**Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting**

**held in Scarning Village Hall on April 11 2023**

Present: F Bradford (Chair), T Abel, M Blackburn, S Bunn, C Farnham, C Geary, C Hewson, T Mallard, M Steward. In attendance: N Hartley (Parish Clerk). Cllrs L Turner and Hewett (Breckland Council). Ten members of the public.

**1 Apologies for absence**

Apologies were received from Cllr W Richmond (Norfolk County Council).

**2 Minutes**

The meeting confirmed the minutes of the meeting held 11 April 2022.

**3 Parish Affairs**

The Council was asked to look at the signage to the defibrillator at the school, which may need to be clearer.

**4 Scarning Primary School Report**

Nick King, head of Scarning Primary School, delivered the following report.

I am pleased to report a positive year at Scarning VC Primary School.

Our school remains a popular school; one where attendance is good and outcomes are generally pleasing. Parental satisfaction surveys are positive (e.g. 100%, who answered at last survey, would recommend the school)

We have been particularly working on our curriculum in recent times. This has seen each subject reviewed thoroughly and we hope improved. We have managed to do this whilst not losing sight of the sound teaching of the basics.

We have established a curriculum specific website (<https://sites.google.com/nsix.org.uk/scarningcurriculumwebsite/home>) which readers may find interesting. It details specific subjects as well as some of the other features of learning at Scarning.

The school roll is currently over 400 and we remain popular, with an intake of 60 anticipated for September. This is effectively our capacity. Growth in the future is not anticipated.

The governing body has continued to provide invaluable support to the leadership of the school. In the last 18 months the governing body has been bolstered by new recruits from within the wider Scarning community.

As ever we work closely with the Seckar Trust and they have enabled us to run projects that, without their support, we might not have been able to e.g. a speech and language project.

It is fair to say that financially the current educational landscape is the most challenging it has been in my experience. Energy costs and changes to SEN funding are just two of a number of significant stresses on our budget. It has made setting a budget for the new financial year incredibly challenging.

Sports, arts and cultural activities have continued to take place throughout the year. Highlights since my last report have included:

* *Over 40 sports events scheduled to have been completed by the end of the year*
* *‘Inspire Days’ based around a variety of themes e.g. ‘folk tales’; ‘The World Cup*
* *The return to having Christingle and Easter services at the Church*
* *The continued (albeit slow) development of the wood we are trying to grow in the old ‘Thistle Field’*
* *A recent visit from Science Minister and local MP George Freeman for a pupil ‘Question Time’*

One thing that we are excited about is a project to develop a ‘Scarning legend’ – this will give the community an opportunity to write a story of Scarning that might sit alongside ‘The Pedlar of Swaffham’ or Dereham’s Tale of St Withburga’. We hope to share this project with the wider community through the Scarning Beacon in the June issue.

It remains a pleasure to lead the school, as well as to work within the welcoming and supportive community that is Scarning.

**5 Chair’s Report**

Fiona Bradford delivered the following report.

This Report covers the activities of the Parish Council over the last 12 months.

The Council had full membership during the year and has met every month since May to conduct Parish business, with discussions over various topics being in depth, extensive and at times very lively.

One of the most important events which took place was the unanimous decision in May to terminate the lease of the Water Meadows from Breckland Council. The reasoning for this was in part due to Breckland Council insisting that according to the existing lease the Parish Council was responsible for all the trees within the rented area. This had never been the understanding of the Parish Council, and therefore as it did not have the funds to undertake this responsibility it was felt that the lease could no longer be continued.

Also it had been intimated by Breckland that as the Water Meadows was such an important area, being one of only five in England of such special interest and value that care of the area may be given by Breckland to other agencies such as the Norfolk Wildlife Trust, who maintain Scarning Fen.

It was felt by the Parish Council that such agencies had far greater specialised expertise and knowledge in this area than it did and that for the benefit of the Meadows the lease would be terminated.

Over the years a dedicated group of volunteers have looked after and cared for the Meadows and together with the Parish Council have ensured that the diversity of flora and fauna could be enjoyed by all.

The Parish Council would like to thank all those who have contributed to the care of the Water Meadows especially James Walker and it is hoped that going forward Breckland Council will provide the due care and attention that the area deserves until a more appropriate guardian is appointed.

Having made the decision to terminate the main lease it was then agreed to enter into another lease with Breckland for the two play areas on the Meadows one off Ted Ellis Walk and the other off Blackthorn Drive. Throughout the year various discussions have taken place regarding this and although it has been a very long journey it is hoped that entry into the lease will take place this coming May.

