

HALES & HECKINGHAM PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

Held remotely on 5th May 2021

'Present' via webcam:

HHPC Councillors: Sheila Beckett (SB) – Chairman
Georgina Buckle (GB)
Luisa Ferrari (LF)
Phil Grimes (PG)
Andy Woodman (AW)

Other attendees: Victoria Jenkins attended for item 8, the 'Pigs & Pollinator' video and Q&A.

Clerk: Eleanor Bannister (EB)

The meeting was opened at 7.10pm.

- 1. Welcome** – The Chairman welcomed everyone present. As the guest speaker needed to finish promptly, item 8 was taken first.
- 2. Apologies & Approval of Absences** – All Councillors were present.
- 3. Approval of the Minutes** – The Minutes of the last Annual Parish Meeting held on 8th May 2019 were approved.
- 4. Updates from County & District Councillors** – Please see Appendix 1 for Cllr. Kay Mason Billig's Annual Report, Appendix 2 for Cllr. Jeremy Rowe's April Report and Appendix 3 for Cllr. Margaret Stone's Annual Report.

Members of the Council reiterated their thanks to Cllr. Margaret Stone for the support and advice that she has given the Council over the years as Norfolk County Councillor. This has included invaluable support related to the delivery of the A146 roundabout and most recently, for her support helping win Norfolk County Council Parish Partnership matched funding for a SAM2 and additionally, contributing a significant sum from her Members Budget reducing the sum HHPC would need to pay.

- 5. Chairman's Annual Report & The Year Ahead** (Previously circulated to Members)
As has been said many times, the last year has been difficult and we have had to learn to adapt quickly to the changing situation. Whilst virtual meetings have worked we are looking forward to seeing each other for real!

Neighbours have pulled together to help each other and there has been a great deal of support from volunteers. We are really grateful to all those who have provided help to others and to

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our County and District Councillors for their support. They have all helped in different ways that have been invaluable to our community.

I would also like to thank our Parish Clerk who has worked so hard during the year with patience and good humour.

The Year Ahead

The Parish Council would like to build on the community spirit that has been so positive during the last year. We would like to start a Neighbourhood Planning Project so that the Parish Council better understands what you need and want to see in our villages. We will be looking for ideas from everyone and also for champions who feel passionate about specific projects.

We are a very small Parish Council nearly always operating with too few Councillors and this can make it difficult to meet your aspirations. We are delighted that Manik Prama, has agreed to be co-opted onto the Council and look forward to welcoming him to the team. We still have another vacancy and if we do not manage to recruit more Councillors there will be two more vacancies at the next election.

6. Working Group Reviews

Composting – Working Group Members: Andy, Phil, Alan Mason

Despite the lockdowns during the year the Composting Group managed to carry on when government guidelines allowed. Unfortunately, members had to work in family groups and so missed out on the friendly team working that has been enjoyed in the past. It is a credit to their enthusiasm that they managed to collect and process so much garden waste during the year. They have received £235.50 from South Norfolk Council in recycling credits and £180.00 in donations for soil improver.

The Parish Council is grateful to the members of the composting group for their generous £1,000 contribution towards the cost of the new goal posts at the playing field.

Environment & Amenities – Working Group Members: Phil, Sheila, Andy, George, Luisa

With support from Saffron Housing and advice from Chet Valley B-Line the Parish Council has identified areas of grass around the village that are suitable to be left to allow wildflowers to colonise them. This will mean changing the mowing regime so that these areas are cut once in the spring and once in the autumn. This project will also involve planting some pollinator friendly shrubs around the village sign.

To enable residents to sit and enjoy the area near the village sign, a bench has been installed on the grass overlooking it. This has a plaque acknowledging the contribution made to the villages by Alan Mason during his time on the Parish Council.

The bund by the roundabout has been removed and some of the surplus earth was used to landscape the playing field and improve safety under the Rope Bridge. Village support for the removal of the bund helped the Parish Council petition Norfolk County Council who were supportive of the idea to reuse the soil.

