alternatives have been identified by the NCC or campaign groups. Whilst being pragmatic about the need for the NWL the Parish Council remain committed to ensuring a minimum traffic disruption to Ringland and the other local villages and minimising the environmental impact associated with the road.

Cllr Peter Bulman offered a vote of confidence for the democratic stance the Council has taken in representing the views of the residents of Ringland Parish.

Cllr Lindy Cooper proposed that a further village meeting be arranged after the final plans are reviewed at the Cabinet meeting in July. **This proposal was put to the vote with 10 for and 3 against a future meeting, this will be duly arranged**

- 4.4** Malcolm Turner requested that the Council improve communication within the village as not everyone is receiving updates on decisions, events etc. **The Parish Clerk advised that the Council will be directly inviting all residents not subscribed to the mailing list to do so.**
- 4.5** Residents expressed concern that the NWL survey group are speeding whilst their vehicles are loaded with materials. **Cllr Adams to speak to Harrison Geotech to request that the group operate with more care and attention.**
- 4.6** A request was made for the grass on the Green to be cut shorter and for the edge of the river to remain un-trimmed. **Cllr Adams to forward this request to the Grass Cutting Contractor.**

There being no further points for discussion the meeting was closed at 8.55.pm

These Minutes are to be approved by the Chair at the Annual Parish Meeting to be held in 2023

Andrea Hendrick
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