

# Castle Acre Parish Council

Clerk: Mrs Libby Firth, 7 Sandles Court, Back Lane, Castle Acre, Norfolk PE32 2XF

Telephone: 07825 229345

Email: libbyofirth@gmail.com

## Minuted record of Parish Council business conducted via Zoom video online meeting 21 January 2021

Present: Mr M Hickey (MH) Chairman, Mr L Fisher (LF) Vice Chairman, Mrs H Breach (HB), Mr T Hubbard (TH), Mrs S Moister (SM), Mr N Patrick (NP), Mr L Manson (LM), Mr M Tate (MT), Mr S Allen (SA).

In attendance: Mrs L Firth (Clerk), Mr J Moriarty (JM) (Borough Councillor) and three members of the public.

**67. Apologies:** Mr J Moriarty (JM) (Borough Councillor) informed the Clerk that he would be late to the meeting due to attending a prior PC meeting.

Apologies not received: Cllr G Middleton (NCC).

## **68. Presentation by Alex Sydney, English Heritage (EH) - managing EH sites in the village.**

In a PowerPoint presentation, Mr Sydney, Head of Investment and Involvement for EH, gave a brief overview of the different types of EH sites (chargeable and free to enter) and showed confidentially the income and expenses for the three sites in Castle Acre. He outlined EH's strategy for the Castle: working more closely with and involving the local community, conservation efforts, third party events, volunteers, fund raising, safety and financial stability. He stated that EH is investing £50,000 this year to upgrade the public toilets adjoining the Priory.

[8pm- JM joined the meeting].

Questions from Cllrs and members of the public touched on opening the seasonal toilets all year round, with better directional signage; expanding the Castle car park and removing the charge for non-EH members. Mr Sydney welcomed MH's offer of a future meeting to discuss potential ideas for closer cooperation between EH and the village.

## **69. Wittles Café**

MH invited the Wittles Café owners to speak, following their request to attend the meeting. They took the opportunity to thank the village for its warm welcome and support. They expressed their interest in becoming more involved in the community. They could not yet confirm their final plans for opening hours or menus but that their aim is to cater for both local residents and visitors.

## **70. Minutes of online zoom PC meeting held 10 December 2020**

TH requested the following amendments:

- Item 58. Following an inspection to assess thinning the canopies of the five Stocks Green lime trees, the correct cost is £1,500, plus two days hire of a cherry-picker, a total £2,100, not £2,400 as minuted.
- Item 60. Change 'western side' to 'southern side'.
- Item 47. Change 'northern churchyard boundary' 'to 'southern'

With these amendments, TH proposed approval of the Minutes and MT seconded.

## **71. Health and Safety - reports on any new H&S**

NP reported the defective street light outside the Red Lion. Already reported to K&L Lighting for repair.

Tree down on South Acre Road. Clerk to inspect and report to landowner.

SA updated Cllrs on the agreement between the land tenant and Holkham's Head Forester to remove the overgrown hedging along Orchard Lane, replacing it with more appropriate, plantings. MT suggested Highways could dig out further grips between the new plantings.

## **72. Updates on actions required from previous meetings**

### **41. Surface water flooding**

MT reported: more pumping took place opposite Priory Court which seems to alleviate flooding on High Street and Massingham Rd, Town Lane. MT to show Highways where he believes the blocked outlet in Foxes Meadow is situated. HB expressed her concern about water flows from BT marked pipes which are eroding the corner of the village hall.

### **29. Purchase of traffic safety mirror Massingham Rd junction**

On receipt of payment (agenda item) the traffic safety mirror will be delivered. MH and SA to erect.

### **34. Damaged bench on St James' Green**

SA still to assess and report back to the PC.

### **40. HGVs excessive use of Newton Road/Town Lane**

MH reported at the December PC meeting that at £10,000, a weight restriction traffic order on Newton Road would be too costly. While residents can monitor and report excessive HGV traffic along Newton Road, it is still considered that an HGV weight survey using an 'Automatic Traffic Counter' at a cost of £350 +VAT would be beneficial. Cllrs discussed whether this would be money well spent and if the data produced could be utilised effectively. Agreed to include the cost in the 2021/22 expenditure budget for approval at a suitable date when HGV traffic is at a peak e.g. sugar beet harvest. MT suggested the weekend traffic data could be useful for supporting a planning application for a visitor car park.

### **49. Castle Acre Voice village newsletter - progress report**

MH advised that the first issue's final proof is approved. Printing and distribution is planned for weekend 13/14 March.

