

Earsham Parish Council Minutes

of a meeting of Earsham Parish Council held at the Village Hall,
on Wednesday 26th March 2025 at 7.30pm

Present: Councillors: Richard Randlesome (Chair) Keith Reeve, Jim Bennett, Dave Clark, Stephen Revell and Tony Leech

Also present: District Councillor Chris Brown, County Councillor Barry Stone, three members of the public and Lynda Ling (Clerk)

1. Welcome – The Chairman welcomed those present at the meeting

2. To receive and accept apologies from members unable to attend – Apologies were received and accepted from Cllr. Nicholas Meade

3. To receive any declarations of interest, in particular matters to be raised at this meeting

- To note any declarations of members pecuniary and/or non-pecuniary/other interests pertaining to items on the following agenda – The following interests were declared: -
Cllr. Dave Clark – Item 6a
Cllr. Richard Randlesome – Item 9a
Cllr. Stephen Revell – Item 9a
- To consider any dispensation requests - None

4. Approval of minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 29th January 2025 - Agreement proposed by Councillor Clark and seconded by Councillor Reeve **ALL AGREED**

5. Reports/Protocols/Consultations -

District and County Councillors –

District Councillor Chris Brown reported the following: -

- South Norfolk Council recently agreed the budget which amounted to a £5 increase on Band D households, the SNC finances are in a reasonable position largely due to good investment returns and interest.
- The increase for temporary accommodation continues to put pressure on SNC but some grants from Government, plus the purchase of more properties will ease the pressure.
- SNC agreed to increase the Community Action Fund in 2025/26 up to £100,000
- The VE grant funding has all been allocated
- There is a new Conservation Fund for small and medium scale projects of up to £10,000 to help improve the environment and biodiversity
- Village Clusters – Earsham has two sites under consideration, however there is another delay which means it won't get to the Planning Inspectorate until summer this year
- Devolution – there will be a new Mayor elected for Norfolk and Suffolk in May 2026 and unitary authorities will come into being. Local councils were required by the Government to respond to the request for outline plans by last week. A report by consultants has recommended three unitary authorities, however SNC were not in favour of this and suggested 2, West and East Norfolk. A consultation will be held after plans are agreed.

County Councillor Barry Stone – County Councillor Stone reported the following: -

- Norfolk County Council has approved a balanced budget for 2025/26. The Council has a **gross** expenditure budget of £2.2 billion (£1.7 billion excluding schools which includes:
£700 million for Adult Social Care
£367 million for Children's Services (non-schools)
£283 million for Infrastructure
£44 million for Communities and Environment
£46 million for Fire Services

The budget includes an increase of £121 million to cover demand and demographic, inflationary, and legislative pressures, plus overspends for Adult and Children's Services

- **Unitary authorities** – As rural areas cost more to manage, future monies will be divided between unitary authorities who will take over all responsibilities. A cross-party working group has been established to see how to progress the final proposal for unitary authorities.
- The Boundary Commission may or may not alter boundaries, however parish council areas should stay the same.

Cllr. Revell asked who makes the final decisions and will representatives speak directly with the Secretary of State. County Councillor Stone responded that consultations are already taking place with the Secretary of State, and the aim is to have an agreed proposal to put forward, however, if the proposal is not achievable, the Secretary of State will make the final decision.

County Councillor Stone left the meeting at 20.10

Chairman and Parish Councillors

Chairman's report – The Chairman reported that the resident from Bull Cottage had said that the recent drainage works are working well, but the road surface is uneven and when heavy vehicles go by the cottage, there is a lot of vibration which has caused items to fall off the wall. Cllr. Revell asked if there was any scheduled resurfacing due to take place, non-one was aware of any. The Clerk will report the traffic vibration problem to Highways.

ACTION – CLERK

The loose plank on the bridge at Marston Moor was raised again, this was reported last year and was under investigation, however, the work still has not been done, the Clerk will report again.

Clerk's report – Only one item was reported as follows: -

Anglian Water – Allotments – A recent inspection was undertaken by Anglian Water on the allotment site which was to ensure that the water supply system was compliant with the Water Supply (Water Fittings) Regulations 1999, happily compliance was confirmed by the Water Regulations Engineer.

