

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

FOR THE ELECTORS OF RINGLAND PARISH
HELD IN
THE VILLAGE HALL THE STREET RINGLAND

at 7.pm on Monday 17th April 2023

Chair: Mr N Adams, chair of the Parish Council

Clerk: Mrs S Hunt, clerk to the Parish Council.

16 members of the electorate were in attendance.

1. Introduction.

The Chair thanked those attending and explained that the Annual Parish Meeting, which annually must take place between the 1st March and the 1st June, would take place first, followed by the Parish Council Meeting.

Parishioners are invited to submit any matters for discussion under item 4, and these issues were recorded by the Clerk for discussion under item 5.

There remains a vacancy on the Parish Council, and residents were invited to contact the chairman with any expressions of interest. Those present were invited to also attend Parish Council meetings throughout the year.

2. Minutes.

The minutes of the 16th May 2022 Annual Parish Meeting were signed by the Chair as a true and correct record of the meeting.

3. Annual Report of the Parish Council by the Chairman, Ringland Parish Council.

Attached at Appendix A.

4. The public were invited to raise any matters for discussion.

4.1 Litter Picking.

4.2 Dust on Road.

4.3 Hedge in village.

4.4 Leaning tree in river.

4.5 Listed Bridge.

4.6 Speeding in village.

5. Consideration and decisions on subjects raised:

5.1 The Swan Public House had been litter picking on River Green, this may be an issue for the village now that the pub is closed. Volunteers will be needed this year – Simon Addington will be the first point of contact. Clerk to post onto facebook and website.

5.2 Mud and dust on the road is an ongoing issue in a rural village. Local landowners are very responsive when asked to address this. The Chair will follow this up.

5.3 Hedge in village. Any hedge issues adjacent to highways can be reported to the Clerk who will then contact Highways who can have the power to address this issue.

- 5.4 Leaning Tree in River. This has been reported to UK Power Networks. The Council contractor is not able to work on the tree as there are live power lines present. Simon Addington will chase.
- 5.5 Listed Bridge. It was noted by the meeting that bridges elsewhere have received building listings.
- 5.6 Speeding in Village. There have been incidents of speeding within the Parish.
6. The meeting closed at 7.34pm.

draft

Appendix A

Chairmans Report

2022 saw life in the UK continuing to return to normal as the severity and frequency of Covid outbreaks reduced. Similarly, village life here in Ringland returned to something close to it's normal pattern, albeit quite often at a slower pace than normal as the dust of the pandemic settled. As a result many of the items reported on in this annual report sound very similar to the comments I made last year, so please accept my apologies if you get a strong sense of Deja-vu whilst listening to me.

2022 once again saw little physical change in Ringland itself although sadly the Swan pub closed it's doors when the publicans elected to not renew their contract with the pubs owners. Currently the pub remains unoccupied and it can be found amongst some 27 other pubs also owned by the same company and available to let on their website. An item on the parish council meeting that follows this meeting will open a debate on what steps the parish council should take to try and help the pub re-open.

The development of 5 holiday lodges on the land behind the pub continues as well, although rather intermittently. The council has raised a number of compliance matters relating to this development with Broadland planning and will continue to monitor the development as it progresses.

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 has completed the DCO process with the Secretary of State recommending the project should proceed alongside the changes to the Thickthorn junction and the Burlington to Blofield section of the A47. A challenge to those decisions which calls into question the methodology of the Carbon Dioxide emissions calculations has however been made and a Judicial review has been called, scheduled for mid-

May. Until that review is complete the projects cannot proceed with any physical work such as breaking ground although detailed design and survey work is ongoing. In the event of the challenge being upheld the projects could either be cancelled or be forced to go back several steps, which will of course delay them significantly, potentially by a matter of years. If the challenge is not upheld by the judicial review then the Easton to North Tuddenham project is likely to have been delayed by around 12 months from its original schedule. National Highways remain confident that the judicial review will conclude that the projects will be allowed to proceed.

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 (like the junction at Sainsburys) at the junction with Taverham Road. The temporary closure of Honingham Lane, which runs from the crossroads by Merryhills Country Park to St. Peters Church and which the parish council requested to protect the village from a large increase in traffic remains within the DCO and we can be confident that it will happen if the A47 project goes ahead. 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 also been slower than originally planned, with issues around the environmental impact of the scheme being a major factor in its delay. The Outline Business Case was submitted to the Department for Transport for their review but so far DfT approval and confirmation of government funding is still outstanding. At the same time the scheduled report submission to the Norfolk County Council Cabinet has been delayed from March to later this year. The reasons given for this include the lack of a decision from the DfT and also the volume of data collected from the most recent public consultation. Clearly the NWL cannot proceed unless the A47 dualling goes ahead and it seems clear that in reality the council are awaiting the outcome of the A47 judicial review before proceeding with the next major steps in the NWL project.

