

MULBARTON ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

Minutes of the Mulbarton Annual Parish Meeting held remotely on
on Tuesday 4th May 2021 at 7.00pm.

Meeting Chairman: Cllr Beverley Leek

Councillors present via remote videoing platform:

Steve Sewell Adam Banham Gerald Peachy Derek Aldous Richard Tucker Emma Reeve

Also in attendance were two District Councillors and 5 members of the public.

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

Following an explanation that the meeting was being held remotely as permitted under The Local Authorities (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority Meetings) (England) Regulations 2020 which came into force on 4th April 2020 and allows local authorities to conduct meetings remotely Cllr Leek welcomed those present to the meeting and reported that the Annual Parish Meeting is a parish meeting 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

Apologies were received from District Councillor Gerry Francis.

3. To confirm and sign the minutes of The Annual Parish meeting held 13th May 2019

Cllr Leek reported that the draft minutes of the last Annual Parish Meeting held on the 13th May 2019 have been on the Parish Council's website since after that meeting.

The minutes for the Annual Parish Meeting held on 13th May 2019 were agreed as a true record of the meeting and signed accordingly.

4. Parish Council Chairman's report

Cllr Leek read out the following report on behalf of Mulbarton Parish Council:

Welcome to the Mulbarton Parish Council Annual Report.

We are told that we are living in extraordinary and unprecedented times. For the last eighteen months Mulbarton Parish Council has continued to work hard to represent and improve the quality of life for the residents of Mulbarton.

After many years of dedicated service the Chair of the Parish Council Peter Leigh decided to step away from his role and later in the year Mrs Emma Reeve was co-opted onto the council. We would like to thank Peter for all his hard work and welcome Emma onto the council.

Covid has impacted on all our lives and the Parish Council has adapted to Zoom meetings and streamlined its methods of organising the maintenance and works required in the village. The usual upkeep of public areas has been supplemented by projects to enhance life in the village with work including areas on the common, allotments and village centre.

The finances of Mulbarton Parish Council remain robust and able to fund maintenance and development in the village. The Council decided not to increase the precept for this year as it recognised the changes in income in some households but also the additional costs imposed by the pandemic and the recent political developments in trade.

The Common in Mulbarton is privately owned and the legal administration is conducted by South Norfolk Council. We have recently resurfaced the main Common car park, had trip hazards removed and have an ongoing works plan to renovate the play equipment including the wonderful rocking horse which we believe dates back to the 1950's. The Parish Council is replacing the plastic bench which was destroyed by arson with an ethically sourced solid oak bench made from the bough of a Norfolk tree, and we have also sourced forty young trees for planting on the Common as a donation by the Woodland Trust. We are looking at regaining the momentum of a management plan for the Common including work on the ponds with the "Claylands" project. There has been some contention regarding the digging out of a historical clunch pit as a BMX track which is contrary to the bye-laws of the Common. As a positive way forward the Parish Council has conducted a feasibility study into installing a BMX Pump Track as a community asset on Parish Council land so the pit can be restored to a wildlife area with assistance from the Norfolk Wildlife Trust.

The Meadows is another valuable asset of the Parish Council with allotments and a play area. This year has seen the refurbishment of the Zip Wire and ongoing work on other play equipment.

New allotments on the Long Lane Hopkins Homes development have been added to the Parish Council's holdings and are now almost fully populated with a water supply and added security. It has been interesting to see the new areas grow with different methods including "no dig" and this summer will see the first crops. It has been good to see that MALGA has encouraged and given advice to some of the first time allotment owners.

Mulbarton Parish Council have been pleased to renew the lease of Blakey's Bus Café which has done sterling service. We have also added secure cycle racks to the village hall car park to encourage cycling around the village. There are ongoing discussions with Mulbarton Wanderers and Belles Football Club about the lease on Mulberry Park and ways in which it may be possible to develop the facilities for football.

Mulbarton Church clock is also the village war memorial and after seventy years exposure to the elements was looking a little shabby. Working with Rev Adrian Miller and the Diocese the council arranged and paid for the church clock to be removed, the face renovated and the mechanism fully serviced (MPC pays for the annual service) by Smith of Derby who are the original manufacturers. It was fitting that it was replaced just in time for the Remembrance Service on the 75th anniversary of VE Day.