- **Consultations** – To note a government-initiated consultation, seeking views on a proposal to form a Mayoral Combined County Authority for the local government areas of Norfolk and Suffolk County Councils – NOTED

6. Village Items – Update on all village items plus: -

- a) Report from the Speed Watch group** – Cllr. Clark reported the group members who have been ill are now recovered and have been out a couple of times recently. They have been approached by a few people complaining about speed.
- b) WW1 Commemorative Plaque** – update and agreement on cost of installation (£3230 + VAT) – Cllr. Meade had provided a report on both this item and the basalt stone for members attending this evening. The agreed contractor provided an updated cost of £3230 excl. VAT for installation of the plinth – after a brief discussion, agreement was proposed by Cllr. Clark, seconded by Cllr. Bennett
ACTION – CLLR MEADE
- c) Commemorative bench on The Green – agreement on installation date and who will install** – Cllr. Bennett and other councillors will aim to have the bench installed on 12th/13th April, subject to weather conditions, Cllr. Bennett to contact the Clerk to confirm
ACTION – CLLR. BENNETT
- d) Speeding issues on A143** – No updates from NCC, however, the Chairman commented that the Beccles and Bungay Journal had been in contact and asked for a comment about speeding on the A143 which he had responded to in line with the Parish Council's concerns.

- e) **Grant Funding – discussion on funding for car park resurfacing** – Good news on the funding front, the Parish Partnership Bid for £5000 was successful, so the resurfacing could now proceed to be ordered, the balance of the spend is in earmarked reserves, with a small top up from the general fund. The total cost of resurfacing is £15,450.00 + VAT.
- f) **VE and VJ Day** – The Clerk informed members that an application for a grant from the Armed Forces Covenant had been successful and £250 had been awarded, which may go towards the cost of photographs/photocopying and/or framing. The Chairman reported that things were going very slowly in the bid to get information, however, there are several maps (not of great resolution), and efforts will be made to improve the quality. The suggestion of getting these blown up to A3 size was agreed, and Cllr. Bennett said that he will try and get this done. The Clerk asked which RBL branch covered Earsham as they may have some information.

ACTION – CLLRS BENNETT AND RANGLESOME

- g) **Agreement on planting scheme and placement of basalt stone updates –**
Planting scheme – It was agreed that Cllr. and Mrs. Clark, Cllr. Leech, the Clerk and two resident volunteers will meet on Friday 4th April at 2.30pm at a nearby nursery to purchase the plants, it was agreed that low maintenance was a priority whilst still managing to achieve some colour in the flower bed.

ACTION – CLLRS. CLARK, LEECH AND CLERK

Basalt Stone – Cllr. Meade reported via email that the stone has split in two, approximately two thirds of the original size. This was not a new crack as the rust colour of the inside surface of the cracked edges indicated this had existed for a long time. The question now raised are there other hidden crack and is the stone too crumbly. A couple of geology professors are visiting Cllr. Meade this week and hopefully they will provide some answers.

- h) **Defibrillator placement agreement and resolution to pay for any costs incurred for installing the new cabinet** – It had been previously agreed that the defib placement would remain where it currently is, and the only cost involved would be the electricity connection of the new cabinet – the quoted price is £80 plus VAT. The Clerk had previously contacted Jayne Biggs from the Heart2Heart charity to ask if she would check that all was operational once the new defib was in place, however, Jayne has responded to say that she is busy and unable to commit to the request. The Clerk suggested asking Bungay's First Responder to check the defib if Jayne is unable to attend. Cllr. Clark felt very strongly that someone who knows about defibs should check it over once it's in place to ensure it is working properly, the Clerk will chase this up to ensure that the defib is checked as requested.

ACTION – CLERK

- i) **SAM2 – agreement of cost for assessment of issues of £45.00 + VAT and consideration of a replacement machine if required** – The oldest machine (which was repaired last September) has gone wrong again, this time the radar has broken down and repair costs amounted to £1000. As the machine is 10 years old, it is probably not cost effective to repair. Cllr. Clark had asked Westcotec for replacement costs, and it is hoped these will be forthcoming soon. The Clerk will contact the manufacturer to find out life expectancy and costs to replace. The Clerk thought it may be possible to purchase another machine through the Parish Partnerships Scheme, however, this will take up to a year for a decision to be made on whether the bid was successful or not.

7. **Planning Applications – Noted**
 Application Number - 2025/0255
 Applicant: Mr. Iain Gwynn
 Location: Earsham Mill Church Road Earsham Norfolk
 Proposal: Development glamping site with erection of 3no timber cabins
 Application Type: Full Planning Permission

The Parish Council had no objection to this application subject to all the surveys and assessments requested by consultees being conducted to their satisfaction.

