

CASTLE ACRE PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Parish Council meeting held in the village hall on Thursday 14 March 2019

Present: Mr M Hickey (MH) Chairman Mr T Hubbard (TH)
Mrs S Moister (SM) Mr M Tate (MT)
Mr S Allen (SA) Mrs H Breach (HB)

In attendance: Ms L Roast (Clerk), Mr J Moriarty (JM) (Borough Councillor) plus 4 members of the public

Apologies: Ms C Williams (CW), Mr N Patrick (NP) Mr L Fisher (LF) Vice-Chairman,

118. Minutes of PC meeting on Thursday 10 January 2019

Minute amendments: Mr H Breach in attendance; 109. line 9: change to 'but they could be Right to Buy for locals (time constrained)'; 94. Change 'theses' to 'these'; 112. change 'find' to 'fund', 112. remove duplicate paragraph.

Mr Martin Tate proposed the amended Minutes and Mr Tim Hubbard seconded.

119. Actions from previous meetings

28. Bailey Gate –English Heritage is obtaining quotations to repair and then re-instate the portcullis on Bailey Gate. No further update – the Clerk to chase.

51. Newton Road bridge flooding – After 19 months, the channel has now been dug out on north side of the road. No work started yet on the blocked drain/gully on the southern side.

28. Directional sign on Stocks Green to the Ostrich car park – still waiting for Highways to produce draft designs for Stocks Green and also revised signage on the Town Lane island

56 South Acre Ford road closure consultation in September 2016 – Cllrs expressed dismay and disbelief at the contents of the e-mail to the PC from our County Cllr, Graham Middleton (GM), dated 14 March in response to the PC's of 10 December 2018. His e-mail repeated the same inaccurate statements, namely that NCC Highways first consultation on restricting vehicle access to South Acre ford '*followed what is required*' when in fact nearly all the key consultees weren't consulted at all! Equally, that '*the original consultation was heavily in favour of keeping the road open*' when one of the few consultees was the Breckland Land Rover Club which has nothing to do with our village but, it is believed, lobbied its members to put in their many similar objections, citing their right to drive on green roads etc., which was then numerically counted as outweighing the views of the Parish Council that represents the village of 880 people!

Cllrs were critical of GM's call for the PC to start a petition when there are already have 362 responses in favour of restricting vehicle access from our Neighbourhood Plan questionnaire. They do not accept the sweeping £50,000 cost of any further action as if this justifies not proceeding with the key first stage of instigating a properly run Highways consultation to all consultees and probably costing no more than £2,000- £3,000

Cllrs unanimously agreed to contact NCC's Monitoring Officer to instigate a judicial review into both the original consultation and the current lack of cooperation and action from officers and our representative.

60. Hedges along south side of Newton Road - the Clerk contacted the landowner last December to trim the brambles outgrowing from the south facing hedge on Newton Road between the A1065 junction and the bridge. Still not done. Cllrs requested confirmation on the cut-off date for cutting and trimming hedges under cross compliance. TH to advise.

66. Rights of way and open access land – no further update from Holkham until May. A further Mass Walk is planned for Sunday 26 May at 11.30am.

80. Grass footway along Newton Road – the verge has been trimmed. TH to review. It is suggested the Greens cutting team could keep a path trimmed during the summer.

94. Back Lane surface sweep – done. Foxes Meadow pothole done; Orchard & Archer Lane hedges – Clerk to chase.

107. Bus Shelter – no smoking and no litter signs – the ‘No Smoking’ sign is installed and cleaned. Cllrs approved purchase of a Glasdon internal litter bin at £58.68. The litter team will install and empty as necessary.

112. Summer Ball June 2020 – The PC agree with the chosen location on Holkham’s field by the Priory for the next Summer Ball and took the opportunity to thank the Holkham Estate for their generosity in not making a charge. A confirmation letter has been sent to the Ball Committee who will now inform residents close to the site of the Ball's date.

Tidying up East Green – Two Cllrs and two residents helped with leaf removal, moving twigs and branches to create a wild life area to the eastern side. MH thanked participants for their help.

113. Replacing bus stop sign and outstanding Highways requests – the Clerk has emailed photographs to NCC with a request for signage. Redressing North Street/St James Green road surface – planned for this summer; replacement 30mph repeater sign on St James Green - waiting replacement; ‘Deep Water’ signs placed as close as possible to each side of the ford – waiting installation; extra grips at the top of Orchard Lane and along Rougham Road – work ordered.

116. Priory Lane potholes – reported and marked. New potholes in Archer lane, Town Lane and St James Green reported.

120. Health & Safety matters (including Tree Report)

TM looking at the trees along the North Street alley

121. Matters requested by Councillors

Traffic Speeding.

Vehicle stats from SAM 2 indicate that 50% of vehicles are speeding along Newton Road within the 30 mph limit, with several doing over 60mph. Cllrs agreed that police should be requested to do speed checks. MH to find out how SAM2 is calibrated i.e. whether it picks up people outside the 30mph limit as a warning only or whether their speeds are recorded.

