

MULBARTON ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

Minutes of the Mulbarton Annual Parish Meeting held on
on Monday 8th May 2017 at 7.00pm.

Parish Councillors present:-

Peter Leigh – Chairman	Steve Sewell	Beverley Leek	Adam Banham
Emma Reeve	Derek Aldous	Richard Tucker	

In attendance: County Councillor Colin Foulger, District Councillor Nigel Legg, Rector Adrian Miller, representative from local clubs and organisations and local residents.

1. Chairman of the Parish Council opens the Annual Parish Meeting.

Councillor Peter Leigh welcomed everyone to the Annual Parish meeting and explained that a parish meeting in England is a meeting to which all electors in a civil parish are entitled to attend. In an area where there is a parish council, the Chairman of the parish council shall chair the parish meeting. A parish meeting has no powers; it acts only as an annual democratic point of communication.

2. Apologies for Absence.

Cllr Leigh explained that the Police no longer attend Parish Council or Annual Parish meetings.

3. To confirm and sign the minutes of The Annual Parish meeting held 9th May 2016.

The minutes were agreed as a true record of the meeting and signed accordingly.

4. Parish Council Chairman's report – Peter Leigh.

Cllr Leigh as Chairman of the Parish Council read out the following report:

Chairman's Report May 2017

At the Council meeting in January we set out the Precept for the year 2017/18 and I am pleased to announce that, unlike the District Council, we have reduced our tax bill by 5%. This has been achieved by tight financial control, reviewing existing contracts, maximising third party contributions, Councillors doing a lot of the work and also foregoing their entitlement to their yearly allowance. This has enabled us to maintain our commitments whilst lowering the tax. I believe we are the only PC in SNC to actually

lower the tax burden. Three examples of how we have saved money is the repair to play equipment at the Meadows. We have rebuilt the "tunnel", completely stripped, powder-coated the zip wire and rebuilt it with upgraded material as well as the repairing the mini roundabout- in this case the contractor wanted over a £1,000 to do the work something we did in a morning!

We have spent a lot of time and money on the maintenance of the play equipment and much of this is due to the fact that vandals have sabotaged some equipment and also adults are using equipment designed, installed and certified for youngsters up to the age of 13. We have had to put up signs reminding people of this and it would help us greatly if people respected this and encourage others to do the same. At the time of writing this isn't necessarily the case because a number of adults are being observed sitting on the swings, some even with their children on their laps. **Remember it is YOUR money we are spending on all these repairs.**

Communicating with our residents is a core function of the Council and one idea that has been muted is the holding once a month of a Parish Council "Surgery" so that residents can discuss in detail their ideas or concerns with members of the Parish Council. We are always looking to improve our "connection" with the community and we are mindful that a lot of residents don't have regular access to computers or smart phones.

Don't forget to keep up to date with our activities and news and in particular our newly updated "Welcome Booklet" by logging on to the Parish Council website and for those who don't have access and would like a hard copy of our Welcome Booklet again get in touch with our Clerk, Anne.

We are working closely with the Football Club in trying to help them with their aspirations in providing better facilities for both the players (including match officials) and the loyal band of supporters. We have reinstalled a new bench near to the football pitch, to replace the one that was lost a time ago.

We are also looking at ways to support the Cricket Club, who are struggling to get teams out but we hope they can succeed as we feel cricket is an essential part of Village life.

We have completed the re-surfacing of the tennis/5-a-side football/netball court and if you look on our website you will find details of how to book etc. I know the football club are keen to make use of the all-weather surface.

We are scheduling another set of litter picks this year. Watch our website for details.

The people who manage the phone mast at the rear of the Village Hall have applied to raise the mast height by five metres. This will enable other mobile operators to use the mast and it should also provide better coverage within the Village.

The perennial problem of dog waste has come to the fore again. I know the vast majority of dog owners act responsibly but I have seen instances recently of dogs defecating on arable land, planted with wheat and this means disease can easily get into the food chain. If you see this abuse happening please report it either to us or SNC Environmental Team.

Despite the atrocious weather, thanks to everyone who helped make the Queens 90th birthday celebrations a great family day out.

