

CASTLE ACRE PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Parish Council meeting held in the village hall on Thursday 11 July 2019

Present: Mr M Hickey (MH) Chairman Mr L Fisher (LF) Vice-Chairman
Mr T Hubbard (TH) Mrs S Moister (SM)
Mr M Tate (MT)

In attendance: Ms L Roast (Clerk), Mr James Moriarty (JM) (Borough Councillor), seven members of the public.

Apologies: Ms C Williams (CW), Mr S Allen (SA), Mr N Patrick (NP), Mrs H Breach (HB)

Apologies not received: Cllr G Middleton.

33. Minutes of PC meeting on Thursday 13 June 2019

Mr Laurie Fisher proposed approval of the Minutes, Mrs Sheila Moister seconded.

34. Actions from previous meetings

28. Bailey Gate – no response from English Heritage since January as to when the portcullis will be reinstated. Clerk and MH chased but no update received.

51. Newton Road Bridge flooding – the south side is owned by Narford Estate who have been requested to dig out the ditches. Highways have programmed clearance of the drain and gully.

28. Directional sign on Stocks Green to the Ostrich car park – now in place along with the Massingham Road/Town Lane island signage.

56 South Acre ford road closure consultation in September 2016 – still no response received from County Cllr Graham Middleton to the PC's e-mail of 16 March. MH has contacted NCC's Monitoring Officer to determine what steps might be taken to make an official complaint about his poor attendance record and inactions of our County Cllr, as well as forcing a judicial review into the way the Highways consultation was conducted and the refusal to re-run it properly. Their advice was that the PC would have to pay for a judicial review which would be outside the PC's budgetary limit. MH may contact the Conservative Group. MH has also appealed directly to Tom McCabe, Executive Director, NCC Community and Environmental Services to intervene. A site visit was suggested.

60. Hedges along the south side of Newton Road at A1065 - TH, MH and resident Sally Hubbard have cut back the brambles. MH thanked them for their work. TH remarked that the Highways Rangers need to cut back this hedge further along the road once the annual environmental restrictions are lifted.

80. Grass footway along Newton Road – the overgrown wide verge first needs to be cut back by Holkham when they make their autumn topping. The Clerk to contact TTSR to enquire about cutting a footpath in the future.

113. Updates on outstanding Highways requests – replacement 30mph repeater sign on St James Green – not yet done; 'Deep Water' signs on each side of the ford – ordered, not installed; extra grips at the top of Orchard Lane and along Rougham Road – work scheduled for this summer.

120 Report on North Street alley, behind 109 North Street - TH will cut back the overhanging bushes once the nesting birds have gone.

123 Replacement wooded handrail on gate from church to South Acre Road – as an alternative to wood, HB to get quotes from the metal railing supplier to the village hall.

20 Extra litter bin on playing field– a black bin has been delivered. NP to enlarge the picket housing to accommodate this.

25 Tree by Boundary Cottage – the PC has declined to offer to pay a contribution for any remedial work on branches that overhang the resident’s boundary, believing these are the resident’s responsibility . The good condition of this tree is noted in the Parish Tree Register Both the PC’s Insurer and the resident have been informed.

Highways proposals for safety measures on Massingham Road/Back Lane junction.
– no report yet received.

35. Health & Safety matters (including Tree Report)

Updating the Tree Inspection Register should be completed by the September PC meeting. TH to inspect some of the lower tree branches on St James Green.

36. Matters requested by Councillors

Holkham public rights of way and open access land – report on meeting 26 June.

MH had circulated the Minutes of this meeting in advance to Cllrs (public copies available on request). While welcoming Holkham’s proposal to declare the footpath across Minns Meadow as a PROW (making nine in total in the Parish), MH expressed his disappointment at Holkham’s reluctance to declare the current six permissive paths, as well as the other seven nominated footpaths, all as PROWs to safeguard them after the CROW Act deadline of 2026 and for future generations.

Holkham spoke of maintaining good relations with the PC and of considering a form of Contract with the Council to guarantee the retention of all thirteen footpaths as permissive (scope and time limits of such a Contract yet to be determined). Holkham agreed the PC could cut back the summer overgrowth of all these paths, if so wished. Holkham’s new General Manager, Conservation - Jake Fiennes - will visit the village soon and be shown the footpaths in question.

There was an acceptance that the PC would not gain any benefit from leasing any of Holkham’s land around the Nar river, including Priors Meadow Precinct as Holkham would still be responsible for their maintenance and grazing rights, similar to Castle Acre Common etc. that historically are leased to the Council.

MH stressed to Holkham that negotiations have been ongoing for 18 months and that both the PC and residents are impatient for a decision on a clear way forward. He reminded Holkham that the PC has over 200 user evidence forms that could be sent to NCC in support of declaring all these footpaths PROWs, if a satisfactory outcome can’t be achieved.

Ostrich pub outdoor decking and seating area – update on planning and licensing.

The Conservation Team made a site visit and do not approve of the decking . The Ostrich will be requested to remove the structure, although it has the right to seek planning permission.

