

BLYFORD AND SOTHERTON PARISH COUNCIL

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING (AGM)

Minutes of meeting held on 20th May 2024 at 6.45 pm

(immediately following the Annual Parish Meetings)

In the Meeting Room of Wenhaston Village Hall

Councillors Present: Mr G Walker (Chairman), Mrs R Parry, Mr B Martin, Mr RW Bucknell, Mr B Goldbart and Mrs A Donnachie (Clerk)

In Attendance: 0

Public Forum 1 member of the public in attendance.

To receive reports from County & District Councillors:

- 1 **Appointment of Chairman for 2024/25 and signing of declaration of Acceptance of Office:**
Councillors unanimously appointed Gerard Walker as Chairman who then signed the Declaration of Acceptance of Office. Chairman Gerard Walker welcomed everyone to the meeting.
- 2 **Apologies Received:** Cllr L Sharman and Cllr A Cackett, District Cllrs Beth Keyes-Holloway and Geoff Wakeling and Suffolk County Councillor Annette Dunning.
- 3 **Declarations of interest and any dispensations allowed:** None
- 4 **Minutes of previous meeting:** Resolution passed that minutes of Blyford and Sotherton Parish Council held on 18/03/24 were approved and signed as a true record.
- 5 **Chairman and Clerk's report on progress of actions from last meeting(s):** All actions completed/designated to other Agenda items to follow.
- 6 **Review of Governance Documents:**
 - 6a Standing Orders 2024/25: Reviewed, approved and adopted by council.
 - 6b Financial Regulations: An updated version of NALC template used this year. This was reviewed, approved and adopted by Council. **Action: Clerk to put these 2 documents on website.**
- 7 **Finance & Preparation of documents for 2023/24 Internal Audit:**
 - 7a Bank Reconciliation of accounts from 12/03/24 to 31/03/2024 showed a balances on the current account of £3,616.94 and on Latitude/Savings account of £3,980.47 giving a combined total on accounts of £7,597.41. Payments of over £100 were Clerk Salary and Allowances and SALC annual subscription of £128.21 as approved at meeting 18/03/24. Reconciliation checked against bank statements approved by Council and signed by Cllr Parry and Cllr Walker.
 - 7b The RFO presented her Report on Accounts for year ended 31/03/24 to the Council.
"Receipts for 2023-24 financial year amounted to £8,196 being £3,250 of precept monies and £4,946 of Latitude income. Donations were taken from Latitude income which included £2,000 to the Wenhaston Primary School Library, £1,328 on event to celebrate the King's Coronation, £500 to Holton Pits Community Interest Company; £439 for purchase of trees for Blyford Orchard project; and £650 to other local charities/services and parish amenities."

In 2023/24 the Parish Council's total expenditure (minus the above donations) was £5010 being below budget set of £5732.

At end of the 2023/24 financial year the Parish Council held cash at bank totalling £7,597 with £3980 of this being restricted Latitude funds.

In January 2024, the Parish Council voted unanimously to request an increase in our precept from £3,250 to £3,500 for 2024/25. This would result in a charge of £30.67 for a band D property and this charge will show as a 5.86% or £0.68p per annum change on the Council Tax Bills against the Parish element. The 2024/25 budget includes an appropriate cash reserve against ongoing and reasonably foreseeable additional expenses, plus a contingency."

- 7c The Year end Receipts, Payments & Budget spreadsheets were verified, approved by Council and signed by Chairman.
- 7d **Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) – Page 3:** As the Parish Council's gross income/expenditure did not exceed £25,000 they would wish to certify themselves as exempt from a limited assurance review under Section 9 of the Local Audit (Smaller Authorities Regulations 2015). Certificate of Exemption was approved and signed by Chairman and Clerk/RFO. **Action: Clerk/RFO to forward this to external auditors.**
- 7e **AGAR Page 5:** The Annual Governance Statement. The Parish Council and Clerk/RFO confirmed to the best of their knowledge and belief that there is a sound system of internal control, including arrangements for preparation of this statement for year 2023/24. Approved by Council and signed by Chairman and Clerk/RFO
- 7f **AGAR Page 6:** The Accounting Statements previously signed by Clerk/RFO prior to approval by the Parish Council and signed by Chairman.
- 7g **The following documents were presented for approval by the Clerk/RFO:**
 - Explanation of variance 2023/24:** Receipts were substantially down on previous year by 40% due to donations in 2022/23 from both District and County Councillors for that year; Other Expenses increased by 87% due to the contested Parish & Town Elections fees of £808 and donations to various local projects/charities from Latitude Account.
 - Supporting Statement:** Asset Register increased by £126 due to purchase of printer/scanner for Clerk. Verified, approved by Council and signed by Chairman.
- 7h Bank Reconciliation of accounts from **31/03/24 to 12/05/24** Precept of £3,500 was added to the balance on the current account which stands at £7,079.94 and on Latitude/Savings account of £5,202.05, giving a combined total on accounts of £12,281.99. Reconciliation checked against bank statements approved by Council and signed by Cllr Parry and Cllr Walker.
- 7i **Approval of online payments:** £396.23 to Clerk (net salary, home office allowance, expenses and mileage); £66.20 to HMRC; £128.21 to SALC for 2024/25 annual subscription; £35 ICO Annual Subscription 2024/25 and Wenhaston Village Hall Hire 2024/25 £52. Payments verified and approved by Council. Agreed by Council to continue to hire the Wenhaston Village Hall for Parish Council meetings to May 2025. **Action: Clerk/RFO to action online payments and confirm hall bookings.**
- 8 **Planning Applications Public Access Link:** <https://publicaccess.eastsuffolk.gov.uk/online-applications>.
- 8a **New Applications:** None received.
- 8b **Update on Previous Applications:** None outstanding.