We continue to manage the Five Year Management Plan for the Common, albeit with little or no input from SNC. You will have noticed that new Bridle path signs have been erected on the west side of the Common adjacent to the B1113. Unfortunately a couple of weeks after being erected, someone took it upon themselves to uproot one of them and throw it in the copse 200-300 yards away. This would have involved more than one person given the size and weight of the post. People should note that there are no bridle paths alongside either the south or east sides of the Common and if people see this being abused would you contact Helen Sibley at SNC as she is the person responsible for these matters. We

have been gradually pushing back the bramble around the wooded areas and tidying up the areas surrounding the ponds. This has been done conscious of the need to minimise the impact on the wildlife. You may remember we commissioned an ecological report on the Common from Norfolk Wildlife Trust - this was intended to be published in July but we are still awaiting this report, despite several reminders about it still being outstanding. We must be doing something right as we have received an enquiry from a Council in the Attleborough area, complimenting us on our Common and they would like to come and talk to us to see how we have managed it so well.

We reviewed our existing grounds maintenance contract – the present one ran out at the end of October; and have awarded a contract to a company that used to work for us a number of years ago. We have received positive feedback from people who have seen the work and it is our intention to review the contract at the end of the year and if favourable extend the contract to three years. This was built into the tendering process.

As a consequence of our articles in the Parish News, and a bit of arm pulling, we have two additional Councillors - Adam Banham – who joined us in October last year and Emma Reeve who has recently joined us. They are both younger people and give a different prospective to the Parish Council. Something we welcome as it gives us a broader outlook on our decision making process.

Many will have noticed that the Village Sign is now illuminated and all reports are positive and say how well it looks.

As you may or may not be aware SNC have called for land to be considered for potential development within the Village in the next phase of the local plan. One of the areas that SNC have put forward is the area at the north end of the Meadows and to which we and Bracon Ash & Hethel Council strongly object to. By now the SNC exercise of “call for development sites” exercise has been through the initial screening process and early indications are that the Village will not be subject to any large scale developments but with SNC nothing is guaranteed. If people remember our Development Plan did allow for small scale “infill” developments and it should form part of the decision making process.

We continue to financially support the publication of the Parish Mag to the value of £320 and also support Marina in maintain g the Village Website to the tune of £120 per year. Our Clerk would appreciate a copy of the Parish Mag.

Finally a big thank you to all our Councillors for their support over the past twelve months. Don't forget, these are all volunteers who have given their time freely and all have forgone their right to an allowance to enable the money to be used in the Community. Also thanks to Nigel and Colin for their help and advice over the past year.

5. County Councillor’s Report.

Cllr Colin Foulger explained that councillors were currently in purdah due to the forthcoming general election and this restricts what they can say publically.

Cllr Foulger reported that the NDR is due to be completed in the second week of January 2018; no decision has been reached regarding whether it will join the A47. Highways England will continue to invest in road improvements on the A47, Gt Yarmouth to Norwich and Norwich to Peterborough; this may include improving the existing road or possibly widening it, at present it is still in the planning stage. Cllr Foulger reported that he had attended meetings to discuss plans for the Thickthorn junction of the A11/A47 and again this is still under discussion.

In response to a question regarding the proposed changes for the Harford Bridge, B1113/A140 junction Cllr Foulger replied that it was still in the planning stage and had not yet been approved. As it was still in planning and as he had only seen outline plans, he was unable to comment further as discussing it may

lead to him having a pre-judged opinion and he may be called as a reserve/substitute member when it goes before planning committee.

6. District Councillor's Report.

Cllr Foulger had already reported in his capacity as County Councillor.

Cllr Legg, following on from Cllr Foulger reported that there was one planning meeting between now and the general election and it was unlikely that the Harford Bridge plans would be discussed at that meeting. Cllr Legg read out the following report:

District Councillors Annual Report for Mulbarton PC

It is good to report that South Norfolk Council was placed in the final 6 out of 380 Local Authorities in the LGC Awards, so we must be getting something right!

There has been a revaluation in respect of Business Rates. The intention is that these will be available to Local Authorities in place of The Government Rate Support Grant. There is concern that there will an extra burden on businesses following revaluation. However in South Norfolk there will be a fall in the aggregate bills by 5%.

Domestic Council Tax was increased by 3% this year. There is pressure on Local Authority finances due to a reduction in the New Homes Bonus. Nationally South Norfolk District has performed well in terms of new homes built. About 1000 new homes are being built each year in South Norfolk. This represents about 1% of the National Housing performance. Many of the new homes are of the affordable type. It would be good to see more of these allocated to shared ownership in order to help young people buy their homes.

Because of the reduction in direct Government support South Norfolk Council is exploring ways to generate income. The Council is building new homes, office and factory accommodation for rent.

