**held in the Preston Room on Tuesday 5th January 2016 at 7.00pm**

**Parish councillors present:**

Mr A Buxton Mr C Phillipo

Mr H Buxton (Chair) Mr G Saunders (Vice Chair)

Mr N Coleman Mr A Wiseman

Ms M Gibbons

**Clerk**: Mrs C Male

**County and District Cllr Dixon and three members of the public were also present.**

1. **ATTENDANCE**

All councillors present.

1. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS**

As previously stated in relation to the Common.

Item 7.4 - the River Ash. The legal status of the River Ash, and therefore subsequent councillor interests to be discussed in more detail during the meeting.

1. **MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

The minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on 3rd November 2015 were confirmed as a true and accurate record.

1. **PUBLIC SPEAKING**
   1. County and District Councillor N. Dixon gave an update.

Norfolk County Council public spending review “Re-Imaging Norfolk” has a few more days to run and the public are invited to comment. It is very likely that the County Council will increase council tax in the next financial year. The government has given councils a green light to raise tax by up to 2% to pay for social care.

North Norfolk District Council is working very hard to find a way not to raise council tax. However this is still to be decided.

* 1. PCSO Jeanette Boardman was not in attendance, but reported that there were no crimes in the Parish in the period.
  2. No questions from the public.

1. **MATTERS ARISING**
   1. Referendum principles - notice from Norfolk Association of Local Councils that the government has decided not to implement referendum principles which would have given them powers to dictate local council’s precept.
   2. Funding available for Defibrillators and training from the British Heart Foundation. Agreed that this would be a good thing to look into further. Closing date March 2016. **ACTION: CLERK**
   3. Police Council Tax increase consultation meetings 13th January at Norfolk County Council and 18th January in Kings Lynn. Councillors and members of the public can also comment online.
   4. Clerk apologised for the agenda not going onto the website until today, due to an Internet fault over Christmas.
2. **CORRESPONDENCE.**
   1. Mid Norfolk Citizens Advice - update on delivery of services.
   2. Norfolk County Council - invitation to event on Re-imagining Norfolk on the 11th January 7pm Edwards room, Norfolk County Council. Cllr Buxton to attend.
   3. Independent Custody visitors - volunteers required.
   4. Offshore Helicopter Community Note.
   5. Norfolk Fire and Rescue Service - Draft Integrated Management Plan 2016-2020 - for consultation until the 14th January.
   6. Norfolk Association of Local Councils - invitation to attend the AGM, 6th January 2016. Clerk to attend.
   7. North Norfolk News - introducing new Community Editor, Ali McGilvray.
   8. Christmas Cards received from Norman Lamb, MP and Cllr Annie Claussen-Reynolds, Chairman, NNDC.
   9. Age Concern - agreed not to make a donation.
3. **HIGHWAYS, PLANNING, LAND AND ASSET ISSUES**
   1. The Common - The Common working party met on the 22nd November 2015 Present were Cllrs H Buxton, Gibbons and Phillipo, the Clerk and parishioner Steve Newstead.
      1. Drainage - Ditch that crosses the Common in an East-West direction has been filled in and needs reinstating. Cllr H Buxton agreed to undertake this free of charge but would not be prepared to remove the spoil, which would ideally be relocated on the Common. This would need Environment Agency permission. A small bridge would need to be reinstated to allow access north-south. Cllr A Buxton stressed the need for a proper specification for the works. Possibility of local residents putting their clean septic tank water into a reinstated ditch was discussed, as per the minutes of the last meeting. A fee could potentially be charged for this service and this could then be used to maintain the ditches in the longer term.
      2. Cricket Club **-** Access and parking for the cricket pitch should primarily be to the south of the pitch. Cllr H Buxton has discussed signage with the Cricket Club to clarify the entrance to the car park and the reinstatement of the ditch.
      3. Land Area - the area was measured as 0.42 of an acre. Records show that the total area as 0.66 of an acre. It was unclear to the party the exact position of the boundaries and also the inclusion, or not, of the hedges, which could possibly account for the difference. Possible that the hedge that runs between the Common and the Cricket Club is part of the Common. The shortfall in land is not an issue for the Council as there are questions arising over the previous methods used to measure the land. However it is important that no further erosion of the land area take place. Discussed the possibility of putting bollards along the boundary with the road to discourage parking and turning in the area. There would be a capital outlay but it would also make grass cutting etc more difficult.
      4. Legal Status - The site is a registered Common, which limits the Parish Councils ability to undertake works on behalf of the Community. Clerk has investigated the files and discovered an anomaly in the legal status. The land was registered as a Common in 1967 and in 1979 the Commissioner decided that no person officially owned the land and therefore it was Common land. However there is also documentation from North Norfolk District Council, issued in 2011, which lists the land as a Surveyors Allotment. Clerk has discussed the issue with NNDC and they have reported that the land cannot hold both titles. Either it is a Surveyors Allotment, with no owner but NNDC would act as custodians. If it is a Common it should have an owner, although previous records indicate that this is not the case. Waiting for NNDC to investigate further and report back. Aim is for the Parish Council to clarify the legal status and then be able to work as effectively as possible on the land within the constraints. It is hoped that by the next meeting that the Council is in a position to apply for the appropriate permissions for the works. **ACTION: CLERK**