122. PLANNING

19/00148/F - 4 small dwellings and associated landscaping at Land Adjacent Rose Cottage, Massingham Road, Castle Acre, Norfolk

Highways disagree with the proposed eight parking spaces sited behind the semi-detached dwellings as this could lead to more on-street parking. This application is still being reviewed by Borough Planners.

BCKLWN Local Plan review to 2036 – PC policy on responding to suggested site options. Removal of ‘at least’ from the LP review wording. Raising concerns about ‘Housing delivery test’.

Cllrs considered the Borough’s public consultation on two new building sites, put forward by landowners, with a combined 28 dwellings. Site 1, with 20 houses, extends into the field at the top of Massingham Road which already has planning permission for 11 dwellings, plus an outstanding application for four lower cost semi-detached units - a total of 14 to be built this summer. Cllrs object to what would then be a very large, sprawling housing estate which is quite inappropriate in the village setting.

Site 2, with 8 houses, is on the land adjacent to the new school behind Back Lane. Cllrs object to this on historical, environmental and safety grounds. Once called ‘Further Pond Close’, this land formed part of Fox’s Manor in the reign of Henry III; it was subsequently an ancient meadowland for grazing and has now been left unworked for about 18 years. The site supports a diverse range of wildlife, including a pair of Barn Owls. Highways safety - with two cars per household, congestion would increase between the shop and the school with some 20,000 extra vehicle movements, endangering pedestrians. The Inspector of the current Local Plan stated ‘developing this land would not contribute significantly to improving the setting of the village’. Cllrs prefer to see this land as a Green Open Space and/or used to extend the school buildings.

The Borough Council’s calculation, based on population growth, estimates that the village needs 12 more houses to 2036 on top of those already approved. Cllrs think this should be only 8 more as the proposed four semi-detached weren’t included in these calculations. This number mirrors the majority opinion from the Neighbourhood Plan findings, calling for small estates of three to five houses. Cllrs believe there is scope to build at Manor Farm, on the church glebe land off South Acre Road and possible on part of the field by the water tower.

The PC’s draft response to the Borough’s consultations will be debated at the PC meeting on 11 April. Residents are encouraged to attend or to e-mail their views to the Clerk in advance. In line with other Parish Councils in the Borough, CAPC also calls for the words ‘at least’ not to be placed in front of any agreed housing numbers to stop any unwanted increases in building allocations. It shares other Council’s alarm at the new Housing Delivery test that could mean more unwanted development if not met.

Planning sifting panel - PC correspondence.

The Sifting Panel has been operating for 12 months. Along with other Councils in West Norfolk, the PC, considers that the Panel operates undemocratically. A report was produced for the Borough’s Corporate Performance Review Panel meeting on 19 February. The PC e-mailed its objections to the Panel’s Chairman in advance but the e-mail was not read out. Subsequently JM called for the Chairman to resign.

The PC’s e-mail expressed its continuing concerns about the operation of the Borough Council’s Planning Sifting Panel, having read the 12 month report and looked at the online Minutes of the Sifting Panel since its inauguration in March 2018. It confirms CAPC alarm at the apparent lack of democratic accountability from sifting through planning applications that

Parish Councils have objected to on good planning grounds in the expectation of making verbal representations to the Planning Committee, only to have that right denied – according to the report, 46 times since March 2018. The PC posed a number of questions. These and the Borough responses are minuted below.

Why, unlike other Borough Council Committees, are no Agendas issued and posted online in advance of a Sifting Panel meeting?

This is not a committee (such as the Planning Committee). It is a sifting meeting only to determine how an application will be determined.

Are Parish Councils informed in advance that their ‘Object to’ planning application is to be considered by the Sifting Panel?

No, parish councils aren’t notified in advance.

Do they have the right to attend and make their case?

No, this is an internal sifting meeting only. However parish council comments are always looked at in detail at the meetings.

Why do the Minutes not give the reasons why an application is either referred to the Planning Committee or back to officer delegated powers?

There is no need to go into detailed minutes on a discussion to determine the way an application is to be determined.

Is a Parish Council immediately informed that their ‘Object to’ planning application is being referred back to the officers or does the PC just find out when the weekly PDF of approved applications is sent out to Clerks?

The decisions are usually posted on the same day as the sifting meeting on the council’s website.

Does a Parish Council have a right of appeal if its ‘Object to’ planning application is not referred to the Planning Committee?

No. There is however a right for your ward member to call a planning application into Committee within 28 days of it appearing on the weekly list.