8. **Finance, Governance and Training –**

- a) **Approval of items of expenditure invoiced since the November 2024 meeting and note balances: -**

Parish Council payments made since last meeting – £377.70 excl. VAT (streetlighting electricity, ICO, SNC Brown Bin, and Christmas Lights donation to Mettingham VH)

Playing Field payments made since last meeting - £111.53 excl. VAT (pavilion electricity for February and March, plus Anglian Water)

Allotments payments made since last meeting – £44.63 (Anglian Water)

Payments for approval at this meeting –

Parish Council - £150.68 (Streetlighting maintenance quarterly contract, Clerk travel expenses, and brush cutting invoice for allotments)

Bank Balances – PC - £41,899.61 PF - £4,997.09 and Allotments - £1,875.27

Agreement proposed by Cllr. Leech, seconded by Cllr. Bennett

ALL AGREED

- b) **Resolution to agree Jackie Loveday to undertake the internal audit for 2024/25 at a cost £70** – Agreement proposed by Cllr. Leech seconded by Cllr. Bennett **ALL AGREED**

- c) **Resolution to agree to give delegated authority to the Clerk for the purchase of a new laptop and paper shredder for parish council work, at a cost of no more than the budgeted amount of £999** – The Clerk informed members of the age of the current laptop which was paid for through the Transparency Fund in 2017, which is now getting very slow and showing its age. The Clerk has been using her own shredder for the whole time of her employment and that has now stopped working. It is a requirement that Parish Council papers are disposed of properly due to confidentiality, so this is a requirement. Some discussion has already been held with the Chairman, and if agreed, the Clerk will continue to liaise with Cllr. Randlesome. Agreement proposed by Cllr. Leech, seconded by Cllr. Bennett **ALL AGREED**

- d) **Review of the following policies and note any updates -**

Equal Opportunities Policy

Safeguarding Policy

Risk Assessment for Litter Picking

Scheme of Delegation

System of Internal Control

The changes to the Safeguarding Policy were noted, agreement was proposed by Cllr. Leech and seconded by Cllr. Bennett **ALL AGREED**

9. Playing Field/Play Equipment/Bowls and Football Clubs/Allotments –

- a) **Update on allotments – Update on number of empty plots - SNC grant of £200 for clearance and discussion on digging over the plots after brush-cutting** – At the January meeting, the Clerk reported that there were 10 vacant plots, but that 3 had been given out the same week. Since then, there has been a rush on plots being taken up and now there only remains 2 empty allotments, however, these are very overgrown, as are the last two plots allocated. The Council's contractor has attended the allotments today and brush-cut 3 plots, but the debris needs to be removed, and the plots dug over. After a long discussion on the best way forward, Cllr. Revell said that he would be willing to visit the allotments and see what needs to be done to bring them back into order. **ACTION – CLLR. REVELL**
- b) **Play equipment – Discussion on further repairs required as per the Play Inspection Report of March 2024 and to discuss a replacement person to undertake the monthly risk assessment checks** – Cllr. Revell suggested that everyone takes a turn for the monthly checks, and offered to do April's checks himself, Cllr. Bennett offered to undertake the May checks – the next rota will be discussed at the May meeting. The works required in the Play Inspection Report need further discussion and there is still some S106 money to be utilised before the November deadline which will help towards the cost of repairs.

10. Significant Correspondence – Forwarded to Councillors and included:

- **CPRE Norfolk email asking for support to oppose the proposal to build a new town in South Norfolk – discussion on this important subject and members to decide if they wish to support this opposition** – Members were uncertain as to where the new town was going to be built and asked the Clerk to find out before any comments could be made.
- **Devolution and LGR from Barry Stone, County Councillor - Noted**

Cllr. Randlesome asked members at 9.31pm if they would be happy to continue the meeting for another 15 minutes as Standing Order 3(x) resolution had now been reached. All agreed to continue.

11. Business for the next meeting –

Basalt Stone progress, Emergency Action Plan, Village items (including signposts, WW1 Commemorative Plaque and bench and flowerbed)

The meeting was adjourned at 21.35 for public participation and reconvened at 21.43pm

A member of the public mentioned that the fence on the bridge was not installed all the way along and there was a gap where children could climb down.

Another member of the public asked if the man on the electric bike, who has been speeding through the village over 30mph, was known to the members. Cllr. Clark commented that he was aware of him, although he hadn't been seen for a while.

12. Confirmation of the date of the next meeting – Wednesday 28th May 2025 in the Village Hall, Earsham at 7.30pm immediately following the Annual Parish Meeting at 7.00pm

Signed ...R. Randlesome

Date ... 28th May 2025

Meeting ended at 21.45pm