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We have renovated various items on the Playing Field, with some major work carried out to the Rope Bridge. We have also installed new goal posts following the removal of the old ones a few years ago. Unfortunately we have had to claim on our insurance for damage done to the bus shelters during the year.

Hales Green Common – Working Group Members: Luisa, Sheila, George, Shane Waterhouse
With help from Helen Sibley at South Norfolk Council, we are hopeful that some of the historical issues regarding Hales Green may be addressed so that permanent solutions can be found for them. There are different stakeholders – the residents, the grazier and those using the Common and their interests all need to be balanced. South Norfolk Council is working on improving the car parking and signage for visitors.

During the lockdown the issue of owners whose dogs do not have good recall has been a big issue which on occasions has had distressing consequences both at Hales Green and elsewhere in the village. If your dog does not come back when called for whatever reason, it should be on a lead. There have been instances of antisocial behaviour where owners have allowed their dogs to approach other people or their dogs. Dog poo has become an issue again with dog owners not picking up after their pets. We would urge everyone to be considerate of other people and their circumstances.

Old Village Hall – Working Group Members: Sheila, Andy, George

Following the sale of the old village hall which is now known as the Hales Christian Assembly Hall, the building has been registered as an Asset of Community Value with South Norfolk District Council. The Parish Council and the Village Hall Charity are working together with regard to the proceeds from the sale of the hall. The Village Hall Charity AGM will be held later in the year to present ideas to residents and hold a referendum about the future use of the funds.

Planning – Working Group Members: Sheila, Andy, Phil, George, Luisa

The Council has received £1,611.87 reflecting the Community Infrastructure Levy received from South Norfolk Council following the development of the new houses on Green Lane.

Police & Safety – Parish Council Liaison: Andy

This has been a relatively quiet year despite a few instances of vandalism and opportunistic theft. We continue to urge residents to report things that don't seem right to the Police.

Traffic & Transport – Working Group Members: George, Sheila

In accordance with government and police guidelines Community Speedwatch has been on hold for much of the year. We are grateful to volunteers who have successfully recommenced the Speedwatch as relaxation of rules has allowed them to do so. The PC has been advised that its application to Norfolk County Council's Parish Partnership Scheme for 50% grant to buy a new generation Speed Awareness Monitor has been successful. Our outgoing Norfolk County Councillor has also made a generous contribution towards this project and we are really grateful for her support and championing of this cause.

[All the Working Groups are supported by the Parish Clerk.]

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7. Budget Summary (For 2020/21 and 2021/22 - previously circulated to Members)

The Clerk/Responsible Finance Officer reported that the Parish Council's finances remained in good shape though reserves that were carried over from the previous year were diminishing. Highlights and key variances during 2020/21 included:

- **The Composting Scheme** kindly gave a donation to the playing field of £1,000.
- **New 5-aside goal posts** replaced the old ones. This came in under budget at £9,555.
- **Bus Shelter Panels:** There was an unanticipated cost for the replacement of 3 panels on the Beccles-bound bus shelter. Vandalism was a possibility so they have been replaced with strengthened polycarbonate panels at a cost of £784 excl. VAT.
- **Staff & Training Costs:** Costs were higher than budgeted for as they included back-dated pay due from 2019/20 and back-dated pension provision. Training costs were higher given CiLCA training which the Clerk was undertaking in their own time. Training was an aspect the Council was keen to encourage and new councillors would be offered training via the Norfolk Association of Local Councils of which HHPC was a member.
- **Professional fees:** These were also higher given the need to seek professional advice from a Community Halls Advisor. However, this was a one-off and becoming a member of Community Action Norfolk would help address any future needs cost efficiently.
- **Playing field maintenance, inspections, repair costs:** These were higher than budgeted (£3,072 vs. budget of £2,200) as the rope bridge netting urgently needed replacing to ensure safety and other items including the seesaw needed more minor repairs.