Mulbarton Parish Council is very concerned about the cumulative impact of development in the Parish and neighbouring areas and has made representations to our District Councillors. At present there are plans to develop land for:

- Proposed substations for offshore wind farms at Swardeston
- Proposed solar farms at Bloy's Grove and Bracon Ash
- Apex Business Park on the Harford Bridge corner
- Ben Burgess industrial development near Swainsthorpe
- Village clusters and possible garden villages as a result of the latest Greater Norwich Local Plan
- Proposed Norwich Energy Innovation Park on the road to Wymondham
- The Thickthorn roundabout development, which will also have an impact on the traffic through the village while these developments are underway.

There are concerns that the development is being granted piecemeal with no regard to the cumulative impact on the countryside around Mulbarton and will not result in any significant benefits in economic activity or employment for Mulbarton.

Two local solar farms are proposed at Bracon Ash and Bloy's Grove. The Bracon Ash site is reasonably compact and will feed into the local electricity supply with minimal traffic impact on the village although probably using the overworked B1113. The Bloy's Grove site with EDF is very large at 81 hectares to the north and south of Brick Kiln Lane. Apart from the loss of farming land, the Council is concerned about proposals to possibly transport the components through Mulbarton from the B1113 at seventy two HGV journeys per day, and the impact on safety and village life over six months. In a meeting with EDF this was put strongly to the developers, who do appear to have amended the transport plan but still retain the Mulbarton route as an outside possibility in the planning.

Over the last three years Mulbarton Parish Council has played an active role in the planning inquiries for several offshore wind farm projects.

The inquiry for Hornsea Three closed in April 2019, and the recommendations were made public for the first time just over a year later in July 2020. The Parish Council raised several objections to the proposed location of the Hornsea Three substation alongside the B1113, but these were set aside by the government. The Parish Council did not take part in the Norfolk Vanguard inquiry. This project was approved by the government in July 2020, but the decision was overturned by the High Court in February 2021. As a result, the project does not have planning consent to go ahead with its proposals.

Both of these projects were recommended for refusal by the Planning Inspectorate because of their damaging effects on offshore wildlife.

The Parish Council did take part in the Norfolk Boreas planning inquiry, and along with many other groups, called for the use of offshore transmission to connect these large wind farm projects to the national grid. A decision on Norfolk Boreas was due to be announced on 12th April 2021, but has now been postponed.

Also in July 2020, the government announced an urgent review of the use of offshore transmission to connect all these offshore projects to the grid. This could avoid the need for any substations to be built in South Norfolk, and would ensure that more renewable energy is carried across the grid to London.

In December 2020 a new White Paper on Energy was issued. It recommended the use of offshore transmission and called for urgent proposals. The Parish Council submitted a proposal, which has been accepted by the government for serious consideration. Despite this, the government approved the Hornsea Three project on 31st December 2020. After the High Court decision on Norfolk Vanguard, it is not clear what will happen next to this project.

Another planning inquiry, for the Dudgeon and Sheringham Shoal Extensions, is just beginning. If all of the other projects go ahead, and the government decides not to use offshore transmission, then this would also need a substation in South Norfolk, close to the National Grid site at Dunston.

We are still waiting for South Norfolk Council to publish their Greater Norwich Local Plan village cluster document and details of the consultation period for comments. The Council will be reviewing and possibly updating the Mulbarton Neighbourhood Plan depending on what proposals the documents contain.

Mulbarton Parish Council wishes to thank all those in the village whose efforts during the pandemic have helped others, and to thank all contributors for their continued support of the village. A special mention goes to Chris and Jane Landsdowne who have taken over the running of Charlie's Box (the telephone box) and have maintained an excellent facility for the village.

We look forward to the village coming out of the pandemic and returning to a more normal way of life. The Parish Council will continue to maintain and develop the community amenities in the village, support the groups and associations who are part of village life, and to safeguard the way of life of its residents.

5. County Councillor's Report

Cllr Leek reported that at the last Parish Council meeting, District Councillor Colin Foulger had informed the meeting that he had decided not to stand for re-election at next Thursday's elections and thanked him for his time representing the residents of Mulbarton.

6. District Councillors' Reports

District Councillor Nigel Legg:

Covid restrictions apart, there have been significant changes in operations at South Norfolk Council. There has been a move to combine many office functions with those of Broadland Council. For example, there is now a combined planning department. Residents therefore may find that they have to deal with officials from Broadland Council for certain functions. There is to be a common website and email function which hopefully will make these processes relatively seamless. The Council offices are now called The House and The Lodge respectively.

Hard copies of bin emptying calendars have not been issued so far this year. This is because there are proposals to change some of the rotas. Details are published on the Council's website. For those who do not have internet access a hard copy of the calendar can be obtained by telephoning the Council's Ketteringham depot. Hard copies of calendars may be made available later this year, when any rota changes have been made.

