

ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

April 9th 2024

The Annual Parish Meeting for the Parish of Ashill was held on Tuesday 9th APRIL 2024 at 7.00pm in the Community Centre.

Mr A Ketteringham was in the Chair with 8 members of the Council, the Clerk Jean Sangster, 15 members of the public & District/County Councillor Mr F Eagle in attendance. Apologies for absence were received from Mr T Hinds.

The minutes of the last Annual Parish Meeting held on 11th April 2023 were taken as read, passed and signed as a correct record.

MATTERS ARISING

HIGHWAYS – Unfortunately the Parish Council do not seem to have the same working relationship with the new Highways Engineer as previously. The Council understand the difficulties that they have faced over the last few months with flooding and the road repairs but this does not excuse the lack of communication. The end of last year the Engineer met Councillors on site and showed where there are problems in Swaffham Road with blocked drains and gullies but then twice the Clerk has received questions as to where this problem exists.

Also the Council had participated in the Partnership Scheme with NCC for the installation of gates at the entrances to the village and paid the 50% of the cost to them a year ago but these still have not been installed and therefore NCC has made the interest on this money rather than the Parish.

Noted that Clerk not happy about this procedure.

PLAY EQUIPMENT – Inspections have been carried out by Councillors each month and much of the work required has been carried out. The roundabout has new safety surround in place and matting has been placed under the old swings. Repairs have been carried out thanks to volunteers and the whole site has been kept in an exceptional condition thanks to the Warden Mrs J Pickard.

SPEEDWATCH SCHEME – Mr Street has continued as co-ordinator and reported that he now had 8 members in the team and holds 2 – 3 sessions a week. The Chair thanked Mr Street and his team for all their hard work.

COMMUNITY CENTRE – The Chairman Mr K Collins reported that the Centre is running well with bookings most evenings and with the Football Team now making regular use this has helped with the running costs. A very successful Fete was held last September and there will be another with the Dog Show on 1st September. He apologised for the late issue of the profit but the Treasurer did not receive some donations from stall holders till later. Maintenance costs have been higher this year due to the heating system having to be updated and further work is required to update kitchen and flooring. The Committee has just purchase a BBQ for use at the Fete from the funds raised at recent Bingo. Coffee Mornings continue every second Friday of the month and he advised that the AGM is to be held on 30th April 2024 at 7.30pm and he hoped that people would come along and support the Committee and either join them or offer help at events. He thanked everyone for their support. A Member of the public did advise that at the Fete last year there was a lot of Dog Poo on the field during the event and this will be noted. Mr Ketteringham thanked Mr Collins for his report.

RECYCLING BANKS AT COMMUNITY CENTRE – Income obtained from these for the year 2023-2024 was £734-17 a large decrease on previous year and it was requested that Parishioners continue to use these recycling banks rather than their own bins.

FOOTPATHS – Report from Warden that all in good condition and recent signpost reported missing in Common Road has been reinstated. Thanks to Mr Thomas.

ALLOTMENTS – Efforts are still being made to procure an alternative site but efforts keep getting hampered.

ASHILL ESTATE – Attempts to purchase this area of 16.34 acres for the Parish are proving very difficult but negotiations are in hand. The Chair expressed thanks to Mr Eagle for his support following the NCC Cabinet decision to allow this land to be sold to the Parish and it is hoped that an agreement on a 'fair' price will be reached in near future.

ASHLINK – Following attempts made by Nadine and Gareth to keep this running it was with regret that they had handed this back to the Parish Council with funds of £3950-71 to be kept for future if anyone else comes forward. Some people have offered help to get this off the ground and a meeting of volunteers is to be held in following weeks.

EMERGENCY PLAN – This had been completed last year and is now due to be reviewed and updated. Following the visit from the Fire Officers last month it is agreed that contact numbers from this are to be given to them and the team will get together to assess what information can be passed on. This had proved a very useful meeting and a report is on hand for anyone to read but the Officer assured that this was a ‘wild-fire’ and due to excessive heat but no cause could be established.

POLICE – There is no report from the Beat Officer and contact has been very limited over last few months. Advised that the election of new Police & Crime Commissioner is to be held on 2nd May 2024 and that again photo ID is required to vote.

ASHILL COMMUNITY FOOTBALL TEAM – Report by the Chair Mr Rhys Pearce as this has been active since the last Annual Meeting. He advised that this has turned into a thriving community hub and made remarkable progress creating teams of u7,u8 and u12’s providing opportunities to develop their skills. They had received funding exceeding £10,000 through sponsorship and fundraising and taken steps to improve the facilities such as the changing rooms and they hope to add another compound for storage of goals on the playing field. Also to form an u6’s team. Top priority is funding which is essential to the support of the Club to invest in the future. He thanked all those who have supported them in the last year and this will continue to create a positive impact on the lives of the community members through the sport. Special thanks to Parish Council for their support. Mr Ketteringham thanked Rhys for his attendance and all the hard work his team had given to the community.

CHAIRMAN’S REPORT – Mr Ketteringham gave his report on behalf of the Council.