   2. Parish Partnership Scheme - Clerk updated that Highways have agreed to level and fill the large puddle at the area at the top of Church Road before the end of 2015, free of charge. However, they wish to pursue the history of the boundary before agreeing to install a hard top surface. Cllr H Buxton noted that the area has become dangerous to pedestrians, especially over Christmas when there was a larger volume of people visiting the church. Noted that the works have not been completed, clerk to chase Highways for a date. **ACTION: CLERK**
   3. Crossroads in the village - markings were very worn and therefore not clear to motorists. Crossroads sign travelling east to west has been knocked and is at an angle. Both items reported to Highways at Norfolk County Council. Markings have been renewed but angle of sign was deemed acceptable.
   4. Diminishing flow of the River Ash on the Hoveton/Ashmanhaugh border
      1. Clerk made enquiries with the Broads Authority who advised contacting the Environment Agency (EA). Clerk contacted the EA and spoke with them about the legal status of the River and also rights around extracting water from such a watercourse. EA referred the Council to a guide entitles “Living on the Edge: rights and responsibilities of riverside ownership” but were unwilling to make a definitive statement on the legal status of the River, referring the Council to Norfolk County Council (NCC). NCC replied *“I have now had a look at what I think your referring to, and can confirm that they are all riparian, unfortunately there is nothing that the Lead Local Flood Authority can do as we would only get involved if there was internal property flooding, I have however attached a template letter that we sometimes send out to “remind” riparian owners of their responsibilities, but it should be noted that no enforcement actions can be taken to make the owners carry out maintenance as the watercourse as it is still flowing and we have had no reported flooding.”* Therefore, some Councillors have a disclosable pecuniary interest in the area.
      2. With regard to extraction or damming of the River - Land Drainage Act 1991 s23, requires consent of the Local Authority before constructing or altering any culvert, mill, dam, weir, or similar construction in a non main watercourse. NCC advise that if in doubt, it is always best seek advice/approval first, and to remember that in some circumstances planning and/or building regulation consents may also be required. Preliminary searches do not show any type of application for extraction or the insertion of a culvert to NNDC, NCC or the EA from Wroxham Barns or others. Discussion on appropriate action to be taken by the Parish Council, in line with Powers and Duties assigned to Parish Council. Agreed to write to Norfolk County Council outlining the Councils concerns and asking them to write to landowners, copying the Parish Council in. The clerk advised that private landowners can also express their concerns directly to NCC *(contact details are : Flood & Water Management Team, Community and Environmental Services, enquiries: 0344 800 8020 or* [*mailto:water.management@norfolk.gov.uk*](mailto:water.management@norfolk.gov.uk)*).* **ACTION: CLERK**
   5. No planning applications received in the period.
4. **ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS.**
   1. To update on Quality Council status. At the last meeting discussed that the Council was unable to reapply for Quality Council status this year. Clerk has investigated the matter in more detail and reported that the good news is that when the Council fulfills all the criteria, it can pick up its accreditation where it left off without having to make a fresh submission. Reasons for non-qualification:
      1. Clerks qualifications - it is correct that you can be in the process of studying for your CiLCA in order to qualify for Foundation level however 15 Continuous Professional Development Points (CPD) are required, which the Clerk does not have.
      2. The final date for requesting an application form was the 1st October with completed forms back by the 1st November. As this notification was received in August this should have really been picked up at your September meeting and then the matter could have been taken forward in good time. This has now been added to the Parish Council timetable for review in September 2016.
   2. To agree satisfactory completion of Clerk’s probationary period (13 weeks) - agreed.
   3. Clerk to update on CiLCA - latest module has been Finance and the Clerk reported it is very relevant to the position,
   4. To report back on NNDC update session on Planning 30th November, Neatishead - Noel Coleman and the Clerk attended. Reported that it was a very useful session.
   5. To discuss arrangements for the Annual Parish meeting - hall booking and guest speakers - 8th March 2016. Agreed to invite the same speakers as last year, with the Preston Rooms representing the all the clubs that meet there. Clerk to organise tea, coffee and biscuits and book the Preston rooms **ACTION: CLERK**
5. **FINANCIAL MATTERS.**
   1. Banking update - change in signatories and access to Internet banking complete. Noted.
   2. To vote on whether to join the Sector Led Body for audit procurement (NALC) or to procure independent external auditor services - The Parish Council was previously externally audited by Mazars on behalf of the Audit Commission. The Audit Commission has been dissolved and Mazars contract expires in March 2017. A new company called the “Small Authorities Audit Appointments Ltd” has been set up to take over the appointment of external auditors and setting audit fees for smaller authorities in 2017. They will tender for a company to undertake external audit. Due to changes in legislation the Council would only be externally audited if there was a challenge. Fees have yet to be agreed and DCLG are seeking legal advice to clarify the situation. Decision date has been postponed to the 31st March 2016, so Clerk recommended postponing to the next meeting, where it was likely that new information would come through. Agreed.
   3. To note there are no receipts for the period.
   4. To authorise payments for:-
      1. Newsletter printing (N Sharpe) £40.37
      2. Clare Male – salary Nov/Dec £298.58
      3. Clare Male– expenses £9.34
      4. Clare Male - mileage £18.00