It is likely that some restrictions will remain in place following easing of the Covid regulations. There will be limits to the numbers of people who can attend public meetings at the Council offices, for example. The details have yet to be clarified by officials.

The members' ward grants system is to continue as before. Residents who wish to take advantage of these should contact the District Councillors directly. The Community Action Fund grant system is also open for applications. These must be made by June 1st.

The Village Cluster element of The Greater Norwich Local Plan is expected to be published on June 1st. There will be a period of consultation afterwards.

District Councillor Vivienne Clifford-Jackson reported that Cllr Leek and Cllr Legg had covered all the points she wish to mention, and went on to thank all for the work that had been done in the last year to support the village, and also praised the work done by the Help Hub at South Norfolk Council. Cllr Clifford-Jackson noted that 12 SNC Covid Hero certificates had been awarded around the village.

7. Reports from local groups and organisations

Cllr Leek read out the following report on behalf of **Mulbarton Parish News**:

We only missed one issue since March 2020 due to lockdown, and have continued to provide a means of informing the community of local matters, with space for longer reports from Councillors, Church, School and Surgery. Some organisations have found it a useful way to keep members in touch, and some have sent interesting 'extras' such as quizzes.

I am particularly grateful to the Assistant Editor, Sue Parker, who has taken the lead on a couple of issues and has come up with great ideas to bring the community together through the magazine. We have received a number of appreciative messages.

Thanks, too, to all who have been willing to deliver whilst taking their permitted exercise, and to Pauline who organises the deliveries. Jill Wright (Editor).

Mrs Marina Carter read out the following report on the **Village Website**:

I have hosted the village website since the turn of the century and thank the Council for their continued support.

In the last 30 days the site has had 342 unique visits looking at 830 pages.

Carl continues to give me technical support as and when I need it, although this hasn't happened during lockdown; and I've been pleased to include some of Cllr Peachey's amazing village photographs – so thank you to them both. I do always need to keep an eye on updating as much as possible and am always happy to hear from anyone who spots something that needs changing / updating.

I also 'run' a village Google calendar and send monthly info-mails to nearly 200 recipients who have opted in to comply with GDPR. All of these have been slightly more tricky during Covid with the lack of events going on locally, and I do rely on people sending me their information to disseminate.

The village map has been updated by my brother again, this time to include the play parks with equipment on Mulberry Gardens and Oakley Park.

Mr Malcolm Court reported on behalf of the **Mulbarton Scout Group**:

The Scouts have carried on with virtual sessions during the last year and thanks are given to all our colleagues for keeping all within the Scout group occupied and it was encouraging that no members had been lost whilst restrictions have been in place. Renovations have been taking place within the Scout Hut during the lockdowns and these have made use of grants to help with these upgrades. Thanks were given to Mulbarton Parish Council for their continued support.

The HQ will be back in action after 17th May, and it is hoped that this year's planned fireworks event will go ahead as a celebration and thanks to the village.

Rev Adrian Miller reported on behalf of **Mulbarton Parish Church**:

2020 was a very different year but the church was kept open. Technology and new ways of working have helped the Church to continue to engage with its congregation. The volunteer group set up to serve the community helped many throughout last year and it is pleasing to report there have been no assistance requests in the last two and a half weeks. There has been a lot of footfall through the churchyard. An architectural inspection recently completed was impressed by works completed since the last report six years ago.

Cllr Leek read out the following report on behalf of **Mulbarton Heritage Group**:

Back in 2005 a group of people offered to get together to organise activities and meetings to focus on Mulbarton's historic heritage. The results have been websites, transcripts of Parish Registers, surveys of local churchyards, research into Mulbarton men who served in WW1, a catalogue of historic photos, meetings on a whole range of subjects of local interest, and we have secured hosting for the current village history websites until 2029.

Unfortunately, several of that group are either no longer here or have had to stand down for health reasons. For the past 3 or 4 years we have appealed through Parish News and at meetings (including past Parish Annual Meetings) for others to join the group, but to no avail. So we have decided to disband as a group and close the bank account. We have donated the £150 in it to NORAH – the Norfolk Record Office Heritage charity – and kept a small cash float (£30) in case anyone else is inspired to organise a local heritage project or meeting. I will continue to maintain the websites.

Jill Wright (Co-ordinator, retired!)

8. Any other business

There being no further business the meeting closed at 7.33pm.