The Year-End Bank reconciliation was:

HALES & HECKINGHAM Parish Council Bank Reconciliation (all accounts) Financial year: 2020/21

Opening bank balances as 1 April 2020

Current account T1	£6,417.86	Unity
Instant Access/Savings	£14,174.34	
Heckingham Charity Marsh/Savings	£0.00	Unity
Barclays (charity marsh)		
Barclays (charity marsh)		

£20,592.20

Cheques raised yr-end 2019 presented yr-end 2020	£0.00
Outstanding receipt	£24.95

Totals £20,617.15

Receipts to date £13,517.77

Payments to date £25,775.66

Ledger Balance to date £8,359.26

Below updated on: 31/3/2021

Current account T1	£1,170.78
Instant Access/Savings	£7,188.48
Heckingham Charity Marsh/Savings	
Barclays	£0.00

Bank balance £ 8,359.26
Difference £0.00

Notes

Primary working account	
Reserves account	
Restricted funds	
closing bank sums:	£1,830.74
closing bank sums:	£377.23

£18,409.18 £20,617.15

Restricted fund: £2,057.97
Closed July 2020

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In relation to 2021/22:

The Council did not have major investment plans, given as noted by the Chairman, it aimed to get residents feedback so it could plan for the future, responding to local need.

As original reserves were reducing, the Council had increased the Precept for 2021/22 by 10% to cover costs. This meant that for a 'Band D' Household, the charge on their Council tax would move from £36.02 to £39.62 in 2021/22. Additionally,

- **CIL** (Community Infrastructure Levy) – The Council had received £1,611.87. South Norfolk Council set criteria as to how this could be used and HHPC welcomed resident's feedback on what they would most value. Criteria: *To support the development (of Hales & Heckingham) by funding the provision, improvement, replacement, operation or maintenance of infrastructure or anything else which is concerned with addressing the demands that new development places on an area.*
- **Restricted Funds:** In 2020/21 restricted funds related to the:
 - Village Sign (£707), and the Playing Field (£64.05). In 2021/22 neither would be restricted, as agreed at the HHPC Meeting on 24th March; Minute item 21/177.1
 - Composting Scheme (£1,347). The auditor had suggested these funds might be better termed 'designated' funds. The Council would consider this.
 - Heckingham Charity Marsh (£2,057.97) These funds had been moved in June 2020 from a separate Barclays Bank account to an online Instant Saver account with Unity Trust, the bank used by HHPC. This would not change and is not noted in the summary below.

2021/22 Budget summary:

Hales & Heckingham PC	2021-2022 Budget		
RECEIPTS		PAYMENTS	
Monies brought forward from Bank	£9,473.24	Employment & Training costs total	£5,420.00
b/f Unrestricted Funds	£8,125.61	Administration overheads total	£2,667.00
Precept	£9,905.00	Community Spend total	£7,920.00
Rent from The Pit	£110	RESERVE BUILDING	
VAT Refunds (retrospective claim)	£600.00	Total Reserves	£500.00
b/f Restricted Funds	£1,347.63	Total Expenditure	£16,507.00
Composting / Recycling Credits	£300.00	Budget surplus/shortfall	£7,113.11
Grant Income opportunities			
S106 & CIL	£1,611.87		
NCC Grants inc PPS 50% for project	£1,620.00		
Total income	£23,620.11		

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8. **'Pigs & Pollinators'** - A short video by Vic Jenkins of Thatched House Farm was shown (see www.halesandheckingham-pc.gov.uk/news/ and Vic kindly answered some questions and confirmed:

- They had not had any complaints about the pigs communicated to them by neighbours but were keen to hear if there were any concerns.
- At the last count, they had 42 in their Broadland herd of Lop Pigs. Cllr. PG noted the Council was committed to supporting environmental initiatives and there were clear benefits from the project so asked how the Council could help. Vic confirmed this was a long-term project and was currently focused on establishing a border along the fence with 'bee hotels'. They were slowly seeding wildflowers but to seed an entire field cost c. £5,000 so it was being tackled in sections, accepting donations where they could. They hoped to get schools involved and had plans such as running a sunflower growing competition. Lockdown had stopped group activities but they were starting to get local groups involved including Avocet House.

Cllr. PG suggested contacting the Norfolk Wildlife Trust as a source for seeds. Cllr. SB suggested advertising in Chet Contact Magazine and it was agreed a reference would be included in HNPC's June submission. Cllr. AW asked if seeds could be donated and Vic confirmed yes, but they would need to know what the seeds were as some could be poisonous to pigs but poppies were fine!