Following surrender of the lease it had been agreed that funds previously allocated to the Water Meadows would be redirect and apportioned in to buying new play equipment for the play area off Blackthorn Drive. To give a wider understanding of what type of equipment may be most beneficial to the users a survey was undertaken, the results of which suggested that a new youth shelter, BMX track or zip wire would be desired. A large thank you to Tim Abel for giving up his time over several days to canvass the young people on the playing field.

The Council has been unable to take any action in regard to seeking grants or purchasing any equipment due to the lease not being in place however having previously agreed siting the erection of the table tennis table did go ahead and again thanks to those who assisted with its installation.

The Parish Council have investigated the possibility of the Parish starting a youth club and a community car scheme, after research it was felt that neither could be progressed, the former due to the expense of having sufficient trained and vetted leaders in place and the latter due to the number of drivers required, poor reimbursement rates for petrol and apparent lack of community demand.

2022 saw the Queen’s Jubilee, the Parish Council arranged activities which involved the beacon being dismantled, overhauled and re-sited, in readiness for lighting on the occasion. The running of a first aid course for those volunteers who required training in order to assist over the weekend.

Scarning’s events were free of charge and were very well attended and enjoyed by many over the weekend our thanks go to all those who assisted in making them such a success especially Melanie Blackburn, Chris Farnham and Tim Abel.

To mark the Jubilee the Parish Council gave the Primary School some books for their library which we hope have been enjoyed by the children. It is sad that after such a joyful occasion the Queen died only three months later and books of condolences were signed on behalf of the Parish.

In relation to roads, lighting, footpaths and verges the Parish Council has been in contact with Norfolk County Council with varying degrees of success. The dips in Dereham Road just after the junction with Chestnut Road, although previously agreed to repair and given works numbers have now been cancelled due to cost, nor can Norfolk County Council provide lighting between Rushmeadow Road and Chestnut Road.

The Council as in previous years made donations to several charities which benefit the Parish, it also made a donation to the Ukrainian appeal, and awarded three grants one of which was to the Scarning Pre-School £910, for safety padding to be wrapped around posts holding up a newly erected canopy, and the other £3,100 to the Playing Field Committee to assist with its maintenance costs during its 2023/2024 financial year.

During the year the Parish Council attempted livestreaming of its meetings but there was no interest from the public in this and so it was decided not to continue.

The Parish has undergone an upsurge in graffiti and vandalism, which has resulted in increased expenditure for repair and replacement of items damaged. So much so that it is now Council policy not to take any action in the face of this anti-social behaviour unless it is required for health and safety reasons or necessary to provide a public service.

The Speed Watch Group continues to meet; however, a shortage of volunteers means that its activities are curtailed and anyone wishing to join would be very welcome. Our thanks go to all those who give up their time in order to try and reduce the excess speeding on our roads, especially Cathy Geary and also thanks to Michael Steward for moving the speed sign from location to location.

The Council has organised litter picks during the year and our thanks go to those who give up their Saturday mornings in order to do this. Also, thanks to Sharon Goldsworthy for planting and caring for the Parishes flower boxes, they really do brighten up the day for all those that pass by them.

The Parish Council along with the Church have helped set up the Scarning Community Box, whereby food etc can be left in a box in the porch of the Church and then removed for use by those in need. We have also been trying to have the mobile food bus include Scarning in its route, this again may benefit the Parish.

Moving on to current matters the Council is looking at the proposal by the Village Hall Trust to improve the parking facilities on Shipdham Lane Playing Field. This is a long-term project and at the present time the Council cannot confirm the percentage it will be able to allocate to assist funding it, we await details of suggested surfaces to be used along with associated costings from the joint party working committee.

There is also Breckland Councils development plan to be considered, which relates to growth and development within the Parish. As part of the review, Breckland launched an Issues and Options public consultation, which will close on Friday 19 May. A meeting with Breckland to discover what was proposed for the Parish was very well attended on the 1 April, with relevant questions being asked by the public.

The Parish Council works as a team and part of that team for a long number of years has been Chris Farnham. He became a Councillor prior to 2005 and was Chair from May 2019 to 2021. He has been involved with almost everything the Council has undertaken from litter picks, storage of equipment, helping erect, move, clean, paint, repair and care for Parish assets. He was instrumental in establishing the Scarning Beacon magazine and overhauling the Parish website. He has given his time, knowledge and enthusiasm for the improvement and benefit of the Parish.

Chris is now standing down as a Councillor and on behalf of not only the Council but the Parish I would like to say a huge thank you to him for all he has contributed over the years. I am glad to say that he will continue with his work on The Beacon and the website, and I am sure he will be willing to assist the Council where possible in the future.

