

## Lessingham and Hempstead with Eccles Parish Council

Action points from the virtual Parish Council meeting, which concluded on 9<sup>th</sup> March 2021. Due to Coronavirus and the need to maintain social distancing, the business of the Parish Council is being conducted remotely, with decisions made by email or telephone. These notes include any comments and views on agenda items received by the clerk by 7.30pm on Tuesday 9<sup>th</sup> March 2021.

Commenting: Cllr White  
Cllr Henderson  
Cllr Reynolds  
Cllr Cull  
Cllr Holden  
Cllr Bennett

Others: Cllr Shires (NNDC)  
Cllr Price (NCC)  
Nicky Debbage – outgoing Parish Clerk  
Charlotte Hummel - incoming Parish Clerk

### **1. Apologies and approval of absence**

No apologies.

### **2. Declaration of Interests / requests for dispensations**

No declarations.

### **3. To approve as accurate minutes of the last meeting of the Parish Council**

The minutes of the virtual meeting held on 9<sup>th</sup> February 2021 were approved as a true record. Proposed by Cllr White, seconded by Cllr Cull

### **4. Matters Arising**

The highways issues raised at the February meeting had been passed on to the Highways Ranger who had carried out an inspection and their response had been included in the correspondence folder.

### **5. Progress and information reports**

Cllr Richard Price (NCC) provided the following update for the PC:

“I want to start by paying tribute to your Chairman, Ken, for his significant dedication and service to the Parish for all of these years. I have had the privilege to be the District and now County Councillor for Lessingham for some 14 years and have witnessed the excellent way that Ken has run all the meetings. Nicky will also be a loss but I can reassure you that your new Clerk, Charlotte is very experienced and Clerk to two of my other Parishes.

The latest Covid figures for North Norfolk show the number of infections has increased to 2,938, an increase of 8 in the last week. Sadly, a further 8 people in North Norfolk have lost their life in the last week bringing the total loss of life to 202 and our thoughts go to all those people, their families and friends. The positive news is that the infection rate for North Norfolk has dropped in the last week from 36 to 13 per 100,000 which is one of the lowest for East Anglia where the overall rate is 57.

County has passed a balanced Budget for 2021/22 without needing to increase Council tax by the full amount permissible. We often hear about Councils closing libraries and therefore it is a sign of the sound financial management at County that £4m is being spent on our libraries in the coming year with huge investment on Great Yarmouth and Attleborough. Work will also continue to develop libraries as Community Hubs.

The personal Highways budget for County Councillors is increasing from £6k to £10k. This is very good news as the scope of how this can be spent is also being increased. I have now completed financing Sam 2s for all of the Parishes in my Division that wanted them so this leaves greater scope for helping with other road safety measures in the coming years.

£1.5m is being added to the County Flood Reserve which is good news and a very sensible one too. Back in late December when we had the heavy rain there were over 300 reported flooding incidents with 190 involving flooding of property. It might surprise you to learn that there are 36 different organisations in Norfolk with flood risk responsibility. Can you imagine holding a meeting with 36 different organisations and getting agreement? Not realistically easy! County have therefore created a new body, The Norfolk Strategic Flood Alliance and has had their first meeting where the agencies presented paper on their roles. The Chairman ended the meeting by thanking them but making it very clear that the Alliance was not to talk about the problems but to find solutions. You may have heard of the Chairman as he is Lord Dannant. I think that you may agree that if you can run the Army then you will not flinch from the task ahead. I represent the County on the Regional Flood and Coastal Committee (RFCC) which covers Norfolk, Suffolk and Essex on both coastal and inland flooding issues. The RFCC will be attending the next meeting of the Alliance.

Finally, please remember that I am available to help with any personal or business problems as we hopefully look forward to a more normal life and answering any questions. My Very Best Wishes to Ken and Nicky."

Cllr Lucy Shire (NNDC) provided the following update for the PC:

"A huge thank you to Cllr Ken White for his service on the Parish Council, 50 years really is remarkable. I agree this should be marked, please let me know how I can help.

Thank you Nicky for everything you have done to support Lessingham Parish, and for the adjustments and work over the last 12 months. Welcome Charlotte, I look forward to working with you.

A quick update from the district, with apologies for the delay. Home schooling is officially over, for now! As you may have read in the local news, we have frozen council tax for the coming year. We recognise that many are facing a difficult time and whilst approximately 9.5p from every £1 collected is for NNDC, every little bit helps. We have been able to do this with no cuts to service.