The Chairman and all Members thanked Vic for her time and informative presentation on an inspiring project that was actively trying to get all the community involved, while supporting the environment.

9. **Public Forum** – As no members of the public were present the meeting was closed.

The Annual Parish Meeting closed at 7.30pm

Please contact the Clerk (Eleanor Bannister) if you have any questions:

clerk@halesandheckingham-pc.gov.uk or via 07703 124544.

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Appendix 1. – Cllr. Kay Mason Billig – Annual Report 2020/21

The last 12 months have been incredibly difficult ones for all of us. None of us realised that Covid 19 would be with us for so long or affect so many. At South Norfolk we have been tasked with issuing government funding to help residents and businesses in need.

Our staff have stepped up during the year and have provided the following support locally:

- Taking over 51,000 calls to the Housing and Benefits team
- £73,000 paid out through the Covid-19 hardship fund
- £1,260,935 paid in extra Council Tax support
- 10,000 businesses called to offer support
- £84 Million in grants distributed to local businesses

On top of this we have:

- Collected 2,750 prescriptions
- Done 3,150 shopping trips
- Delivered 4,000 food parcels
- Supported 45 community groups, totalling 4,000 volunteers

We have also sheltered those in need by:

- Housing 739 residents
- Providing housing advice to over 1,600 people every month

Locally, as your councillor, I have been pursuing schemes to improve our environment including:

- Chairing the meetings of interested parties to get the Loddon roundabout built – we now have a start date of June 2021.
- Taking part in the Wherryman's Way steering group, pressing for the investment needed to reopen it along its whole length – dredging the river to reinstate the footpath will start in Autumn 2021.
- Championing phone mast applications to improve the abysmal mobile phone signal locally – we now have approval for two new masts, one in Chedgrave (at the telephone exchange on Langley Road) and one in Loddon (opposite the vets on Beccles Rd).
- Assisting local businesses to get grants to help them through the Covid crisis by signposting them to council staff and providing information on what is available.
- Using my Members Ward budget to get CCTV installed to prevent vandalism and anti-social behaviour and providing funding for Loddon on Call, so that they can replace their defibrillators with the latest models.
- Liaising with the Police to tackle anti-social behaviour and vandalism.

As always it is a pleasure to meet local people and to do my best to assist where I can to improve our villages and protect our way of life.

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Appendix 2 – Cllr. Jeremy Rowe – April 2021 Report

Our ChetChat group continues to go from strength to strength; our next ChetChat event will be a sponsored walk from Loddon to Hardley Mill in the afternoon of **Saturday 18 September**, which will raise money for our group and for very important local causes. I hope that as many of you as possible are able to join us for some refreshments at the Mill. We're grateful to Musker McIntyre, and to Rosy Lee's, for jointly sponsoring the event.

If you know anyone over-60 who might like a regular visit or phone call, or just some help, please let them know that we are here to help, on **07876 050110**.

As mentioned last month, South Norfolk, working with the Chet Valley B-Line project, have identified sites in Loddon in which they are planning to leave some areas uncut, as part of the 'Don't Mow, Let It Grow' initiative. The areas are: Leman Grove, Harvey Green, Gilbert Grove, Filbert Road, The Staithe and Pye's Mill.

I'm also looking at whether it could be possible to establish a community bank in Loddon, with High Street banks sharing the running costs. This has been tried successfully in other parts of the country, so it is definitely something which is worth looking into.

My regular surgeries will start up again later this Summer, by which time it should be safe to hold them again. In the meantime, please ring me anytime on **07733 323581** if I can help you.

It's a great privilege to be able to serve our fantastic community. Thank you.