The pressure from above to build more homes means that there is increasing pressure on the green landscape in South Norfolk. There is a "call for sites" to be put forward for inclusion in the next Local Plan. So far this includes much of the remaining green space in Mulbarton. This will not necessarily be built on but it gives an indication of the pressures locally. Mulbarton is in the Norwich Policy Area for housing development where there is a lack of the Government requirement for a national five year land supply. This gives developers an almost free hand to build where they wish. There is pressure to delete the NPA so that any new housing development can be spread throughout South Norfolk.

There has been major refurbishment of Wymondham Leisure Centre. There are plans to upgrade Long Stratton Leisure Centre similarly.

Cllr Legg went onto report that he had attended a meeting recently to discuss the problems that some residents were having in getting their bins emptied as bin lorries were unable to get down their roads due to parked vehicles. It was mentioned that developers will allocate only minimal parking spaces to achieve district design and access policies, which leads to residents parking on pavements and roadside.

Cllr Legg reported that with regards to the Thickthorn junction a number of schemes had been put forward and that Highway England would be starting on the A47 improvements sometime in 2020 but

not necessarily at Thickthorn; Highways England had offered an apology for not taking into account Cantley Lane traffic into their original plans.

Cllr Legg concluded by saying that SNC Members grants were still available and if anyone was interested in applying for some funding then to contact himself or Cllr Foulger; funding will be on a first come/first served basis. Councillor Leigh commented on the fact because SNC had spent a lot of money on the leisure Centre a local businessman- running a similar establishment had had to close down with subsequent loss of jobs and revenue to SNC.

7. Reports from local groups and organisations.

Mr Danny Gaskin, Mulbarton Wanders & Belles Football Club: reported that the club had had a very successful season and had retained all existing players. The club continues to attract new members and the reception/first year coaching session now has more than 30 children signed up. The club is looking to add an additional three teams this year with a view of having 25 teams in total in the next three years. Mr Gaskin reported that the club currently has a lack of facilities, with only two changing rooms for 17 teams and no regular access to toilet facilities for those playing or their parents/guardians/spectators. The club has spoken to the Parish Council of their aspirations to develop the club and a potential source of revenue to build new facilities including car parking.

Rev Adrian Miller, Mulbarton Parish Church: reported that the church had been packed on Remembrance Sunday with the Scouts and Guides, and the Christmas Carol Service had been attended by 240. The Community Choir group that is being led by Andrew (Rev. North) has 50 members. The Church has been working with the Social Club in promoting the Mardlers Group that has 40 plus attendees most months. Rev Miller continued that following the review of churchyard regulations in 2016 and the church's negotiations there had been some relaxation of the rules and currently the "ball" was back in their court. The new part of the churchyard is two thirds full and it is anticipated that it will be completely full within ten years, although this could be four-five years if the rate of last year continues. Rev Miller concluded with an open invitation to their open day, during daylight hours, on Saturday (13 May 2017).

Mrs Jill Wright, Mulbarton Heritage Group: reported that the group still continues and that meetings have been well attended, although it is still the same small committee that arranges them so they'd like for new people to join and suggest new ideas for local topics. In October 2016, Caroline Jarrold told the group about the history of her family and its various businesses; in November 2016, Dr Rob Knee spoke about the Paston family and in January this year the group had an afternoon meeting to show mementoes and share memories of childhood and shopping, this attracted far more people than expected so they will have another one next year looking at different themes. Last March local resident Jonathan Draper, an archivist at the Norfolk Record Office, told the group about the recently acquired treasures from the Morningthorpe Hall sale.

The group have already planned a programme for next winter: Wednesday 11th October – David Berwick will be talking about the trials of Bishop Hall, Norwich during the English Civil War. Tuesday 7th November – Frances and Michael Holmes will give one of their presentations on the Norwich boot & shoe industry. Meetings are at 7.30pm in the Hanover Gardens lounge, there is a charge of £1.50 per person, which includes refreshments.

Mrs Jill Wright, Mulbarton Parish News: reported that it was time for a rethink as the current production group will be 75 this autumn and are wanting to hand over their roles to younger villagers who may have new ideas to make it a better production. Brian Laws gave notice last year that he wanted to stand down as Advertising Manger by the end of 2017 and despite pleas going on for a replacement in the Mulbarton Parish News and village website there have been no takers; if no one takes over the adverts then funding for the magazine will be greatly affected. Currently the magazine goes out 4 times a year, with 1750 copies being distributed by volunteers organised by Pauline Campion. There are currently 20 pages of adverts, 15 of text including the front cover. The Parish Council subsidises the magazine to make up the short fall between production costs and advert revenue. The magazine is printed in the village and then taken to a firm of finishers.

In response to a question asking if any other organisations contribute to the publication, Mrs Wright confirm it was only the Parish Council contributed and that the it was originally started and run by the Church.

