

Minutes of the Dersingham Annual Parish Council meeting held on 20th May 2024 at 7pm in the Dersingham Village Centre

Councillors present: Coral Shepherd (Chairman), Brian Anderson (Vice Chair) Valerie Brundle, Robert Frost, John Houston, Martin Noble, Mike Shepherd, Jordan Stokes, Brett Thomas, Mark Ward, and Sarah Whitehead.

Also present: Karen Orgill (Business Manager – BM)
Geraldine Scanlon (Assistant Business Manager - ABM – Minute taker).

- 1 **To elect the Chairman of the Council and to receive the Chairman’s Declaration of Acceptance of office.**
Cllr B Anderson nominated Cllr C Shepherd; Cllr Martin Noble seconded the nomination.
Councillors voted; and it was resolved that Cllr C Shepherd be duly elected as Chair.
- 2 **To elect the Vice Chairman of the Council and to receive the Chairman’s Declaration of Acceptance of office.**
Cllr C Shepherd nominated Cllr B Anderson; Cllr Robert Frost seconded the nomination.
Councillors voted; and it was resolved that Cllr B Anderson be duly elected as Vice Chair.
- 3 **Apologies for absence –** Councillors Ann Watkins and Dennis Wright.
- 4 **Declarations of interest and request dispensations by Councillors in any of the agenda items listed –** None Received.
- 5 **To review the Asset Register**
Cllr C Shepherd said the Asset Register had been shared on SharePoint, and as there are some amendments needed, suggested the Environment Committee reviews the street furniture, streetlights and trees and all other items be dealt with by the Finance & Admin Committee. Once the necessary corrections have been made the Asset Register will be presented to Councillors at the July Full Council meeting
- 6 **Appointment of Parish Council members to serve on the following committees.**
Councillor C Shepherd reviewed the current Committee representatives.
It was resolved to approve the following Committee representatives.

Communications Committee

Cllr Tony Bubb
Cllr Coral Shepherd
Cllr M Shepherd
Cllr Jordan Stokes
Mrs Geraldine Scanlon (ABM)
Mr Stephen Martyn (Website)
Mrs Jo Halpin-Jones (Editor)

Mr Rob Smyth (Assistant Editor)

Environment Committee

Cllr Robert Frost
Cllr Brian Anderson
Cllr Tony Bubb
Cllr Coral Shepherd
Cllr Jordan Stokes
Cllr Ann Watkins
Cllr Mark Ward

Finance and Administration Committee

Cllr Brian Anderson stated he wished to withdraw from the F&A Committee for the foreseeable future.

Both the Chairman and Cllr M Shepherd raised concerns regarding the number of Councillors on the F&A Committee and asked for volunteers to join F&A, with only four members there is a significant risk that the Committee will not be quorate for meetings.

Cllr Mike Shepherd
Cllr Robert Frost
Cllr Coral Shepherd
Cllr Sarah Whitehead

Planning Committee.

Cllr J Houston
Cllr Valerie Brundle
Cllr Dane Hipkin
Cllr Martin Noble
Cllr Coral Shepherd
Cllr Brett Thomas

7 Appointment of Parish Councillors as representatives for the following: It was resolved to approve the following:

- (a) Dersingham Social Club.**
Councillor D Wright.
- (b) Norfolk Playing Fields Association.**
Councillor D Wright.
- (c) Tree Warden**
Councillor B Anderson and Councillor A Watkins.
- (d) Heacham & District Community Transport Scheme.**
Councillor R Frost
- (e) Dersingham United Charities Trustees.**
Councillor D Wright and Councillor T Bubb

- (f) **DVCA Trustee.**
Councillor C Shepherd.
- (g) **Internal Audit Controller.**
Councillor M Shepherd.

8 To receive attached Chairman's reports.

(a) Full Council

Dersingham Parish Council Chairman's Annual Report 2024

The Parish Council continues to meet regularly and to provide services to the community. We should have 18 councillors but our current complement is 15, so, if you know of anyone interested in joining us please speak to me or our Business Manager, Karen Orgill.