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Appendix 3 - Cllr. Margaret Stone - Annual Report 2020/21

Norfolk Statistics

- 6,200 miles of highway, 3,000 miles of footway, 5,000 bridges and structures, and 53,000 streetlights across Norfolk (40% of which are environmentally friendly LED)
- 98.0% of highway inspections completed within timescale
- 99.9% of highway inspections completed within timescale
- 227,000 tonnes of rubbish dealt with
- 52,000 Adult Social Care Assessments for 20,000 people
- Under 1,000 Looked After Children (LAC) (0-17yrs population)
- 95% of Norfolk homes have superfast broadband coverage

The 2021/21 Budget

A **£439 million** net revenue budget, a **£102 million** boost for roads and infrastructure and a 3.99 per cent Council Tax rise has been agreed to support communities, the economy and the environment across the County.

Further, there will be an investment of **£45.7m** to meet cost and other pressures in services, including **£28.2m** in adult social care, **£7m** in children's services and **£10.5m** in community and environmental services.

Within the investment of **£102m** in the capital programme, taking the total infrastructure programme to **£537.66m**, these include **£11.5m** for supported housing for young adults, **£4m** for children's residential homes and investment in the Long Stratton bypass and new libraries.

Additionally there will be an investment of **£2m** to respond to flooding, including an additional **£350k** in revenue budget provision, **£235k** in highways spending to reduce road flooding risks and **£1.5m** for the creation of a new flood reserve to fund urgent works and repairs.

New service from Norfolk Libraries helped families learn from home

Families that were struggling with home learning have a new place to turn to for advice and support. Norfolk Libraries has set up a phone line which serves as a first stop for parents and carers in the county using new devices to teach their children.

The phone line aims to provide a friendly voice to families that aren't familiar with home learning technology, including those that have received a new laptop or tablet as a result of Norfolk County Council's 'Every Child Online' campaign.

Norfolk libraries has scrapped late fees for children as part of post-pandemic reading push

Norfolk County Council has agreed have agreed ambitious plans for the Norfolk Libraries and Information service to improve children and young people's reading skills which have been diminished nationally as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

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This includes the removal of overdue charges for everyone under the age of 16, universal membership of the county's e-library through Norfolk's schools and the introduction of a new '1000 books before school' reading challenge.

Norfolk participating in new contact tracing scheme

Norfolk County Council is to oversee all Covid contact tracing in the county, building on the county's successful work to identify close contacts of those who have tested positive for the virus.

The "Local-0" scheme will see cases passed without delay to local tracers at the same time as an individual who tested positive for coronavirus is invited to complete the online contact information. The current approach passes cases from the national NHS Test & Trace taskforce onto local tracers only after the national team has been unable to make contact over a period of 24 hours.

In the seven days between 9th and 16th January there were 4,029 confirmed cases, but between 7th and 13th March this had reduced to 351, which is below the UK average.

Every Child Online campaign launched

A new campaign which aims to ensure every school age child has a digital device and internet connection to learn remotely at home was launched.

Norfolk County Council has been working with Norfolk Community Foundation (NCF) on the campaign backed by the EDP newspaper to make sure no child is left behind in their learning because of digital disadvantage.

The county council has already co-ordinated the sourcing, prioritisation, and distribution of over 5,000 laptops and tablets, either directly to youngsters or to their schools.

Major highway improvement schemes started in 2021

A multi-million-pound programme of road maintenance continued into 2021 with major schemes getting underway in Great Yarmouth, Downham Market and Stalham. The improvements have been made possible thanks to the £22m highway funding for Norfolk that the Department for Transport announced in May 2020, to fund schemes in the 2020-21 financial year.

Norfolk received more than any other local authority in the East of England for maintenance and repairs to the county's roads, bridges, pavements and cycle paths.

At £1.2m the mechanical and electrical upgrades for the 90-year-old Haven Bridge in Great Yarmouth is the largest scheme to be funded as part of the £22m programme. Some upgrade works were completed in the autumn, but other work, which will resolve many of the issues caused by the lifting bridge's ageing equipment, started in February and is expected to take 13 weeks to complete. The £22m funding award is in addition to Norfolk County Council's existing highways capital maintenance budget of £38.6m for the year 2020-2021.

Surge of Beryl Bike rides in 2020 as Norwich pedals to greener future

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With over 11,000 riders, close to 70,000 trips and 266,303 kilometres ridden on Beryl Bikes this year, Norwich can boast to being a greener place for residents and visitors throughout 2020.

