

SWANTON NOVERS PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on Thursday 6th December 2018 at Swanton Novers Village Hall at 7.00pm.

Councillors present: Cllr. Mrs. C Armstrong (Chair), Cllr Mr R. Hadden (Vice Chair), Cllr. Mrs. V Hart, Cllr Mrs. R. Leeder, & Cllr Mrs V. Brittain

Others present: – 1 Member of the Public. Mr David Wilson.

2018/058

Apologies.

Steffan Aquarone (County Councillor)

2018/059

To receive Declarations of Interest:

No declarations of interest were received.

2018/060

Report from County Councillor: Steffan Aquarone.

The Parish Council informed Cllr. Aquarone of the meeting date and sent a reminder requesting his report from NCC. Unfortunately, we have not received an apology or report in time for this meeting.

2018/061

Report from District Councillor: Pierre Butikofer.

The new Sheringham Splash Pool is progressing, and some pre-enabling work has been authorised. The Mobile Library are re-organising to cut out the many "Dead Stops" that are rarely used and as a consequence of the savings made the service will be maintained. NNDC is looking into the number of empty homes in the district and is looking to bring these back into the available housing stock through compulsory purchase. NNDC has £400K of additional money to be distributed under the "Market Towns Initiative" to projects within Holt, Fakenhan, North Walsham and Stalham. Initial grants of £267K from this money have already been made for improvements within these towns. Planning permission has been granted for the Bacton Sea-Scaping project to protect the gas terminal from flooding. This will cost between £19 - £27 million pounds, with the majority of this being paid by the gas plant. The chairmanship of the NNDC Cabinet has changed from Conservative to Liberal Democrat. This came about after a vote of no-confidence defeated the sitting cabinet. The new cabinet is now cross-party controlled, and District Councillor Sarah Butikofer is the new leader of NNDC.

2018/062

Public Forum:

Mr Wilson asked if there was a scheme for emergency first aid training for villages. He went on to say that he felt that a number of people in the village would be happy to pay to attend a training course in emergency first aid if made available.

2018/063

Matters arising from previous meetings minutes:

Referring to the minutes Cllr. Armstrong went on to say that Parish Council had received two letters raising concerns from members of the public who were present at the last meeting. An informal gathering of councillors to discuss this correspondence and to respond to their concerns was convened. During this gathering the text of a letter in response was agreed and has subsequently been sent. To conclude, Cllr. Armstrong said that in future it must be clear exactly what will be discussed under each agenda item and encouraged councillors to seek further clarification of any items that they feel are not clear or they think may be contentious.

Drains

The Clerk reported that he had been in contact with the new farm manager regarding the problems with the drainage in St Giles Road. Unfortunately, he is not here this evening as hoped. However, he was hoping to visit the area prior to this meeting to see the situation. I will contact him and report back at the next meeting, hopefully he will be able to attend in January.

2018/064

To Sign the Minutes of the previous meeting as a true record:

No additions or alterations were raised and therefore the minutes were signed by the Chair of the Council and the Clerk.

2018/065

Report from Chair. Cllr. Chris Armstrong.

Having had the greatness of this position thrust upon me due to the resignation of Frances Jenkinson. I would firstly like to thank Frances for her service to the Parish council and her Chairmanship over the last eighteen months.

I am looking forward to my time as Chair and I am grateful that Cllr. Rick Hadden has agreed to serve as my Vice Chair. This will only be until May, when elections will be held for councillors and officers of this council.

The first thing I would like to do is congratulate the Parish Council for all that was done together with the Village Hall Committee to make November 11th such a memorable day. There were of course individuals that worked hard throughout this year to ensure that this event was as good as it could be. We are very lucky to have these people in our village and we have had copious comments from so many people extending their thanks and congratulations regarding the day and its organisation.

Finally, in the short time before the elections I am hoping that we will be able to make some changes to ensure that our council's processes are both clear and transparent, in order that parishioners will feel comfortable when engaging with the Parish Council.

2018/066

Developing Transparency

Because of what happened at the last meeting I think that we need to have ways forward, only small tweaks, to ensure that we are never caught out again.

Member of the Public, David Wilson had expressed a wish to address the Council on this matter. This request was granted by the Chair Cllr. Chris Armstrong. With the greatest respect to all present I feel that the parish council needs to pay greater attention to transparency. I feel that the publication of meeting dates and timely publication of minutes needs to be improved. It's very difficult for members of the public to engage with the parish council if they do not have the information on the matters that were discussed and may not be able to respond in a timely manner. I have been made aware by another person in the village that they are finding it difficult to access the information on meeting dates and minutes. The Government's transparency code was implemented primarily to make it easy for the public to engage with all levels of government. Mr Wilson then went on to mention and cite some examples of good practice.

Cllr. Chris Armstrong replied, thanking David Wilson for his comments and said that we only have two more meetings before election of a full council she will be concentrating, initially on expanding the Agenda to reflect more fully the business to be discussed during the meeting. Small steps and positive ones. Additionally, if complaints are received by Councillors from members of the public that are to be discussed in the meeting, they must be verifiable and Councillors should be made aware of these prior to the meeting, so that further information could be sought if needed. If this had been the case in the past, we would not have been in the unfortunate situation that we found ourselves in at the last meeting. With this in mind perhaps we could develop a complaint form together with a more robust procedure.

2018/067

Financial Report.

The clerk presented the accounts up to date (These had previously been emailed to councillors) together with payments awaiting approval for lawn mowing, hedge cutting, street lighting maintenance and village hall hire. No questions were asked.

2018/068

Setting the Precept for 2019/2020

The draft budget and information on setting the precept had previously been sent to all councillors.

Before discussion between Councillors began, Mr David Wilson pointed out that the parish precept had tripled over the last 4 years and out of 116 parishes in Norfolk, ours comes in as 4th in terms of cost. He asked that the Parish Council take this into consideration when setting the precept. The setting of the precept and the level required to meet the council's obligations was discussed at great length concluding in the Chair asking for a vote to be taken on a 10% increase which equated to a 17pence per week increase on a typical Band D property. A vote was taken and was passed 5 votes for the motion and 0 against. There were no abstentions.

2018/069

Drains and Drainage.

This item was tabled so that the Astley Estate Manager could be asked about the land drainage in the fields adjacent to residential properties. Unfortunately, he was unable to attend so this Item was passed to be re-visited at the next meeting.

2018/070

Correspondence Received.

Correspondence was distributed to all councillors prior to the meeting.

No items needed further discussion.

2018/071

Planning.

No planning items have been received this month.

2018/072

Any other Business:

No items were put forward for discussion.

There being no further business Chair. Chris Armstrong closed the meeting at 20:57pm

Signed..... Chairman dated.....

Signed..... Parish Clerk dated.....

Next meeting will be held on Thursday 24th January 2019 at 7:00pm in the Village Hall.