A huge thank you to my other fellow Councillors who have attended and taken part in meetings, especially when it’s been cold and wet. A final thanks to Nick the Clerk for ensuring that the Council is kept up to date and that we follow our standing orders as required.

**6 Norfolk County Councillor’s Report**

Cllr William Richmond submitted the following report to the meeting:-

**Highways**

-Slurry seal works/resurfacing to the footway along Dereham Road, between Scarning Primary School and the Podmore Lane junction, were carried out in August 2022. The works cost £20,000 and were implemented by contractors working on behalf of NCC.

-Additional resurfacing/slurry seal works to the footways along Dereham Road are included in the Non-Principal Structural Maintenance Schemes for 2023/2024. The total programmed sum for the works is £21,087.

-To support the Scarning Community Speed Watch, several roundel speed road markings have been installed in the 2022/23 financial year. These have been installed on Dereham Road and Draytonhall Lane on entering the 40 and 50 speed limits.

**-**The speed limits on Dereham Road will be considered under NCC’s Road Safety Community Fund in the 2023/24 financial year.

-If changes are to be made to the speed limits under the RSCF then implementation would be in the 2024/25 financial year, in line with other proposals within the Breckland and South Norfolk district areas.

**Mobile Library Service**

-The Mobile Library Service calls at Mayfair and School Plain normally every 28 days on Wednesdays on route number CEN 316.

-The stop at School Plain launched more recently in 2021 and is programmed later in the afternoon to hopefully entice ‘after school’ visitors.

-The next visits are scheduled for Wednesday 3rd May 2023. 10:25 to 10:40 at Mayfair and 16:35 to 17:05 at School Plain.

**7 Breckland Councillor’s Report**

Cllr Turner delivered the following report.

Paul and Lynda are proud to have served their ward for the past 20 years between them, and hope to continue post local elections.

As your District Councillors, our ward covers a vast geographical area stretching across from Cranworth and its hamlets through Shipdham to the parish of Scarning – a total of over 2500 households, including two large nursing homes, two schools and local businesses including Shipdham Airfield Industrial estate

During the past year one or both of us have attended every parish Council meeting in Shipdham, Scarning and Cranworth as well as hosting village forums, and initiating the inter village transport strategy: the road network between our villages is inadequate and much of our time is spent with traffic complaints liaising with the police, Norfolk Highways and other users (such as Serco) to minimise local disruption and frustration during the working day.

We have attended site visits, meetings with planners, environmental health and community officers, meeting businesses and business owners, as well as speaking on your behalf at a number of meetings at Breckland. Paul is a Cabinet member at Breckland, and Lynda chairs the General Purposes Cttee, and we both attend Cabinet and full Council, and spend much time working with officers on your behalf. Usually this proactive approach with officers mean we can achieve what we, our residents and our businesses are seeking. But even when we don’t get what we want, we remain at the table too ensure any decision minimises the impact on local people and residents.

We have a good relationship with our Parish Councils and have worked with all of them on areas such as management of land, management of traffic, and management of development inside, and outside of village boundaries.

Following the pandemic, we have continued to ensure that individuals and organisations in Shipdham receive as much financial support as is possible, either through local or national grants – including money for the Queens’s Platinum Jubilee, the forthcoming Coronation, the environment, and £2000 to enable the warm space project in All Saints Church. We were also instrumental in getting the Mobile Food Bus to call at Shipdham once a week.

Looking outside of Shipdham, Cranworth and Scarning, here are just a few key Breckland Council achievements from 2022-2023 based on the 4 strands of the Corporate Plan.as they affect this ward and the wider community of Breckland

**Supporting our local environment**

Actions have included investment in LED replacement street lights to bring the District and the County up t speed with what we have been delivering in Shipdham for our streetlight network over the last few years. This has helped reduce CO2 emissions in the District by 437 tonnes in the year. At the same time, we are being more energy efficient at our leisure centres and commenced trade waste collection for businesses, and installation of EV points in Swaffham and Watton in addition to those in Dereham and other locations in the district.

We have employed a Forestry Officer, planted over 700 trees in our towns and villages, and taken enforcement action against 100 waste offenders. More recently we have teamed with the National Trust to plant 3000 trees at Oxborough Hall to support their wildlife project, supporting biodiversity and sustainability.

Our bin collections now include the ability to collect batteries and small electrical items. And we have given a further £100K for local “green” schemes, working with schools re recycling and sustainability. For a small district council we are punching above our weight in terms of the local environment.

**Thriving Places**

We have invested £750K into Market Town Initiatives for our market towns, making them better and more vibrant places to visit.

We have helped businesses bounce back from the pandemic with £4.2M of funding.