Following discussions about various options for the future of the magazine, Rev. Miller offered to convene a meeting to discuss a way forward for the publication. Mrs Wright asked the meeting for examples to be forwarded to her of how other villages do their magazine/publications.

Tammy Sharpe, ParkRun: reported that they had around 90 runners whilst using the winter route and last week when they were running on the Common they had 127. It was reported that they will continue to swop the routes between the Common and the winter route depending on weather. Ms Sharpe thanked the Parish Council for their support of the ParkRun.

Cllr Leigh thanked the ParkRun for their positive and proactive approach to concerns regarding the Common and working with the Parish Council to minimise any damage.

Mr Geoff Kitchen, MALGA: congratulated the Parish Council for their work with MALGA. Thanks were also given to Peter (MALGA) who regularly strims around the allotment sites. Cllr Leigh confirmed that registering the allotment site at the Meadows was work in process now that the route to take had been established. Following discussion regarding whether MPC would sponsor an allotment for an individual, Cllr Legg suggest that he may be able to assist using his SNC members grant.

Helen Norris, Mulbarton Peacocks Preschool: read out the following report:

It has been a challenging year for Peacocks during which some difficult decisions have had to be made. However, it has made us carefully evaluate the service we provide for the children of our village and think about the changes we would like to make. Through support from our County Advisors, we have devised detailed plans of how we will improve the quality of the education that children receive at Peacocks.

As a team we are feeling positive about the future and are looking forward to celebrating the successes of our older pupils who will leave us for School at the end of July. One of the new plans for Peacocks is to host a 'stay and play' session on Mondays. This will continue the good work that Monkey Club started many years ago, but under a new name. We hope that this group will provide an opportunity for parents with young children/babies to get to know others in the village and be a supportive group during a busy and tiring time of life! We are excited for the next academic year and are looking forward to implementing our improvement plans which will result in a new and successful season of Peacocks Preschool.

Peacocks would like to thank Mulbarton Parish Council for their continued support over the last year – it is very much appreciated by us all.

Mrs Marina Carter, Village Website: read out the following report:

I have been running the Village website since May 2001 and had help re-vamping it in September 2014 when it took on its current format. I work on the site 2 or 3 times most weeks, sometimes more, to keep it as up to date as I can, but do ask that locals and groups etc. keep me informed of changes to links or contact details that need attention. I gather information to include on the website, as well as for the info-mails I send out to over 300 local contacts usually about once a month, unless anything else crops up, as the Police often send me information to share too; I am grateful to the Parish Council for their support to date, "Thank you!" and appreciate the kind comments many people make regarding these 'resources'. Anyone who would like to go the e-list and receive regular info-mails, can contact me via the website www.mulbarton.info and rest assured their personal details aren't disclosed to other recipients.

Mr Malcolm Court, Scouts: reported that they currently have a long waiting list for their 2 Beaver, 2 Cub, Scout and Explorer Groups that currently cater for 120-150 children. As with many organisations it is lack of adult assistance that restricts their numbers.

Mr Peter Leigh, Rich's Trust: read out the following report:

Not many people may be aware that a charitable trust exists in Mulbarton to help local residents in need of financial assistance. The Trust has only small amounts of money to help local people out with income derived from land rental and the small allotments alongside the south side of The Rosery.

The aim of the Trust is to help Mulbarton parishioners on modest incomes, who are in need of a little financial help to pay for such essentials as heating, school uniforms, equipment to make life easier or perhaps the bus/taxi fare to visit a close relative in hospital or in fact anything they would otherwise struggle to afford without this support.

The Almoner, Mrs Pauline Champion, would like to hear from parishioners who would benefit from a gift from Trust fund, there is no age restriction. The Trust was set up many years ago for the benefit of all local residents.

If a few pounds will help you get over a crisis in your family please contact Mrs Champion and rest assured your request will be dealt with in the strictest confidence.

Mr Leigh confirmed that dig your own Christmas trees were still available from the Trust and that they had just given the Mulbarton Mardlers £250 to help set the group on and to support with ongoing costs.

No other representation was made.

8. Any other business.

There was a general discussion regarding parking on Birchfield Lane and the problems that inconsiderate parking causes all and also the dangers that it poses to those using the school and surgery. It was noted that once the support staff at the school have parked there is very little space for surgery users or those on the school run. It was concluded that all residents need to take responsibility.

No other representation was made.

Cllr Leigh thanked those that had attended and invited those that wish to, to stay in the hall for the Parish Council AGM and ordinary meeting.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 8.40pm