Beryl, the local bikeshare provider, has played a large role in the area's transport habits last year, helping NHS and key workers take essential trips during the first national lockdown, easing pressure on public transport and providing the wider public with an affordable and convenient way to get from A to B. The 68,900 trips taken by Beryl Bike are equivalent to 43.92 tonnes of CO2 saved.

Also in 2020, in partnership with Norfolk County Council, Beryl became the world's first provider of a city-wide multimodal smart fleet including pedal bikes, e-bikes and e-scooters. This choice of vehicles provided residents of Norwich with a chance to take a variety of journeys in a safe, sustainable and convenient way.

Norfolk hits top spot for second year running in road and transport survey

For the second year running Norfolk has come first among its peers in a national highways and transport survey. Over the summer 3,300 people in Norfolk were asked for their views on topics such as road safety, highway maintenance, congestion and public transport as part of the National Highways and Transport (NHT) survey 2020. The results are ranked against other participating councils from across the country to give a nationwide picture of how Norfolk is performing.

Out of the 29 county councils and larger unitary authorities in the peer group, Norfolk secured the top spot for overall satisfaction and saw the highest above average scores in both satisfaction with 'traffic levels and congestion' and 'condition of highways'.

Norfolk Flooding Alliance created

In response to winter flooding seen across the County, the Norfolk Flooding Alliance has been created. Led by Lord Dannatt and including bodies such as District Councils, Anglian Water, the Environmental Agency, internal drainage boards, along with Norfolk County Council, the challenges posed across the County can be addressed and tackled.

Housing boost for people with disabilities

One hundred and eighty-one supported housing units are set to be developed in Norfolk, to help people with disabilities live more independent lives.

The County Council will seek to invest £9m-£18m of capital to develop supported, adapted and specialist housing over the next 10 years, to improve people's lives, reduce hospital admissions and reduce care costs by £1.9m per year.

Grant scheme launched to provide free expert advice and cash to help businesses 'Go Digital'

A new grant scheme launched last December will enabled micro, small and medium-sized businesses to make better use of digital technology through funding and one to one support.

Go Digital was launched by Norfolk County Council to help businesses based in the county identify

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digital opportunities. It will provide expert one-to-one consultancy and the ability to apply for grants of up to £500.

Digital opportunities included how to sell products and services online, reach new customers using social media, build customer databases, develop new or existing websites and attract new visitors, or how to work out the best homeworking options for teams.

More vulnerable children in Norfolk supported to remain with their families

A £12-£15 million five-year programme to transform support for children and young people enabled more youngsters to remain with their families.

National statistics reveal the number of children looked after by Norfolk County Council's Children's Social Care was lower, per 10,000 children than that of England (64 vs 67).

Norfolk Library Service awarding funding to help with Census

Norfolk Library Service has been awarded £53k to deliver support for people in Norfolk needing to access the first ever online Census, amounting to one of the largest single contracts from the Office of National Statistics (ONS).

Children in care gets below the 1000 barrier

The current numbers of children in care are down to 994, this is from a high of 1200 just over 12 months ago.

This has been achieved by working better and closer with families, to keep children in their family unit and is part of our transformation programme. This is a far better outcome for the children and with Average costs for a child in care at £50,000/annum savings are made. The full savings (200 x 50) haven't been fully realised because the unit costs of our children remaining are on the higher side but this does indicate the impact children in care have on the budget. We have also increased our in house fostering meaning we use less agency places where again significant savings are with the difference being around £1000/month.

First look at new Norwich recycling centre as it takes shape

Construction of one of two new recycling centres for the Greater Norwich area is well underway as pictures taken in early March show.

A 300 tonne crane is currently on site at the new £2.75m Norwich North recycling centre as sections of what will be a 500,000 litre tank, an integral part of the comprehensive water management system on site, are manoeuvred into place. This tank is the largest of its kind at any of Norfolk's recycling centres and will ensure any surface water runoff stays within the site. Work on the major project started late last year, and includes a new access road to the recycling centre, which is located on land off the A140/A1270 junction near the airport.

