**Downham West Parish Council**

**Minutes of the Council meeting held Monday, 19th April 2021 at 7.10pm (following the Annual Parish Meeting) virtually via Zoom**

Present: Chairman Cllr R Pegg

Vice Chairman Cllr C Swaine

Councillors Cllr F Daymond

Cllr J Doyle

Cllr J Fox

County Councillor Cllr H Humphrey

Borough Councillors Cllr C Rose

Cllr V Spikings

Parish Clerk Mrs S Porter

Member(s) of Public 0

1. **Declarations of interest and requests for dispensation**

There were no declarations of interest and no requests for dispensation.

1. **Apologies for absence**

No apologies for absence had been received.

1. **Approval of the minutes of the Parish Council meeting**

**Proposed – Cllr Fox Seconded – Cllr Doyle**

**That the minutes of the Council meeting held virtually on Monday, 8th March 2021 (items 17-32) are approved and signed as a true and accurate record.**

**All in favour**

The Chairman, Cllr Pegg, would duly sign and date the minutes of the meeting at a future date.

1. **Update on Previous Minutes**

There was nothing to report to this meeting.

1. **Councillors’ Issues**
   1. **Downham West Community Facebook page**

The Clerk reported that there was currently a Downham West Neighbourhood Facebook page, which was an excellent informative site for the parish, but did not have a facility for the community to interact or place messages on. The Clerk felt that it might be worthwhile if an additional Community page was set up, which would not only enable the Council to advertise important messages, but also allow the community to communicate between themselves. The page would be set up whereby the ‘Admin’ (hosts of the site) could easily remove any undesirable messages and /or block vexatious users.

A short discussion took place and it was agreed that in light of today’s social media movement, Facebook was typically a good source for communicating information to the public, rather than Council websites.

It was agreed for the Clerk to set up a Facebook site when the workload allowed.

**PUBLIC OPEN FORUM**

The Chairman, Cllr Pegg, adjourned the meeting at 7.17pm.

**Reports**

**County Councillor**

County Cllr Humphrey reported that Norfolk County Council was responsible for over 6,000 miles of highways throughout the county, 3,000 miles of footways, 5,000 bridges and 53,000 street lights (40% of which were LED). 52,000 care assessments were being dealt with, and 1,000 children were being looked after through social care.

The 2021/2022 budget had a net revenue of £439M, with a £102M boost for highways. The general precept upsurge was 1.99%, with an additional increase for adult social care of 2% in 2021/2022. The overall raise of Council Tax was 3.99%.

During lockdown when libraries were closed, stories, videos and phone lines were set up for carers and parents to help educate them and their children on using online devices, and this has been a very popular service. Museums have also been very proactive by providing virtual tours of their institutions and online activities for children.

During the Coronavirus pandemic and in conjunction with the Government and NHS, Norfolk County Council, and the BCKL&WN, has been participating in the new contact tracing scheme which oversees all Covid contact tracing in the county to identify close contact with those who have tested positive for the virus. This has been led by the Dr Louise Smith, Norfolk’s Director of Public Health.

An ‘Every Child Online’ campaign was launched earlier this year which aims to ensure every school aged child has a digital device and internet connection to learn remotely at home, to ensure no child is left behind in their learning because of digital disadvantage.

A Norfolk Flood Alliance, led by the former head of the British Army, Lord Dannatt, has been set up to strengthen Norfolk’s resilience due to the increased flooding events in recent months. District and Borough Councils, Anglian Water, Environment Agency, Internal Drainage Boards and other authorities have formed a partnership in this.

Cllr Humphrey reported that he would not be standing as a County Councillor in the forthcoming elections and this would be his final meeting for this Parish Council. The Chairman, Cllr Pegg, and Members of the Council thanked him for all his help and support over the past several years.

**Borough Councillors**

Borough Cllr Spikings reported that postal votes for the County and Police and Crime Commissioner elections would be issued shortly. The Government’s approach to physical voting was that they should take place, providing strict Covid measures were put in place at polling stations.