- 8c New Guidance for Developments in Rural Areas – Planning Policy Update:** Distributed to Parish Councillors. Local plans to allow a range of different developments in rural areas, where appropriate, such as barn conversions, rural worker dwelling, equestrian and economic development. To view this document visit <https://www.eastsuffolk.gov.uk/assets/Planning/Planning-Policy-and-Local-Plans/Supplementary-documents/Rural-Development-2024/Rural-Development-Supplementary-Planning-Document.pdf>
- 8d LionLink (NISP's):** The Parish Council submitted their comments to this project in April and the Council wish to thank Cllr Goldbart for working his way through this 700 page technically difficult document to produce our response. It was noted that soil surveys are currently taking place around the parishes affected.
- 9 Matters Arising since last meeting:** None received.
- 10 Footpaths:** Cllr Goldbart has been looking at old maps with the assistance of one of our Blyford residents who has carried out previous research.
- 11 Highways/Speeding issues – Police Community Speedwatch Scheme Update:** Cllr Goldbart still attempting to find enough people to volunteer for the above scheme. With regards to the extension of the 30-mph signage, Cllr Goldbart has been liaising with Suffolk County Cllr Annette Dunning regarding a meeting with the Area Highways Engineer planned for later in June outside the Queens Head Pub with permission of the Landlord. Cllr Parry suggested he try and ask the Police to join this meeting. **Action: Cllr Goldbart.**
- 12 Latitude Festival 25th-28th July 2024:** All tickets sold with a deadline for payments of 31/05/24. Cllr Parry indicated that she is awaiting information on Accessible Facilities and also details of the plans for cycle routes to the festival. The Council are grateful to Cllr Parry for her efforts with this event.
- 13 D-Day 80 Celebrations 5th June 2024:** It was decided that due to time constraints and costs involved to cancel this event but instead look into a community gathering in September. **Action: Clerk to contact The Racehorse Community Pub.**
- 14 Defibrillator at Blyford:** Nothing to report at present.
- 15 Correspondence received:** Correspondence received was distributed to the Parish Council with items of public information posted to our website/noticeboards and no further action required apart from the following: Grass cutting targets for Summer 2024 – details on website; Cllr Goldbart will be attending the SALC East Suffolk Area Forum on 13/06/24 and SALC AGM on 01/07/24 on behalf of the Parish Council. Approval given for Cllr Goldbart to attend Planning Training webinar on 04/06/24. East Suffolk Council Guidance on Planning for Custom or Self Build Housing Developments. To view this guide, go to link at item 8c.
- 16 Any Items of Information/Reports from Parish Councillors:** Cllr Goldbart spoke about the progress of work being carried out at Holton Pits and the benefits it will bring to the local communities; Asset Inspection for 2023/24: Councillor Martin volunteered to carry out this year's inspection and report prior to our July meeting. **Action: Cllr Martin and Clerk.**
- 17. Meetings held bi-monthly at 6.30 pm, in Wenhaston Village Hall on:**
Monday 15th July Monday 16th September Monday 18th November

The meeting ended at 8.10 pm

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16. Any items of information/reports from Parish Councillors: Cllr Goldbart spoke about the progress
Developments. To view this guide, go to link at item 8c.
on 04/06/24. East Suffolk Council Guidance on Planning for Custom or Self Build Housing
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will be attending the SAC East Suffolk Area Forum on 13/06/24 and SAC AGM on 01/07/24 on
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development. To view this document visit
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Councillors. Local plans to allow a range of different developments in rural areas, where
8c. New Guidance for Developments in Rural Areas – Planning Policy Update: Distributed to Parish