Last month the refurbishment of the Queen Mother’s garden in Dereham was formally opened, supplementing our investment in the Eleanor Fenn garden opened last year. Any visitor to Dereham should see what has been achieved at both of those locations, turning dead spaces into vibrant community gardens and hubs.

Less popular initially, but just as effective, is our work in car parking: visitors from our villages to Attleborough now have a better chance to park there now that restrictive parking has been introduced to our carparks meaning that commuters to Norwich or further afield don’t simply abuse the parking that we offer to shoppers to visit and see the vibrancy that Attleborough town can provide.

We have supported nearly 50 new enterprises, and created more than 65 jobs in the Start-Up programme as well as securing £1.6M to fund the boosting of skills and training: investment that supports both our businesses and our most vulnerable residents. When we say we want our business and our residents to thrive, we mean it.

**Inspiring Communities**

We have invested £4.6M for emergency housing: we are fortunate in our patch that there are few identified rough sleepers but when we do identify them we reach out. Our frustration often is that we cannot do more: we remain clear there is a housing shortage and we are seeking to do more to address this.

For the identified vulnerable in our community we have contributed £100,000 to support survivors of domestic abuse via the Daisy programme; we have introduced the Mobile Food bus that serves rural areas (Lynda and I are members if you can, please also become a member which helps fund the cost of this even if you do not plan to use the service), and static discount food stores in Watton and Thetford: both services offer advice, counselling and help as well as food.

Our Mental health training continues to roll out across district enabling Mindful Towns and villages: 200 residents are now mental health champions, and hopefully initiatives in Shipdham can increase that number more.

Working with partners we have introduced of social prescribers, easing pressure on NHS, and seeking to head off challenges before they deteriorate into problems.

We have improved investment into leisure centres in Dereham and Thetford, and more recently announced plans to build new centres in Attleborough and Swaffham.

Our new handyman service means that residents who need small adaptations or building works in their homes can get this done quicker, and cheaper, than waiting for national funding to deliver.

We have given £120,000 to community projects – including those in our patch, and furthered this with additional financial support to range of celebrations across the District for both the Platinum Jubilee and the forthcoming coronation.

And we have welcomed 100 Ukranian refugees to our district with appropriate support to ensure their trauma can be lessened.

For a district with domestic challenges of our own, it is inspirational that we still look out for those less fortunate that ourselves.

**Working Smarter**

Whilst perhaps not the most important concern for some, how we work with residents over the next few years will be as important as what we do: we were using the term “agile working” before lockdown, and we will continue to work smarter with our residents in the future.

We are now in the top 10 of councils for our website accessibility: we still have call centres but the majority of our residents get from us what they need through the web, and the majority of they comes through Bobbie – the chatbot.

16 staff have now completed Apprenticeship courses – the council continues to be a place where people want to work, and still last year we made £334.000 savings in efficiencies for the Council with more to come.

We exceeded our rental income target last year which helps keep council taxes low: our rental portfolio generates some £3.4m council tax payers across the district: the equivalent of around £75 for every Band D property allowing us to deliver what we deliver for our environment, places, and communities.

We make, and continue to make, the best use of social media and info sources to keep residents updated of hat is happening in the district – from bins to the weather.

A recent survey of residents showed that 79% were satisfied/ happy/very happy with the services provided by Breckland Council: that is significantly above the national average or for the average in Norfolk.

During the year the Council was subject to a Peer review which concluded “The Council can be rightly proud of where it has been, where it has got to and its direction of travel”. Working smarter doesn’t always make good headlines, but it does make good sense: it allows our businesses and our residents to thrive.

This has been a long but important report for you all – and we are happy to take any questions.

As ever, we have been proud to serve you over the past year and would love to continue – but that’s dependent on who you choose for the next four years. Thank you.

**8 Scarning Parochial Church Council Report**

Sue Rockley delivered the following report.

Looking at key events during the year, the invasion of the Ukraine has had a massive impact – bringing untold suffering to both sides in the war. We were pleased to help run two events in support of Ukrainian families – a special coffee morning and a splendid concert by the Big Heart and Soul Choir resulting in a donation of £2,230. This was a great example of the village coming together to support others.

The knock-on effects of the war have been widespread, resulting in huge increases in energy and other costs. We are pleased to be working with the Parish Council on the community help boxes in the church porch. Again, the village is working together to help people.

In terms of the Dereham and District Team Ministry, Paul Cubitt, the Team Rector, is now supported by Revd Laura Purnell. Laura’s role is split between looking after Shipdham and East and West Bradenham and having responsibility for reaching out to schools in the benefice. She is already making great progress.