A new trade waste contract with Serco, in conjunction with Breckland and North Norfolk District Councils, had commenced. The new contractor would be delivering improved services and value for money. Fly tipping in the county had increased significantly, which was a huge disappointment and eyesore on the countryside. Regrettably, and unless this occurred on public land, it was the responsibility of private landowners to clear waste tipped on their land, not the BCKL&WN’s.

A new Covid Restart Grant scheme had been launched by the Government and businesses were being urged to investigate their eligibility for this. The scheme was available for village halls, non-essential retail businesses, hospitality, accommodation, leisure, personal care and gym businesses.

Borough Cllr Rose reported that there were currently no intensive care beds in use at the Norfolk and Norwich University Hospital, which was very good news. Meetings with the QE Hospital were continually being held for information and updates regarding Covid cases, and details were circulated to Councils by the BCKL&WN on a weekly basis.

The BCKL&WN would be holding its first face to face Council Meeting since March 2020. Full lockdown restrictions were still on track to end on Monday, 21st June 2021.

The Safer Neighbourhood Team would be resuming its meetings virtually and it was envisaged that this system would be retained. The next meeting was being held this month and Councils were being encouraged to nominate a representative to attend these meetings. PC Lee Anderton, Community Engagement Officer, was retiring on Friday, 7th May 2021, and was hoping to visit as many Councils as possible to introduce the new postholder.

There had been a reported breach of Covid regulations at one business premise, which had subsequently resulted in police interaction.

Some of the groynes at Hunstanton beach had been repaired/replaced this year as the bedrock had started to be exposed. It was anticipated that sand would repopulate those areas over the coming months. During such time, the mussel bed had increased, and this can be perilous for parasailers.

During the recent heavy rainfall, several Freebridge houses had been flooded and cesspits had overflowed. Due to staff shortages, a resolution of this problem was still ongoing. Various other private and public sites had also been damaged through flooding, and solutions and costs were currently being sought by the BCKL&WN. Branches of pollarded trees being placed in ditches was an ongoing problem and was currently being investigated.

A large residential development of 379 homes in King’s Lynn had recently been passed by the Planning Committee. Wildlife mitigation had been extensive and plenty of open space would be made available on the site when it was built.

Individual Members of the BCKL&WN observed a minute’s silence for HRH Prince Philip, The Duke of Edinburgh, on Friday, 16th April 2021. Black ties and arm bands were worn for this.

Community litter picks would shortly be resuming; the BCKL&WN would be providing equipment to groups on a first-come first-serve basis.

New activity at the Field adjacent to Two Acres Nursery, Downham Road, Salters Lode, had been taking place. He confirmed that he would investigate this with the Enforcement Team.

**Public Participation**

Cllr Daymond reported that the flower boat, on the land just past the bridge on Station Road, had not been watered by Downham Market Town Council’s grounds maintenance contractors, and they were dying as a consequence. The flowers had only been planted six weeks ago. It was noted that this Council may be required to get involved in pursuing further action with the Town Council to get the flowers watered. The Chairman, Cllr Pegg would discuss this further with Cllr Daymond following the meeting.

The Chairman, Cllr Pegg, resumed the meeting at 7.44pm.

1. **Finance**
   1. **Bank Reconciliation**

The Clerk had circulated the bank reconciliations, periods ending March 2021, current bank account statements and finance summary, with the agenda. The bank balances were as follows:

**March 2021**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Bank Reconciliation** | **Community Account (£)** | **Business Account (£)** |  | Reconciliation **Community Account (£)** | |  | Reconciliation **Business Account (£)** | |
| Bank Statement Start Balances | 1,321.02 | 10,971.37 |  | Bank Statement **01.03.2021** | 1,321.02 |  | Bank Statement **01.02.2021** | 10,971.37 |
| **Total Opening Bank Balances** |  | **12,292.39** |  | Receipts | - |  | Receipts | 0.28 |
|  |  |  |  | Payments Cleared | - 891.60 |  | Payments Cleared | - |
| Unpresented Cheques B/F | - | - |  | Bank Statement **31.03.2021** | 429.42 |  | Bank Statement **28.02.2021** | 10,971.65 |
| Unpresented Receipts B/F | - | - |  | Unpresented Cheques |  |  | Unpresented Cheques |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Council Opening Balances** | **1,321.02** | **10,971.37** |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Council Total Opening Balances** |  | **12,292.39** |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Receipts | - | 0.28 |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Payments | - 891.60 | - |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Bank Statement Close Balances | 429.42 | 10,971.65 |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Total Closing Bank Balances** |  | **11,401.07** |  |  | - |  |  | - |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Unpresented Cheques | - | - |  | Unpresented Receipts |  |  | Unpresented Receipts |  |
| Unpresented Receipts | - | - |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  | - |  |  | - |
| **Council Closing Balances** | **429.42** | **10,971.65** |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Council Total Closing Balances** |  | **11,401.07** |  | **Council Closing Balance** | **429.42** |  | **Council Closing Balance** | **10,971.65** |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  | **Council Total Closing Balances** | **11,401.07** |
|  | | |
| **Earmarked Funds** | | |
| Operating Costs (6 Months) | | 3,000.00 |
| Election Costs (4 Year to £1000) Year 3 | | 1,000.00 |
| Street Lights LED Conversion | | 2,270.00 |
| Speed Sign Maintenance | | 500.00 |
| Bus Shelter (fund building for new structure) | | 1,500.00 |
| Transparency Fund Grant | | 230.07 |
| S137 Grants (Poppy Wreath) | | - |
| CIL | | 1,374.29 |
|  | |  |  | Council Total Closing Balances | **11,401.07** |  | |  |
| **Total Earmarked Reserves** | | **9,874.36** |  | Council Total Earmarked Reserves | **9,874.36** | Council Remaining Available Precept | | **1,526.71** |

* 1. **Meeting Room, Methodist Church**

The Clerk had circulated details and costs prior to the agenda of room availability at the Methodist Church for physical Council meetings. The Clerk confirmed that the booking of the 2021 meeting dates had all been confirmed by the Church.

The room available was Room 3, at a cost of £6.00 (No VAT) per hour, and the setting up of tables and chairs would need to be carried out by the Council. It was noted that there was ample room for parking both on site and in the adjacent Hollies car park.

**Proposed – Cllr Daymond Seconded – Cllr Fox**

**That the Council agrees to hire Room 3 at the Methodist Church at a cost of £6.00 per hour (No VAT) for its future face to face Council meetings.**

**All in favour**

* 1. **Financial report for the approved Parish Partnership Scheme 2021/2022**

The Clerk had circulated a report with the agenda to highlight the financial considerations for the Council, prior to submitting its formal Agreement to Norfolk County Council for the approved Parish Partnership Scheme 2021/2022. The Clerk suggested that the following earmarked reserves and bank balances be utilised to fund the overall cost (8,150) as follows:

Operating Costs £3,000 held in Reserves Utilise £2,000 Remaining £1,000

Bus Shelter £1,500 held in Reserves Utilise £1,500 Remaining £0.00

CIL £1,374.29 Utilise £1,374.29 Remaining £0.00

Bank Account (14.04.21) £17,409.41 Utilise £3,275.71

The Clerk reported that the reduction in Operating Costs would leave two months reserves (although in the case of having to employ a Locum Clerk for example, this would in fact equate to around 5 months salary). It was noted that the imminent bid to the BCKL&WN for CIL funding for the bus shelter might be approved, eliminating the need to hold any reserves for this scheme, although there was a possibility that it may not be successful and funds would need to be built up again.

The Clerk confirmed that the BCKL&WN CIL officer had confirmed in writing that the CIL funds held could be utilised for Parish Partnership Schemes and they fundamentally encouraged Councils to do this.

The Clerk reported that the Council’s typical annual expenditure was around £5,500, with little or no annual income. VAT due to be repaid in this financial year was £158, and early indications of insurance quotations currently being sought were that the Council may be able to save £100-£150 on last year’s premium. It was also noted that when the street light conversion was paid for, the Clerk could do an early VAT reclaim for that invoice.

