

WEREHAM ANNUAL PARISH MEETING MINUTES

Tuesday 16 MAY 2023 6.30 PM, Wereham Village Hall

Present

Cllr Jo Bruce

Cllr Annie Bruce

Cllr Gail Koopowitz

Cllr Stephen Bradsell

Cllr Jackie Hitching

Cllr Jonathan Marsh

Cllr Sandra Calvert

Cllr Sue Lintern, Borough Council

Public: 3

1. Apologies for absence

There were no apologies received.

2. Last Annual Parish Minutes May 2022 and Matters Arising

RESOLVED: The minutes of the last Parish meeting May 2022 were approved as a correct record. (Proposed: Cllr Jackie Hitching; seconded Cllr Annie Bruce)

There were no matters arising.

3. Chairs Report

What have we been busy doing for the last 12 months on your behalf? Here are just a few examples:

We've planted a new mini orchard of fruit trees next to the A134 that are currently in blossom & will hopefully provide villagers with fruit for years to come.

The Jubilee bench has been installed next to the pond in honour of our late Queen achieving 70 years on the throne before her sad death last September. It provides a nice place to stop & relax by the pond to have a moment of calm in a busy world.

The jubilee tree has also been planted on the area opposite the village hall car park. It's a Cedar of Lebanon & I'm looking forward to seeing it grow & mature into something to be proud of.

As we've just seen, the village sign has been completely overhauled & modernised by 2 residents to a superb standard.

Last January time we planted new hedging both sides of the cemetery & we've secured 50/50 partnership funding to replace the front hedge & gateway this year to make access a much safer thing for years to come.

I thought as its the start of a new 4-year stint for the council that this year's report could be an educational one. To help settle in new members & to ensure our parishioners know the restraints we work under too. There seems to be a lot of misinformation out there that obviously then fuels strong emotions. Social media in all walks of life has caused its challenges. The Wereham village page is testament to the negative as well as positive aspects of this form of communication.

Nowadays people can complain immediately, hiding behind their pc. Strong debates then occur in full view of all. Its really not pleasant to watch. My own family have been involved a number of times. Trying to defend Mum because when people attack the parish council of course your loved ones take it personally on your behalf. We're all human.

There are areas of the village we have responsibility for – the playing field, church yard, pond & cemetery to name but a few. Other areas fall under other authorities responsibility like highways or the church. We cannot encroach on their areas without planning ahead & having a budget to spend on it in the first instance & seeking their agreement. We agree our annual budget every January we don't have surplus to suddenly spend on other things. We cannot easily increase our precept amount without it impacting on every parishioners council tax bill. Therefore, it's a fine balancing act between progressing our plans for the village alongside ensuring everyone can comfortably afford those plans.

Many years ago when I first joined the council the Lynn News & Advertiser printed an article about us doubling our precept one year. Very controversial! What wasn't printed was that same year we didn't have enough funds to pay our clerk. Things were mismanaged & left to get to that point. Theres usually a reason behind our choices. And they aren't made lightly.

Annually we have the whole debate about keeping everywhere looking nice & tidy, verges trimmed more regularly etc verses the environmental impact that could cause and several parishioners strongly favouring a no mow May approach. So who wins that debate? Having a balance of councillors with different skills, ages, genders & backgrounds ensures overall the majority of our decisions are balanced ones.

Maybe if I can offer any advice to members of the public its this. Be kind to us. Not one of us is sat here with their own agenda in mind. Not one of us is sat here in a paid role. I don't think any of us are 'do gooders', there to simply meddle in day to day life. We all simply want to help. Let's keep the passion in the debate but leave aggression at the door. It's not a pleasant atmosphere to work within. I am speaking on behalf of councillors & clerks when I say that.

Respect the way we work, as Helen is the only paid member of the team its only polite to go through her for anything in the first instance. The days of turning up unannounced at councillors' front doors is past. We all lead busy lives and would hate to be rude or unavailable when you need us. So, check in with Helen first.

Remember we cannot agree to anything outside of a public meeting anyway, so its always better to put your issue to us on email so Helen includes it on future agendas. And finally remember the meetings are for us to debate those items in public. Not for the public to join in too. Your part is always at the beginning now so you can voice any concerns/issues you may have. If we want input during the meeting from the public, we will ask. And if its given outside of that invite you may be politely asked to be quiet!

Finally, I wanted to take this opportunity to thank all those councillors & clerks I've worked with since 2010. It's been a long, & eventful at times, 12 years. Charlie good luck in whatever you continue to do, we've enjoyed working with you & maybe we'll see you join the PC again in the future. Stephen welcome to the team we're all looking forward to working with you to ensure our village & its friendly community is as thriving in the future as it is today.

The Chair reflected that online it was the most difficult part of the role to deal with, and people's best intentions can come across in a bullying way.

The Clerk agreed to add the report with the minutes on the website and link to the Parish Council's Facebook page.

4. Resident Concerns of Anything in Relation to the Parish of Wereham

There was none.

5. Date of Next Meeting – To be confirmed May 2024 at 6.30 pm

Noted.

Meeting Close 6.37 pm

Chair Signed