Vacancy for Parish Clerk

There are three candidates for this position. Agreed that MH, LF and MT will represent the Council in interviewing the candidates during August and selecting the best person for the position of Clerk to the Council. The new Clerk will start on 1 September and will work with Linda Roast until the end of that month when Linda officially leaves.

Supporting the Borough Council’s long term empty homes strategy.

SM reported that the village has at least eight empty properties but that the Borough Council (BC) cannot give the PC the addresses. The BC policy is to attempt to contact those property owners, particularly if there are Health and Safety issues. SM quoted The Old School on Stocks Green as an example of a building that has been left to deteriorate. SM stated that the BC’s document is difficult to comprehend but an eventual stage is compulsory purchase. JM to talk to BC officers about this policy and to bring a report to the September meeting.

37. PLANNING

19/01043/F - Proposed refurbishment of out-building to front of property at Melrose, Newton Road, (response by 12 July).

Work includes repair and extension, replacing roof tiles and guttering, plus adding a porch to the back of the house. Cllrs voted unanimously to support the refurbishment which they felt retained the integrity of the original building and would not impact on to any surrounding properties.

19/00148/F - 4 small dwellings and associated landscaping Holkham – planning status report.

The PC agreed to remove their objection to the application as the architect has now revised the variations, addressing the PC’s concerns on positioning the soakaways and making the landscaping subject to specific planning conditions.

17/02341/RMM - Massingham Road housing development – status report.

MH reported that once the application for the extra four smaller dwellings is approved, the £3 million build scheme will go ahead, probably in September and will take eighteen months to complete. The section of Holkham’s field north of the site entrance road will be fenced off for construction vehicles.

Report on meeting with Holkham on future housing developments.

MH and MT met James Bracey (JB) on 26 June and explained the thinking behind the draft Neighbourhood Plan (NP), in particular the BC’s official advice not to impose any further development land on Castle Acre which is not included in the emerging NP. The BC recommends that no fewer than five new dwellings are planned between 2026 and 2036. JB accepted reluctantly not to pursue Holkham’s plan to extend their current site to build a further 20 - 25 dwellings and will look at the NP’s alternative of limited development on the land between the Water Tower and St James’ Green with an entrance either off Massingham Road

or Archer Lane. JB remains committed to managing this site as a form of Housing Association with four smaller houses sold on a shared equity basis, subsidized by three larger properties.

JB doesn't see any merit in building further dwellings on the Manor Farm land but welcomes the NP proposal for small start-up business units there. JB confirmed that Holkham will consult closely with the PC before submitting any future planning applications to ensure that the PC has a greater element of control.

38. Correspondence

Early topping Priory Field – PC received an email *“This field provides a valuable habitat for ground nesting birds and many other small mammals and invertebrates. Areas of nettles and thistles are crucial to support invertebrates, and I'd been anticipating seeing butterflies and other insects flourish in the coming weeks in this ideal environment.*

Sadly not even a small area of nettles or longer grass was allowed to survive. The whole area was stripped back.

Orchids are to be found in the area, including a bee orchid that I spotted on one occasion. I find it so sad to see this lack of respect for wildlife - under threat, as it is we should all surely be doing what we can to protect it wherever possible. This area next to the Priory provides a valuable habitat for many species and the grass should not be cut back so early in the summer as it jeopardises so much of what is infinitely precious”.

Resident informed of answer from Holkam. *“The reason for cutting the Priory at this time of year is to try and control the undesirable weed species which are prevalent on this area before they set seed and spread more. We leave the cutting until this period to give ground nesting birds the opportunity to hatch and fledge before we carry out the topping. Unfortunately the Priory Field does produce a lot of thistle and ragwort, which if left into July will shed its wind blown seed which can spread over a great area. We have also had concerned neighbours and residents of Castle Acre contact the Estate to ask if we can top these weeds before they seed to mitigate this spread of seed. It is also within our stewardship agreements to prevent the spread of these undesirable weeds. Holkham Estate does take the management of its conservation and biodiversity very seriously and we are constantly trying to ‘strike the balance’ in managing a wide variety of habitats.”*

Little Lane – traffic – a resident asked whether the increasing amount of vehicle traffic along Little Lane can be restricted further, its signed designation as “Unsuitable for Vehicles” not having the desired effect. Cllrs noted that this is an on-going problem and that past enquiries to Highways about closing the road to traffic met with the usual response of high legal costs to effect a Traffic Order.

Filming at The Ostrich – In early July, Souvenir 11, a film production company, was shooting interior scenes at The Ostrich pub. It asked the PC if it could request some residents to move their cars off Stocks Green to create the right visual atmosphere through the pub's front window. The PC agreed and the production team offered a £200 donation. Cllrs agreed that this should be paid to CAPFA towards its funding of new playing field play equipment.

Unleashed dog on Water Meadows – a resident complained of an unruly dog which was let off its lead by a person living in De Warrenne Place and attacked his dog on the Water Meadows. The police have registered this incidence as “Allowing a dog to be out of control” and are looking to prosecute.