Locally, I wish to thank Cllr Bennett for his dedication in supporting the Bush Estate with a community movement to bring the roads back in to a good state. I remember from one of my

earliest Parish Council meetings that it was felt by local people that there was no way forward. I will continue to support as promised.

Enquiries from holiday home owners regarding travelling and overnight stays for maintenance purposes has increased in the last few weeks and the Beat Manger has been very supportive of answering my questions, the current stance is:

**“Unless this is essential maintenance that has to take place e.g. the property will be unsafe if the work isn’t done or it’s necessary for insurance purposes then this wouldn’t be permitted whilst we’re in lockdown.”**

With the rules set to change from “Stay at home” to “Minimise travel” on the 29th this moves to guidance and not law, our Beat Manager is concerned as to what this means for the influx of visitors that we will expect to visit North Norfolk but will continue to enforce the rules of gathering. I would like to thank our holiday home owners for the support they have offered the community with temporary housing for those who need it and for those who have been keen to stick to the rules. There has been a minority who have breached lockdown rules but this should not tarnish the reputation of the majority.

I am still registered to issue FoodBank vouchers for those who need them and there are funds available for fuel should anyone need support with keeping warm or general electricity bills.

I have recently been appointed to the North Norfolk Community Transport Board, I will update you further once I have attended my first meeting.”

## **6. Public participation**

There were no issues raised by members of the public (beyond those in the correspondence folder / on the agenda)

## **7. Planning**

There were no planning issues

## **8. Correspondence for information/discussion**

The full set of correspondence had been circulated to councillors.

Cllr Cull commented on the issue of the track at Eccles, suggesting there was little more the PC could do and that the track was owned by the caravan park who had agreed to assess the state of the track and carry out remedial work if necessary. The park had made it clear they did not want residents undertaking works to the track. Cllr Bennet agreed that the matter was between residents and the caravan park and felt the PC should not get drawn into it. Cllr Bennett was unable to inspect the track currently, but when he had inspected after a previous complaint he had found it to be in comparatively good condition given that it is an unsurfaced track in a rural location.

Cllr Bennett also sympathized with the residents of North Gap regarding the sand issue as he had seen the problem first hand. With regards to the planting of Marram grass to help stabilise the beach and reduce the sand drifting, Cllr Bennett felt this sounded like an excellent idea but was unsure what the technical implications of this would but felt it was worthy of further investigation by the Environment Agency and would fully support this.

## **9. Finance**

The following payments were authorised:

- Clerk's Salary - £104 (cheque number 100987)
- HMRC PAYE - £26 (cheque number 100988)
- Clerk's annual utility expenses - £100 (cheque number 100989)

The Chair proposed these payments be agreed, seconded by Cllr Cull

## **10. Resignation of Chair**

Cllr White announced that he would be retiring with effect from the close of the meeting. In addition to the tributes from Cllrs Price & Shires, Cllr Holden wished to express sadness at two councillors stepping down from their roles. Cllr Holden felt it will be very hard to replace Cllr Moore and Cllr White after doing such fantastic jobs and wanted to personally thank them both. Cllr Holden also proposed that after serving for 50 years Councillor White's departure should not go unrewarded and some kind of recognition should be presented. Cllrs agreed this should be discussed at the next PC meeting.

The Vice Chair, Cllr Henderson, will take Chair until the Annual General Meeting of the Parish Council is held, which is likely to be in May. The Parish Council archives have been passed to the Vice Chair

## **11. Resignation of Clerk and arrangements for temporary Clerk**

The current Clerk also reported that she was resigning and would finish with the PC at the end of March. Arrangements for an interim Clerk had been made and Charlotte Hummel had agreed to take on the Clerk's role until a permanent clerk was appointed.

Charlotte introduced herself to councillors: "I am very much looking forward to working with you all. A little background information on me, as you are aware, I am the clerk for Hickling Parish Council and I am also clerk for Neatishead. I have been a clerk for 5 years, previously I worked within the Home Office as a health and safety executive. When my family moved here 6 years ago it was not possible to remain working in London so a change was needed. Please feel free to get in contact with me".

## **12. AOB – agenda items for next meeting**

Arrangements for AGM and Annual Parish Council meeting