**54. Purchase of dog waste bin at Castle Square.** The residents who requested an extra dog waste bin at the Castle Square entrance to the Castle now propose an open waste bin instead which they offer to empty, saving the ratepayers the annual £92 charge. Thanking the residents for their offer, MH noted such a litter bin would be more expensive to purchase than a small dog waste bin but others felt its dual purpose would be more beneficial at that location. MH explained the leader of the litter team is offering to replace the litter bin at the ford with a new one, paid for out of a small Waitrose grant (see Correspondence below). MH to check if a second litter bin might be similarly purchased.

## **73. Matters requested by Councillors**

### **Review of two year street lighting electricity supply contract**

MH praised the Clerk for assiduously pursuing different electricity suppliers for a two year supply quote as well as negotiating a lower quote from E.ON, the PC's current contractor. Despite this reduction, it is still 15% above the admittedly very low price contracted in December 2018. The new fixed price contract will run from 31/1/21 to 31/01/23. Cllrs reviewed the options in a paper circulated before the meeting and unanimously agreed that the Clerk can sign the two year electricity supply contract with E.ON.

## **PC 2021/22 budget – final review and approval**

Cllrs considered the budget spreadsheet and explanatory notes, amended to reflect the points raised at the December meeting. Noted that in the financial year to end March 2021, total income is forecasted at £17,277 - £2,467 below budget due to the delayed start of the Massingham Road housing build (budgeted CIL £2,238), but off-set by minor income amounts of £207 (VE Day grant, EH litter bin). The 2020/21 forecasted recycling credits are at +/-£800, £200 below budget. Total forecast standard expenditure is £16,260, £356 below budget.

2021/22 budget - income: The Borough's tax base funding was due to cease on 31/03/21. Extended one more year at £110. £2,328 of CIL receipts for three out of the four extra semis on the Massingham Road development site are not included in the 2021/22 budget.

2021/22 budget - standard expenditure: Where not pre-advised, all standard expenses have been uplifted by an inflationary 3%. Agreed to reappoint the Greens cutting contractor at 1% cost increase. No further payments to CAPFA are budgeted. £100 for Neighbourhood Plan pre-referendum publicity. Castleacre.info: £25 extra for purchase of a second Fling software for Clerk's use. £100 for Clerk's future training courses. The £500 support towards the HLF bid was unspent in 2020/21 due to HLF moving all its funds to supporting its existing EH properties affected by Covid-19 lockdown restrictions. £500 left in the budget in case a further bid to HLF is permitted. £400 gross (before £100 advertising) for the second edition of Castle Acre Voice. £300 youth support fund reserve for non-grant-funded activities.

2021/22 budget - new expenditure: £1,150 out of the £1,179 CIL receipt (in 2020) towards the PC's charge of £5,850 for its 50% share of the £11,700 full cost for the Newton Road road – the £4,700 balance being met from Cllr Middleton's highways budget (£2,500) and a £2,200 donation. £100 budget for new Christmas lights on Stocks Green. £1,300 (inc VAT) for two quality housings over the green wheelie bins on the playing field.

2021/22 final budget: Total gross income to 31/03/22 is budgeted at £16,997. Total expenditure £20,884 – £4,675 above the estimated expenditure to 31/03/21 – Council's bank reserves will decline to £6,300.

Agreed: to raise the 2021/22 precept by 3% to £14,625. This will equate to £1.22 on the current £40.57 Council Tax Band D rate.

In reviewing future infrastructure expenditure from CIL receipts, MH apologised for quoting out-of-date regulations requiring expenditure in one year of receipt instead of the revised five years. Now Holkham has started working on the Massingham Road development site, the PC will receive its CIL funds of £2,238 in April 2021. Noted that the Borough Council is launching its central CIL fund for community infrastructure projects across West Norfolk with grants from £2,000 to more than £50,000. Groups and organisations are invited to submit bids from Monday 25 January 2021. Cllrs discussed the grant criteria and requested JM to get clarification on the term 'necessary to support growth'. Cllrs agreed to hold an informal review of its CIL options by Zoom at a date to be set.

## **74. Planning**

-Ref: 20/01982/LB. Insertion of roof lights and porch canopy at The Coach House, Stocks Green. To note Cllrs' unanimous support by earlier e-mail exchange.

-Ref: 20/02047/F. Replacement of deteriorating timber framed asbestos garage/workshop with timber cabin/studio on existing concrete foundation at Cuckstool Cottage, Cuckstool Lane. Cllrs expressed their support for the planning application but requested the Clerk to ask the Conservation Officer to clarify how this wooded cabin-like structure will enhance the street scene, and meet Conservation Area criteria.

## **75. Correspondence**

### **Police Beat Officer update on speed checks, increased police presence.**

PC Barnes carried out speed gun checks in late December down Newton Road at East Green. He reported stopping a handful of cars between the hours of 11am and 1pm. He was impressed with the positive response he received from villagers and has thoughts on starting a community speed watch. JM requested an increase in police presence in the village following concerns over the amount of visitors during lockdown.