The Clerk noted that even if all earmarked reserves were spent this year (which was extremely unlikely), the Parish Partnership Scheme was fully paid and the Council spent £5,500, the balance remaining would still be around £1,750, which was of course nowhere close to insolvency.

The Clerk felt that the Council should however take all these matters into consideration before approving the contract. A long discussion took place.

The Chairman, Cllr Pegg, reported that this scheme had been rejected in the past by Highways and if the Parish Council decided not to proceed this year, it may not get a further chance to bid for it again in the future. He also noted that if the forthcoming CIL bid to the BCKL&WN was unsuccessful for the full restoration of the bus shelter, it could perhaps be given a light refreshment of work until funds could be restored again.

The Vice Chairman, Cllr Swaine, raised a valid point in that the Parish Council may be required to pay more to the scheme if Norfolk County Council demanded this. The Clerk confirmed that this did happen in rare instances, but Norfolk County Council was equally obligated to refund any underspend.

Cllr Fox noted that if the Parish Council didn’t proceed with the scheme this year, it was probable that the construction and material costs would increase year on year and the Council might never have another chance to withstand such increases.

Having carefully considered the pros and cons, Councillors felt that a trod from Lady Drove to the Downham Bridge was a significant infrastructure scheme for the parish, particularly when the current lack of any form of pathway on that stretch of road was dangerous to pedestrians. It was unanimously agreed that it would be an important and well-needed improvement for the village and should proceed.

**Proposed – Chairman, Cllr Pegg Seconded – Vice Chairman, Cllr Swaine**

**That the Council agrees to formally sign the Agreement for the Parish Partnership Scheme 2021/2022.**

**All in favour**

When the payment had been made to Norfolk County Council, the Clerk would report the full use of the CIL funds to the BCKL&WN, as this was a legal requirement for their financial reporting.

* 1. **Approval of finances and payments to be made**

The Clerk had circulated the payments and receipts made since the last meeting and presented the late bills to the meeting:

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Date** | **Payee** | **Description** | **Transaction** | **Net £** | **VAT £** | **Gross £** | **Receipt £** |
| **2020/2021** | | | | | | | |
| 31.03.2021 | Royal Images | Op London Bridge Photos x 2 | BACS | 74.00 | 14.80 | 88.80 | 0.00 |
| 31.03.2021 | Mrs S Porter (The Range) | Op London Flowers/Material | BACS | 14.99 | 3.00 | 17.99 | 0.00 |
| 31.03.2021 | Mrs S Porter (Tesco) | Op London Bridge Vase | BACS | 4.17 | 0.83 | 5.00 | 0.00 |
| 31.03.2021 | Mrs S Porter (John Lewis) | Op London Condolence books | BACS | 33.34 | 6.66 | 40.00 | 0.00 |
| 31.03.2021 | Mrs S Porter (The Range) | Op London Bridge Photo Frame | BACS | 2.66 | 0.53 | 3.19 | 0.00 |
| 31.03.2021 | Clerk | Salary Mar 2021 | BACS | 183.78 | 0.00 | 183.78 | 0.00 |
| 31.03.2021 | HMRC | Employer PAYE/NI Mar 2021 | BACS | 45.80 | 0.00 | 45.80 | 0.00 |
| **2021/2022** | | | | | | | |
| 12.04.2021 | E-On | Street Lighting Supply Mar 2021 | DD | 37.14 | 1.86 | 39.00 | 0.00 |
| 06.04.2020 | BCKL&WN | Precept & Council Support Grant | BACS | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 6,060.00 |
| To be paid | Holly Landscapes | War Mem & Bus Shelter Clean | BACS | 38.75 | 7.75 | 46.50 | 0.00 |
| To be paid | Norfolk ALC | Annual Membership 2021 2022 | BACS | 142.42 | 0.00 | 142.42 | 0.00 |
| To be paid | Norfolk County Council | Parish Partnership Scheme | BACS | 16,300.00 | 0.00 | 16,300.00 | 8,150.00 |
| **Totals this month** | | | | **16,877.05** | **35.43** | **16,912.48** | **14,210.00** |