The Parish Council has over 2.4 million pounds worth of assets, the main two are firstly the village centre which, under a lease, is ably looked after for us by the Dersingham Village Centre Association, a registered charity. And secondly the Queen Elizabeth 2nd Jubilee Hall, rented by the Dersingham Social Club. Their new committee are making it a vibrant and popular facility in the village. Our other assets are streetlights, dog waste bins, several seats and benches, litter bins, over 100 trees, 4 public noticeboards, the war memorial and gardens and several informal open spaces at the Mountbatten Estate, including the Warren. And last but not least the Sports Ground in Manor Road where we have a new lease with the Sandringham Estate. In turn, we lease the ground to the newly formed Dersingham Sports Ground Association. They maintain the land for football, cricket and tennis, all of which have active clubs and are working towards improving the changing facilities as the current pavilion is no longer fit for purpose.

As councillors our work is varied throughout the year, from regularly scrutinising our accounts to ensure that parishioners money is well managed to commenting on planning applications within the village and producing Village Voice. Unfortunately, like everyone else we have been affected by rising prices and have had to put up the precept this year, but it remains below the level set in 2017/18 and importantly we have not had to reduce the level of services. We were able last September to appoint a third member of staff, Joanne MacCallum, to specifically look after our accounts. Our other 2 members of Staff are our Business Manager, Karen Orgill who has overall responsibility to keep us on the straight and narrow and the assistant business manager, Geraldine Scanlon who supports the BMs work and has a specific role to work with the editor of Village Voice, to look after and obtain new advertisers and coordinate our team of volunteers who deliver the magazine to everyone in the village. I would like to give my sincere thanks to our editor, Jo Jones and all those who give up their time to deliver the magazine, whatever the weather.

Over the last 12 months we have quietly achieved the following – commented to the Borough Council on 35 planning applications and given donations to the following – the Village School for their new library, the Dersingham Village Choir to enable them to put on free concerts, Norfolk Befriending to allow them to continue their vital work with lonely and isolated people and NARS. We also provide grants to St Nicholas Church and the Sports Ground Association to assist with the costs of grass cutting and also to the Heacham Car Scheme. We continue to provide grass cutting at several areas around the village, maintain streetlights and emptying of dog and litter

bins. We have replaced 7 somewhat dodgy streetlights and will continue with this project over the next 12 months. We have renewed the contract to keep the village clean, commissioned a survey of the trees in the village and replaced and fixed to the ground the picnic bench and seats at the Recreation Ground. We had the bus shelters in Manor Road and Chapel Road and the war memorial railings repainted and regularly check the 2 defibrillators that we own. We have obtained some new safety signage on the A149 through our county councillor Stuart Dark. We have kept in check the conifer hedge around the pill box at Broadlands Close, removed a dead tree at the Recreation Ground, ensured the cutting of firebreaks for properties next to The Warren and replaced an aging noticeboard beside the pedestrian entrance to the Coop. We are currently in the process of preparing a specification for the renewal of our grass cutting contract.

Last year we introduced an electronic system of data storage and sharing for councillors and staff. This has made it easier for councillors to prepare for meetings and reduced some of the workload for staff, don't worry we still keep them very busy. Later this week we will be making live a new website, not only does it have all of our agendas and minutes, currently back to 2018, and in the next few months will have an electronic public record back to 2015. The website also has all of our adopted policies, as well as annual financial information. There is also some general information about the village, including about a number of active clubs and societies.

Most recently we have been pleased to assist county councillor Stuart Dark in his campaign to ensure that the vital school crossing patrol at Doddshill Road and Manor Road is retained and additional safety signage is put in place. The post has been advertised not only on the county council website but also around the village on our noticeboards. I hope that the post is soon filled.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all of my fellow councillors for their help and support, both practical and moral over the last year. Most importantly I would like, on behalf of us all, to give a huge thanks to our 3 hard-working members of staff who quietly, efficiently and calmly beaver away in the background and without them we certainly would not be able to function.

Coral Shepherd, Chairman

(b) Communications Committee

COMMUNICATIONS COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT 20th May 2024

The communications committee is responsible for Village Voice, the parish council website, social media and village noticeboards. Not much you may think, but these are our main ways of communicating with our parishioners, both letting them know what we are doing and for them to let us know what they think of the work that we do. Unlike other committees we only meet every other month but this is sufficient to cover our work.