On average, the same three Cllrs regularly attended all the twelve sifting panels to date with others making sporadic appearances. Are all these Cllrs obliged to declare an interest and recuse themselves, should any planning application in their electoral ward be presented for consideration? As there are no such declarations at the top of any of the Minutes, should it be assumed this hasn’t yet arisen? The report states that ‘exceptional circumstances were originally considered to be circumstances such as a pecuniary or other interest where the ward member feels that he or she should not become involved in an application, and therefore asks another member to deal with it’. Is this what ‘other interest’ means in this context?

The reference to ‘exceptional circumstances’ was when a ward member feels they cannot call in an application in their ward, and as you say asks another member to look into the issue. Another interest may be that a member feels they do not want to deal with it if for example if the application is on behalf of a close friend. However that will be a judgement for that member to make.

123. Correspondence

The Ostrich pub- proposed outside seating to the front – street furniture licence?

A letter received from a Stocks Green resident stating that a few years ago the Ostrich put out seating at the front to which local residents objected on the grounds of excessive noise from drinkers. Highways also objected for reasons of road safety and encroachment on a public

carriageway. The Ostrich removed the seating. This resident wishes to uphold his objection and asked the PC to ensure that the seating outside is not permitted.

MH met the Ostrich's manager who clarified their plan to place four tables/chairs just on the narrow concrete strip adjacent to their front wall between the bedroom steps and the entrance to the pub garden. The tables/chairs would only be put out in the spring and summer between 9.0am to 6.0pm Monday to Friday and until 8.0pm on Saturdays .

Another resident expressed his scepticism that the tables/chairs would be put away in the evening with the resultant noise disturbing residents sleep. JM advised that he has not received any notification that the Ostrich has changed their license to serve alcohol to include outside the front curtilage of the pub and would refuse any such application. Cllrs agreed. MH to advise the pub manager.

Playing Field - cutting bushes abutting 109, St James' Green.

Email and photos received asking the PC to cut the bushes behind the back of the property. TH to review.

CPRE Norfolk – the potential loss of greenfield sites from BCKLWN Local Plan review.

CPRE Norfolk remains concerned about the potential loss of greenfield sites to additional housing which is likely to result from this review. The consultation papers state that sites for at least an additional 1,685 houses will be sought, in addition to the 11,080 housing completions and housing commitments (existing allocations and planning permissions minus de-allocated sites). In its response to this consultation, CPRE Norfolk will urge for developing the vast majority of these existing allocations before allowing any new sites to be built out, in what would be a phased approach to development. Given current and historic build rates, it is likely to be the case that there would be no need for any of these newly allocated sites to be developed if this phased development was adopted. As part of their submission, CPRE will send copies of pledges signed by Parish and Town Councils across KLWNBC calling for this approach. The PC agreed to sign the pledge.

Handrail from Church kissing gate to South Acre Road.

The PCC enquired if the PC has responsibility for the steps and handrails leading from the churchyard onto the South Acre road. It is claimed that the path through the churchyard is 'essentially' a public footpath. As the steps and handrail are outside the churchyard boundary are they the responsibility of the CAPC or perhaps Highways? The handrails are in a poor condition and the posts at the road end of the handrails are loose and therefore unsafe. Cllrs had suggested using our volunteer team to replace the wooden handrail with the PC paying for the material costs? However, as this is a safety issue, agreed that the PC should get three quotes and ask the PCC if it is prepared to share the cost. TH to talk to the Church Warden.

124. Reports

Highways – no further report.

School – no report.

Village hall – HB reported: the hall now registered with West Norfolk Wins, the Borough Council's lottery scheme from which £0.50 of every ticket purchase goes to the village hall (if selected from the many online good causes). HB urged villagers to purchase a lottery ticket.

Neighbourhood Plan (NP) – MT reported: the key sections are being written. Still waiting for the important Housing Needs Assessment. The traffic survey was completed by 23 volunteers over six days, resulting in 14 pages of statistical data and analysis, though the vehicle volumes would have been higher if the summer tourist traffic could have been factored in. The survey showed up some significant trends including the number of dog walkers driving into the village and areas of high vehicle activity and pedestrian footfall.

BCKLWN – JM reported: JM asked for the revised bus timetables to be published. The Clerk said these had not yet been finalised but would be advertised in the Nar Valley News and posted on noticeboards and bus stops.

County Council – no report.

125. Accounts to be paid

Berrymans Glass Recycling Ltd (URM UK Ltd)	£ 35.34 (£5.89 VAT)
E.on Energy (electricity)	£ 61.69 (£2.94 VAT)
Neighbourhood Plan – Compass Point Planning	£1,191.30 (VAT TBC)
K&M Lighting (9004 Town Lane Massingham Road)	£ 78.00 (£13.00 VAT)
Borough Council KLWN (dog waste disposal)	£ 631.62 (£105.27 VAT)*

* held over until April and new financial year

Mr Tim Hubbard proposed the payments, Mrs Sheila Moister seconded.

126. Village Maintenance – No reports

127 Public Question Time - No questions

The meeting closed at 9.50pm.

The next full Parish Council meeting is on Thursday 11 April at 7.30pm.