Agreed.

* 1. To receive Bank Reconciliation – current balance £6628.04. Noted and signed off by the Chair.

1. **POLICIES**
   1. Transparency Fund bid update - bid was submitted after the last meeting and the award date is the 1st February 2016.
   2. Standards summary notes - issued by the Clerk 16th December 2015, covering Code of Conduct, declaring interests and NNDC complaint procedure. Noted.
   3. To request sign off for policies updated and circulated for review. :
      1. Complaints procedure - agreed and will be published online.
      2. Timetable for Parish Council meetings - agreed.
      3. Financial risk assessment and financial risks control - Clerk has undertaken the risk assessment and there are issues which need to be addressed. This is work in progress. **ACTION: CLERK**
   4. Policies still to be reviewed:
      1. Freedom of Information Act Model Publication Scheme
      2. Standing Orders **ACTION: CLERK**
2. **ITEMS FOR NEXT AGENDA** - **Tuesday 1st March 2016 at 7.00pm**
   1. Transparency code review - requested that the Clerk check the Council is compliant for the next meeting. **ACTION: CLERK**

Meeting closed at 8.10pm.

Final minutes agreed………………………………………………………………………………………………..

Harry Buxton (Chair)

Dated:............................................................................................................................................

Clare Male

Clerk and RFO to the Parish Council

13th January 2016