At Christmas the younger pupils from Scarning School came to church for a Christingle service, and last week the older children walked up to church for an Easter service. The chatter of more than two hundred children as they walked up to church was a real tonic and it was lovely to hear so many young people singing the pieces that they had practised for the occasion.

Revd James Rosie left in December, and we are delighted that from June the Revd Rachael Dines will be the new team vicar with responsibility for Swanton Morley, Beetley, East Bilney and Hoe. This appointment should allow the Rector to spend more time here – he is an energetic leader and keen to see Scarning church flourish.

We recently hosted a concert by Dereham Band and their conductor was greatly impressed by the church’s acoustic, which is very special. We are delighted that the Big Heart and Soul Choir is returning to Scarning in December for their Christmas Concert.

The PCC is grateful to the Parish Council for funding the cutting of the grass in the churchyard and for providing the village Christmas tree – it is always such a delight to see the tree and village hall lit for the festive season.

We are grateful to everyone who helps the church in any way – either through running or supporting events, ringing bells, or serving bacon butties at the monthly coffee mornings.

And now, the elephant in the room. In 2022, the church had its quinquennial inspection. Every five years the Diocese funds an inspection of the building. The 2022 report contained serious news about the tower which needs repairs costing more than £300,000. We will be putting together a bid to the Heritage Lottery fund for grant aid. As part of the grant application, we will need a project which, as well as the necessary repairs, supports wider use of the building. We are looking at the installation of an accessible toilet, a small kitchen facility and a large store cupboard. To accommodate the toilet and cupboard in the base of the tower, we want to raise the ringing floor. We have already run these ideas past the Diocesan Advisory Committee who are supportive.

As a safety measure the base of the tower has been fenced off, and we have applied for the tower to be put on the Heritage at Risk Register. We are now asking architects to submit their ideas for the internal improvements and will then begin the grant application process.

This brings me back to the theme of working together. In order to succeed in securing the funding, we will need to involve the wider community and we hope that volunteers will come forward to join the project team. We do not have a name for the campaign as yet – It could be the 4Ts (Tower, Toilet, Teas, Team). There will be more information in due course in the Beacon etc and plans will be put on display.

This is a critical project for a beautiful church and we hope that the village will once again work together to secure the future of its most iconic building.

**9 Scarning Village Hall Trust Report**

Alan Glister delivered the following report.

The Trust is pleased to report that we have successfully come out of the post pandemic period and Village Hall bookings have returned to normal levels. The gradual and mindful re-opening of the Hall during the past 12 months has seen the safe return of regular bookings and some exciting new and innovative uses by residents and businesses. These bookings provide social, sporting, and often educational and informative experiences for those attending, and play an important role in the Scarning and wider community. The Trust remains conscious of all factors in maintaining the Hall to a high standard, to the benefit of all Hall users, and ensuring the Hall remains accessible for all.

After a seven year hold on increasing Village Hall hire fees, during the latter part of 2022, Trustees reviewed the hire fees with other local venues and facilities. New hire fees, with the introduction of Business Use and Scarning Resident bandings, were introduced in November 2022.

Maintenance of the Village Hall remains an important part of the Trust’s work and this year we have carried out essential work and upgrades. A new sound system, new oil boiler and a new electrical distribution board have been installed at the Hall. The new boiler at the Village Hall is very efficient and will be a great benefit with rising bills during the Energy Crisis, something which is currently being faced by us all.

In early 2023 the Trust evaluated the responses from the Car Park Survey carried out during 2022 and reported these findings back to the Parish Council. From the responses received 84% agreed that improvements are required to the car park. The Trust therefore remains very committed to making improvements to the car parking facilities, and recognises that the project would encourage and improve the future use of all neighbouring facilities. Improvements would also significantly increase the road safety of all visitors, neighbouring residents and passing traffic, as reflected in the survey results. Costings on this project are currently being sought and assessed.

During June 2022 the Hall was adorned with Union Jack bunting and posters for our late Queen Elizabeth II’s Platinum Jubilee celebrations and provided a great venue for a Cream Tea in the sun filled garden and an art exhibition by Scarning Art Club. A display of artwork by pupils of Scarning Village School and historic photos of the village also took place in the Church. The event was well attended with much positive feedback received. A special thank you to all involved in this historic event. The Hall will once again be decorated in May to celebrate the next important event of the British Monarchy; The Coronation of King Charles III.

**10 Scarning Playing Field Committee Report**

Charles Hewson delivered the following report. The Playing Field Committee is functioning well. It has been a successful season with the football team. Tennis has been successful, as has use of the table tennis table. The Committee will be upgrading the pavilion. He thanked the Parish Council for its support with the running costs.