New community police officer - PC Ryan Kerr has been promoted to Sergeant and is moving to King's Lynn. His replacement has yet to be announced.

Sewerage plant - new pipeline to Swaffham. – MH relayed Anglian Water’s latest update. The pipe has not yet been drilled under the Nar. The full installation of the pipeline will not be completed until October.

Invitation for Parish Partnership highways funding bid 2020-21 – noted that all new bids must be submitted by 6 December 2019 which is before the PC budget review. Cllrs should consider projects in time for the 2021/22 bids which could then incorporate CIL receipts from approved planning applications.

George and Dragon listing – e-mail received from the Ostrich pub management asking that the George and Dragon should not be listed online as being in Castle Acre. Cllrs feel that such business decisions are not the remit of the PC. The Clerk to send an explanatory response.

39. Reports

Highways – nothing further to report.

School – no report.

Village hall – the Clerk reported: the Stone Pony gig made a very small loss. The next two gigs are of quite a different genre which will hopefully entice more residents to come along.

CAPFA – final arrangements for the fete are progressing. One resident has not received notification of the closure of Pyes Lane.

Neighbourhood Plan (NP) – MT reported: progressing quickly and finalising the draft. The Borough Council has checked the draft’s contents and confirmed that they meet the Borough Council’s Local Plan criteria. The officer’s feedback has been positive and his suggested amendments taken on board. He complimented Castle Acre’s NP team for the depth of information on the village which paints a clear picture. The final policy on second homes has yet to be finalised. The next stage is an official local authority screening of the Plan before the consultation period with stakeholders and the village. MT estimates that the new build growth in the Plan will generate around £4,000 CIL receipts (at 25%) to spend on Castle Acre’s infrastructure.

Borough Cllr’s report - JM reported on a number of issues:

- Live Leisure is being hived off to a charitable trust which will bring it back under the Borough Council’s control.

- The King’s Lynn Innovation Centre has been signed over to the Borough Council by the liquidator for £1 million (£6 million was spent on the building). There is an outstanding debt of £1.75 million and there will be an independent inquiry into setting up the original deal.

- There will be a management restructure at the Borough Council following the CEO’s retirement at the end of August. His replacement will be an internal appointment.

- A change to The Borough Council’s constitution is being considered which would allow more business from opposition parties.

- Following additional training, it is hoped when questions are asked of the Borough Council staff, answers will be more freely available.

- The Local Plan Task Group meetings are to be properly minuted rather than just notes taken.

- An alternative to the Cabinet system will be considered to see if it would be more appropriate given the recent election results.

- The possibility of two upmarket cinemas being set up within the Corn Exchange. 2 screens on

first floor. Seats to be £7.50.

- Currently all new policies from the Borough are screens to ensure they do not impact in a detrimental way on the rights of citizens. A similar approach is being considered to see if new policies might impact on climate change or loss of biodiversity. Early days. Extinction Rally in King's Lynn called for the BC to declare a climate emergency. Many Councils have already signed up for this. Pushing for West Norfolk to adopt.

- Air quality is to be put back on the Borough's agenda.

- Dog waste bins could be sponsored by veterinary groups who could have their logos on the side.

- Any changes to the workings of the Planning Scrutiny Committee are subject to a motion by full council, which is governed by the six month rule. A motion will be on the October agenda.

- Freebridge no longer associated with the Borough Council. JM hopes they will continue to be community minded.

County Council – no report.

40. **Accounts to be paid**

Accounts due for payment proposed by Mr Tim Hubbard, seconded by Mr Laurie Fisher.

Berrymans Glass Recycling Ltd (URM UK Ltd)	£36.00 (£6.00 VAT)
E.on Energy (electricity)	£ 66.09 (£3.15 VAT)*
Richard Price (internal audit)	£50.00
Linda Roast (Clerk's wages April to June)	£587.50
Castle Acre village hall (hire April 2019 – March 2020)	£220.00
Martin Hickey – printing Clerk's vacancy insert for NVN	£16.00
BCKLWN Election Recharge cost	£51.47
Compass Point (Neighbourhood Plan)	£654.20

* Invoice received after agenda had been sent out.

41. **Village Maintenance** –

Pyes Lane bank – letter sent to resident to clear the debris from the bank caused when a new fence was erected at the adjoining property. The resident has kindly made good the area.

Drainage in High Street – still a problem. The drains cannot take the volume of water after a downpour. It needs a bigger pipe and soakaway. The Clerk to report.

42. **Public Question Time**

Nar Valley Way, off Common Lane towards West Acre – Holkham's Konik grazing ponies, recently moved to the north side of Castle Acre Common, while friendly, are not moving off the footpath when walkers approach. This can be intimidating as well as damaging the Nar Valley Way path. The Clerk to report.

The meeting closed at 8.55pm. No meeting in August

The next full Parish Council meeting is on Thursday 12 September at 7.30pm.