**Proposed – Vice Chairman, Cllr Swaine Seconded – Cllr Daymond**

**That the payment of bills are approved in accordance with the schedule.**

**All in favour**

1. **BCKL&WN CIL Funding Applications – Groups and organisations, looking to deliver infrastructure to benefit its residents and businesses, are being invited to bid for CIL funding start date Monday, 25th January 2021 closing on Friday, 30th April 2021 (circulated prior to agenda)**
   1. **Bus shelter, Bridge Road**

The Clerk had circulated details of this scheme prior to the agenda and confirmed that her husband had estimated the costs to be approximately £2,500-£3,000. With the solar light from Westcotec included, the total scheme cost would be in the region of £4,000.

The Chairman, Cllr Pegg, reported that the bus shelter had been built in the early 1900’s at a cost of around £46.00. He agreed to investigate this further in order for the Clerk to add this information to the bid.

The Chairman, Cllr Pegg, would seek urgent quotations from local builders and it was agreed for the Clerk to invite her husband to quote as well.

1. **General correspondence**

**40.1. For Action/Information**

No correspondence for action/information had been received.

* 1. **Late correspondence**

No late correspondence had been received.

1. **Planning**
   1. **Planning applications**
      1. **Pre-application – Anglian Water Grantham to Bexwell Pipeline – comments required**

A short discussion took place and Councillors noted that the plans indicated a small trench going through the north of the parish with moling underneath the river. It was agreed for the Clerk to confirm that the Council had no comments to make at this stage and would await further information.

* 1. **Planning decisions**
     1. **21/00087/F – Orchard Farm House, Lady Drove, Barroway Drove – Single storey extension to rear of detached dwelling**

Application permitted (Delegated Decision).

* + 1. **21/00105/F – York Villa, Bridge Road – Construction of Domestic Garage**

Application permitted (Delegated Decision).

* 1. **Late planning applications and notices of decision**

No late planning applications and/or notices of decision had been received from the BCKL&WN.

* 1. **Planning enforcements, appeals and other notifications (for information only and not for discussion during the public open meeting)**

No planning enforcements, appeals or other notifications had been received from the BCKL&WN.

1. **Reports from Outside Bodies**
   1. **Downham Market & Downham West Joint Burial Board**

Cllr Fox reported that the precept from Downham Market Town Council had been received by the Burial Board on Friday, 16th April 2021. This should have been received in February and no explanation for the delay had been communicated to the Board.

Damage had occurred to the wall on the boundary between King’s Walk Cemetery and the Howdale. When damage was carried out to another section of the same wall in January 2017, the repairs for that part of the wall had cost £9,656. Originally the BCKL&WN accepted 50% responsibility for the repair in 2017, but then withdrew that offer. This time the BCKL&WN had again suggested that they would cover 50% of the repair costs, although this too may be withdrawn again. At the rate of repair costs in 2017, a very large part of the recent precept may well be required to pay for the repairs.

The next meeting of the Downham Market & Downham West Joint Burial Board was being held at the end of April 2021.

* 1. **Hundred Acre Charity**

There was nothing to report to this meeting.

1. **Ongoing matters**
   1. **Council archives**

There was nothing to report to this meeting.

* 1. **Armed Forces Covenant**

There was nothing to report to this meeting.

1. **Parish Partnership Scheme 2021/2022 – bids to be submitted by Friday, 4th December 2020**

The Chairman, Cllr Pegg, reported that the bid for the Lady Drove to Downham Bridge trod had been approved. Norfolk County Council currently had a backlog of schemes due to Covid and staff shortages and it was unknown when this work would commence.

1. **To record the date and time of the next Full Council meeting**

The next meeting of the Council would be the Annual Meeting taking place on Thursday, 6th May 2021 at 7.00pm by Zoom.

1. **Exclusion of Press and Public (Public Bodies (Admission to meetings) Act 1960 S1)**
   1. **Clerk – matters for discussion**

There were no confidential matters to consider at this meeting.

The Chairman thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting at 8.20pm.