New Members Ashley Howell and Jonathan Pearson were welcomed last May following the Election and he feels that all work well together with ideas and actions for the good of the village. His intention as Chairperson is to endeavour to get things done and resolve issues as quickly as possible and that the rest of the Council are in agreement with this. He feels that the Clerk and himself have a good working relationship and try hard to get answers to the problems that are brought to attention.

Two weeks ago a very successful open meeting was held with the Fire Officers who dealt with the fire in 2022 who presented the Fire Investigation Report and gave an insight to how this had affected the residents and the Firemen too. They have requested that a link be provided with our Emergency Plan which Mr Ketteringham feels would make good sense and shows that it was worth all the effort that went into producing this. There are still seven houses that have not been rebuilt on Edward Close and it has proved extremely difficult to get any answers from Victory Homes as to when they are going to be dealt with.

He feels that it is very frustrating trying to get Utilities to give answers let alone any work done especially with Cadent and the Gas Main and of late Highways who seem very loathe to give answers and who have had money from the Parish for over a year for the gates at entrance to the village under the Partnership Scheme but cannot give a positive date when they will be installed. He reported that he had attended two meetings regarding the new Breckland Plan and that the consultation is going well and further details will be issued in the coming weeks The recent meeting held with the Head of Planning proved very beneficial in regard to Enforcement matters and obligations from builders to abide to the conditions set out when Planning Permission is granted.

He went on to thank all those who come forward to help when necessary to keep the village going, especially the litter pickers who are always out and about keeping the village clean and tidy. Thanks to Mr Simpson for taking over as Tree Warden and to Mr & Mrs Kencroft who look after the Telephone box library and to all those people in the village who strive to keep Clubs and venues going.

He wished to thank his fellow Councilors for their support and as always the Clerk who gives the village undivided attention at all times.

REPORT FROM DISTRICT/COUNTY COUNCILLOR – Mr Eagle started by saying that he felt it a privilege to represent Ashill. He reported on the finances of the District Council that were funding the work of the Inspiring Communities. He explained that the new Local Plan is to provide growth and balance to the village communities but should be sensible for each one. Thetford being the 4th largest town in Norfolk is to receive funding to expand and it is hoped this will filter through to Swaffham, Watton and eventually to the villages.

NCC Services are really being stretched and Highways are suffering. He explained that the Yarmouth new bridge is going to make a fantastic difference to businesses in the area and was disappointed that the Western Link has failed to materialise. NCC had put forward support for local businesses and recently held market town conferences. The Rural Business Award is still open for nominations and he felt this is for Norfolk unsung heroes. He feels that having lived in the local villages he is well equipped to represent them. He informed that Ashill has the highest number of attendees of all the Parishes he represents.

He was questioned about the pay of Council Employees and he explained that both district and County Councils had endeavoured to cut costs by not replacing Chief Executives but spreading the pay to other Officers and it was felt this was good value for money.

He asked that residents promote Norfolk as a wonderful place live and work and this should then help provide more infrastructures.

NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH SCHEME

Mr Hinds reported that crime had been mainly scams and fraud again and he had posted notices warning people of these but there was very little to report.

REPORT FROM POLICE – There had been no report from the Local Beat Officer and it is noted that there has been very little contact for several months.

ASHILL WELFARE CHARITY TRUSTEE'S REPORT

Mr Leighton as Chairperson of Trustees presented his report stating that there had been very little call on the finances this last year with only money being spent on Commemorative Coins for the School children and the updating of electrics in the Call-in. He pointed out that funding for the Common Schemes in the coming year could be reduced. He thanked his fellow Trustees for their support and special thanks to Mrs Seager the Clerk for all her help.

THE ACCOUNTS FOR THE ASHILL WELFARE CHARITY TRUSTEES for year ending 31st March 2024 were then presented by Mrs Seager showing a balance of £35721-12 noting that these are yet to be audited. These were adopted proposed by Mr J Leggett seconded by Mr Howell

THE ACCOUNTS FOR ASHILL PARISH COUNCIL for year ending 31st March 2024 were presented by the Clerk/Financial Officer Jean Sangster showing a balance of £393715-64 noting that these accounts had not yet been audited. These Accounts were then adopted proposed by Mr Pearson seconded by Mrs Binns.

MINDFUL VILLAGE – Breckland Council have set up a new initiative to help people with Mental Health and had asked the village if they wished to be part of this with training offered from them. However it is thought that the village is a very helpful place and organisations already exist to assist if people are in need so it was agreed not to organise training.

CADENT – GAS MAIN – It was agreed by all present that the Council has done all it can to get this matter put right and have now made it clear that if any problems arise from this that it has been recorded it is down to Cadent to take the responsibility for any accidents that result.

CHURCH STREET/WATTON ROAD HEDGE – Following lengthy talks with Highways and the mapping department at NCC they have stated that these and the ditch are the responsibility of the property owners and not Highways or Parish Council and the owners should have adequate Insurance to cover. Highways are to notify property owners of their responsibility. In the last two years FE has taken money from his budget to cover the cost of cutting these hedges but this cannot continue.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Mr Leggett requested thanks are recorded to the members of AVA for the setting up and running the Saturday Morning Breakfast Club which has proved extremely successful.

This concluded the business of the evening and Mr Ketteringham thanked everyone for their support and attendance and closed the meeting at 8.34pm

SIGNED _____

DATE _____