Should the planned A47 changes go ahead without the NWL and the Easton roundabout is removed then traffic flow across the Wensum valley will be even more restricted than it is currently. 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 of this 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 the only option to resolve the issues of traffic volumes crossing the Wensum Valley. 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 and environment.

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 will 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 current closure of Taverham Road has been done to facilitate the widening of it's junction with the A47 to allow large trucks access to the construction compound for the cable project which will be part way up Taverham Road. 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 contact with the developers and are trying to ensure that the impact on our village and it's 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 team are to be congratulated and thanked for their efforts, with the successful and enjoyable Xmas and Easter fairs being great examples of what they can do. Sadly however the hall continues to cost 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 longer term we are starting to consider further improvements to the parking area of the hall, although budget limitations mean this is unlikely to progress before next year.

Following numerous complaints about the smell, noise and flies caused by pigs located right next to the North-West end of the village the council approached the landowner and tenant farmers and were able to negotiate the relocation of the pigs to a more remote location. I would like to record my thanks for their co-operation in this matter.

Maintenance of the villages grasslands by the professional contractor we engaged last year has been a success, with most residents complimenting the standards of work that has been done. The very hot and dry weather in late summer meant that there was no need to cut the grass on two occasions and the contractors helped us by agreeing to perform some winter maintenance work using the credit left over from the Summer.

We still have have no means of getting the grass area on the Ringland Hills cut, but we are actively looking for a solution. We have met with the principal of Easton Agricultural College and will be working with the colleges lecturers this year to try and find a way to get their students involved with developing plans for the maintenance and protection of the common lands as well as possibly performing some of the actual work.

The additional parking for visitors to the River Green installed by the parish council, in conjunction with the long awaited changes to the layout of the railings at the bridge seem to have helped reduce the issues we have had in recent years with people parking at the side of the road on the approach to the bridge. It remains to be seen how it will work this year if the pub remains closed, but the results from last year were encouraging.

Councillor Turner has successfully applied for a grant to help with 50% of the cost of improving the car parking on the Church Mound. He has

developed an outline scheme that complies with traffic regulations and meets with the approval of the relevant authorities and he is now starting to look into the finer details. We hope to be able to complete this work in the coming year and are confident that it will allow us to improve the appearance of the church mound considerably.

We have recently purchased a second Public Access Defibrillator which is due for imminent delivery and will be kept in an unlocked cabinet mounted on the outside of the Village Hall by the front door. We are also replacing the defibrillator cabinet in the old phone box on the village green to the same type as that used on the village hall. While a defibrillator can undoubtedly save the life of someone suffering a heart attack, it can only do so if the victim has received CPR from as soon as possible after the heart attack until the defibrillator is collected and ready to use. To this end it is essential that you know how to perform CPR and how to prioritise what has to be done if you are going to be able to help someone. The parish council will be arranging CPR and defibrillator training again this year and I urge you to make the time to come along with as many friends and family as you can muster. After all, it might be a member of your families life that gets saved.

We have also launched a new Parish Council Website and Facebook page. The old website was very difficult to update and work with so hopefully you will see a significant improvement with the new one, while the new Facebook page should help us communicate better with the villagers.

The new website can be found on: www.ringlandpc.info while searching for Ringland parish council on Facebook will take you straight to our page.

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. As a result we were able to limit our increase in precept this year by just 2%. 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 been strengthened with Keith Stone joining our ranks. This means the council currently has 6

councillors, leaving one council seat vacant if anyone else fancies joining our happy band.

Finally, I was looking forward to introducing you to our new professional parish clerk, Sarah Hunt, who started with us just before Xmas. Sadly however, Sarah has decided that she will not be able to continue in this role and will be leaving our employ in the near-future. So once again we are on the lookout for a new parish clerk. It is the only paid role on the council and although we would prefer a clerk with experience, we are able to offer training for the right candidate. Should you or someone you know be interested in the role then please contact me to discuss things further. In the meantime Lindy Cooper will take over as clerk on a temporary basis once Sarah leaves us. Lindy should be your first point of contact if you have any need to speak to the Parish Council; her contact details are on all Parish Communications, the parish council noticeboards, facebook and the website.

Many Thanks for your attention.