The first most important area of our work is the production of Village Voice every other month. We continue with Jo Jones as our editor and I would like to thank her for all her amazing work which she approaches in a calm, professional manner. Geri does a sterling job of compiling the magazine, coordinating the distributors, and being responsible for financial dealings with the advertisers. Village Voice continues to be delivered to every residential property in the village,

come rain, shine, wind or snow by a dedicated team of volunteers and I would like to take this opportunity to thank them. I know from personal experience it can be a challenge to find letter boxes and avoid losing fingers because of fierce springs and excited pets!

Our other main and important area of work is the Parish Council website, which can be viewed the world over. This year eventually saw us start work on a new website. It was important for us not to lose the valuable data on the old website. So, after liaison with our new suppliers, Parish OnLine, there was much work to detail the structure of the site and many hours uploading the data and putting in links to our mapping system. Many thanks to Cllr Mike Shepherd for all the hours he put in to ensure it contained as much data as possible before it went live in April. The website contains a wide variety of information about the parish council and the village such as photos and contact details for parish councillors, information about when our meetings are due, agendas and minutes and our policies as well as information about village groups and societies. It has a .gov.uk address clearly sign posting that we are local government and will be a valuable resource for councillors as well as for residents.

Steve Martin, our webmaster has quietly and efficiently setup and maintained the old website for around 10 years and it was head shoulders better than many other parish council websites. It set the standard for our new website. We only took the decision to have a new website as he wanted to step back. I would like to thank Steve for all his hard work and help, especially during covid and following the death of Prince Philip, the Duke of Edinburgh and her majesty Queen Elizabeth the second.

For those who are not fans of the internet we keep the village up to date with our activities through our 4 noticeboards – outside Thaxters, the Coop, opposite the Coop and at the library. This year, we have at last replaced the noticeboard outside the Coop, meaning the Geri no longer runs the risk of being hit on the head by the very dodgy door.

In respect of social media, we have for several years had a Facebook page. At our last committee meeting we agreed to cease to have this Facebook page and when necessary we agreed that we will post information or seek views through the village Facebook page.

Finally, my thanks go to all members of the committee and especially to the staff who have to implement our decisions.

Coral Shepherd

(c) Environment Committee

The report for the Environment Committee 2024

Another busy year for the Environment Committee, as you can see below.

The War Memorial Gardens

The parishioner has been busy caring for the Memorial Garden, which looks really neat and tidy, and the Environment Committee would like to thank him for all his hard work. It is a really nice place to sit and remember lost ones.

The railings have now been cleaned and re-painted. The Lime tree roots are pushing up the brick blocks inside the War Memorial Gardens and these brick blocks will be removed shortly and the space filled with a suitable material.

The Warren – The two logs mentioned in my last report have now been delivered and are in situ. The Warren has had fire breaks cut around the edges near the private properties.

The Recreation Ground – The five-a-side goal posts are to be removed, repainted and installed alongside the Skate Park.

Skate Park – Is still well used and liked by all. A new bench, made from recycled materials, has been purchased with easy access for wheelchair users.

The Parish Council have a new cleaning contract in place and all the benches and seats, bus shelters and the dog waste bins continue to be cleaned on a regular basis. All sponsorships have been updated and new signs on the bins.

The bus shelters have been re-painted on the inside and outside. The benches around the village have been surveyed and three are due to be repainted shortly.

Street Lights – The council has replaced street light columns outside 13 Edinburgh Way, 12 Queen Elizabeth Drive and on Glebe Road.

Children's Play area – The area is cleaned, and safety checked, this continues to be done on a regular basis. This area is well used and nice to see families enjoying this facility.

The hole underneath the multi-play equipment has been filled with bark chippings.

The broken swing is being repaired and following the latest safety report, the backboard to the multi-play and the Skate trainer are due to be repaired.

Trees – This year the council has trimmed the tops and sides of the hedge surrounding the WWII Pill Box in Broadlands Close, this will need to be trimmed again later this year after the birds have finished nesting. A tree survey has been completed by an independent company, which we will act upon later on in the year.