### **Massingham Road 15 dwelling housing development - start date.**

Holkham communicated a start date of 18 January 2021. Holkham will issue a monthly progress newsletter to the village which will be uploaded onto castleacre.info and posted on village noticeboards.

### **Pales Green street light.**

The resident of No.67 Pales Green advised that UK Power Network plans to remove the street light pole outside this property, replacing it with a supply junction box. After securing the agreement of neighbouring residents, it is suggested this street light is superfluous and should be removed. Cllrs agreed. Clerk to inform UK Power Networks and K&L Lighting.

### **Replacement litter bin at South Acre ford.**

The leader of the litter team is offering to replace the litter bin at the ford with a new one paid for out of a small Waitrose grant and to reuse the existing bin between the dugouts on the playing field, where a new bin is required. Cllrs accepted this generous offer and requested that it should sit on a concrete base and the bin colour blends in with the surroundings.

## **76. Reports**

### **Highways**

MH continues to push Highways to erect the new directional sign on the A1065 and to replace the illegible sign at the Massingham Road junction.

### **Village hall**

HB reported: resurfacing the parking area is almost complete with three bollards to be painted. Highways is due to blend the road edge with that of the parking area.

### **CAPFA**

MH reported: one of the committee members responsible for raising the funds for the new play area expressed his disappointment that other members were less enthusiastic about installing public toilets in the centre of the village. He offered to investigate different funding streams. MH welcomed any proactive thinking on the subject and advised him that the PC would consider all options. Cllrs discussed the need for new village public toilets, noting the planned refurbished toilets by the Priory. Cllrs welcomed NP's proposal of replacing the wooden bus shelter opposite the Spar shop with a brick shelter facing Massingham Road and with two unisex toilets at the rear. NP is encouraged to undertake more research into the design and cost.

### **Neighbourhood Plan**

MT reported: The draft Plan has now gone through Reg.16 consultation. The Borough Council has submitted the Plan and the consultees' submissions to the appointed Examiner for a six weeks review. The Examiner will contact the Plan's Steering Group directly. Officially this is categorised as Reg.17.

### **BCKLWN**

JM reported:

- JM emailed Cllrs with a link to an impressive presentation on dealing with Covid from the QE hospital in King's Lynn.

-BC is focusing on responding to NHS and local schools' requests for help and therefore all Council committee panels are on hold.

-It is reported that the County Council elections will still be held on 6 May 2021. JM is unsure as to how this can proceed logistically.

-Holkham sought a meeting with the Leader of the Council and its planning department to express its concerns at the lack of affordable housing in the emerging Local Plan to 2036. JM insists on being included in this meeting.

#### 77. Accounts to be paid:

Berrymans Glass Recycling Ltd (URM UK Ltd)	£37.20 (£1.20 VAT)
E.on Energy (electricity)	£68.29 (£3.25 VAT)
Clerk's expenses - Zoom monthly account	£14.39 (£2.40 VAT)
PC contribution to churchyard maintenance	£1000.00
Barriers Direct- traffic safety mirror	£478.82 (£79.80 VAT)
Clerk salary Oct to Dec 2020	£606.33

TH proposed approval of the accounts and LF seconded.

#### 78. Village Maintenance

**Potholes repairs - De Warrenne Place.** Clerk informed the BC that De Warrenne Place is on its assets list and is therefore responsible for repairing the potholes on the shared access driveway. The Council confirmed this is correct and that the work will be carried out.

**Mud on Blind Lane.** The mud and hedge cutting debris on Blind Lane continues to build up. Clearing and scraping the road is not Highway Rangers' responsibility. Following intervention from the Clerk, Highways has reprogrammed for the work to be done when there is a drier slot in the weather

**Highways sign down at junction Orchard and Archer Lanes.** The 'Give Way' sign on the small green was knocked down, reported to Highways and reinstalled.

**Grit bins refill** SA reported that the grit bin on St James' Green is almost empty. Noted Highways refill all the bins twice annually and not on an adhoc basis. The next scheduled refill is due from February.

**Damaged verges St James' Green.** Complaint from resident that recent HGV traffic has led to damaged verges around St James' Green and Massingham Road.

**Replacement defective posts East Green.** Noted that several more posts have nearly rotted through at their base. Highways will replace all of these but not with metal casings which would prevent future deterioration.

**North Street - water seeping through road surface.** TH reported water seeping up through cracks in the road, suggesting a burst pipe and asked for urgent investigation. Clerk to contact Anglia Water.

#### 79. Public questions

Meeting closed at 10.05pm.

The next full Parish Council meeting is scheduled for **Thursday 11 February 2021** at 7.30pm via Zoom video communication.