Flooding – The residents/environmentalists are greatly concerned about flooding in the Holyrood/sports fields areas this is due to dumped materials in the said waterways. This has been discussed at great length, and a new working group will be formed to help with these issues.

Robert Frost
Chair Environmental Committee

(d) Finance and Administration Committee

Finance and Administration Committee Annual Report 2024

This committee advises Council on the setting of the Precept with input from other committees. This year we were unable to avoid an increase due to inflationary pressures, renewal of term contracts and the need to build in contingencies to mitigate risks from uncertainties that face us in the coming year. It is however of note that this increase is the first for two years and the precept

this year is still less than that set in 2018. We hope this will be sufficient to maintain the services we currently provide but we anticipate that the coming year will be financially challenging and will require careful monitoring and management.

The committee also oversees general administration of the council, grants, leases, licenses and policies which are not personnel related or deemed to be the responsibility of other committees. Work on the Sportsground and Queen Elizabeth 11 Jubilee Hall leases is ongoing and has proved particularly frustrating due to issues outside our control. The new lease for the Sportsground has just been signed and it is expected that the sub-lease with Dersingham Sportsground Association will be signed shortly. The lease with the Social Club is expected to be signed shortly.

Provision was made in our 2019/20 budgets for a project to improve our internal communications by updating our IT systems. Unfortunately, this project was stalled due to the pandemic but the financial provision has been carried forward each year to allow the work to be completed. By April 2023 we had implemented a council wide email system and SharePoint for document sharing and collaboration among councillors and staff. We have continued to build on this platform over the last year to maximise the benefits that can be achieved from the new ways of working but there is much more still to be done.

Last year the communications committee embarked on replacing our public website with one conforming to local government standards and branding. The new website is now live and has enabled us to give public access to much of our map based information that had not previously seen outside the Parish Council. Parishioners can now contact staff and councillors using .gov.uk email addresses, reinforcing our position as a trusted part of local government. The next step is to make our .gov.uk addresses our primary addresses for use internally and when replying to outside organisations.

Mike Shepherd,
Chairman of Finance and Administration Committee
May 2024

(e) Planning Committee

Dersingham Parish Council Planning Committee 2023/24

As the newly elected Chairman of the Planning Committee, my term of Office, has been quite short. This Committee has throughout the last 12 months, seen a varied selection of planning applications, with relatively few being refused permission, either by the Parish Council or the King's Lynn Borough Planning Committee.

This coming 12 months could prove to be interesting, as we have various schemes that could come to fruition. We have the redevelopment of the old school site at the bottom of Dodds Hill and the Allotment site, at the top of Dodds Hill, plus, the yet to be decided usage of the Junior School site, we look forward to receive the Planning Applications for these sites.

These major sites, will undoubtedly bring a great deal of interest, from various groups, both for and against the projects.

Needless to say, the Planning Committee and the Full Parish Council, will endeavour to fulfil their obligations, in a fair and professional manner, for all Planning Applications.

Cllr. John Houston
Chairman Planning Committee.

(f) Staffing Committee

STAFFING COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT 20th May 2024

The staffing committee oversees staff contracts, recruitment, remuneration packages and salary payments, working conditions, training, staff appraisals, TOIL, and annual leave.

Due to the nature of its work, the meetings are not open to the public and membership of the Committee comprises the Parish Council Chairman, Vice Chairman and up to 3 other councillors at the invitation of the Chairman. Like other Committees we usually meet monthly.

In September we were able to appoint a third permanent member of staff, Jo MacCallum, as our Responsible Finance Officer. Both Karen Orgill and Geraldine Scanlon work in our office at the village centre and Jo MacCallum works from home. Due to the extent of work undertaken we have increased their working hours by 2 hours a week each.

I would like to take the opportunity to thank all 3 members of staff for their hard work and resilience to deal with whatever work we give them and to always go above and beyond. They are very supportive and I would like to reassure them that we do appreciate their hard work and loyalty.
Coral Shepherd, Chairman of Staffing Committee. 15/5/24

9 Date, Time and Place of all Council and Committee meetings up to and including the next Annual Parish Council meeting.

The BM shared the dates on SharePoint for Councillors.

10 Open the meeting to allow Public Participation. – None present.

With no further business the meeting was closed at 7.20pm