

Minutes of Scarning Parish Council Meeting held in Scarning Village Hall on 16 October 2023

Present: F Bradford (Chair), T Abel, M Blackburn, S Bunn, C Hewson, M Steward. In attendance: N Hartley (Parish Clerk), Three members of the public.

Public Participation

A member of the public asked if the hedge on Dereham Road near the junction with Podmore Lane was to be cut. The Council noted that such requests should be directed to Norfolk County Council through its Report a Problem facility.

Mrs Goldsworthy said she had planted the flower boxes. She noted that it appeared that someone may be removing the flowers from the box at the church end of the village. She asked if the Council could set up a group Parish Council WhatsApp on the Council phone.

It was noted that the willows on Dereham Road near Rushmeadow Road still need to be cut back. Norfolk County Council is aware of this.

The Council will ask Cllr Richmond (Norfolk County Council) for a report on his meeting with Norfolk County Council.

1 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs C Porter and T Mallard, who were unwell, and Cllrs L Turner and P Hewett (Breckland Council), and Cllr W Richmond (Norfolk County Council).

2 Declarations of Interest

Cllr Hewson declared an interest in any matter relating to Shipdham Lane Playing Field.

3 Minutes

It was **RESOLVED** to approve and sign the minutes of the meeting held on 25 September 2023 as a true and accurate record. The minutes were signed by the Chair.

4 Matters Arising

None.

5 Report from Norfolk County Councillor

Cllr Richmond sent a report in which he noted that he had submitted a request to Norfolk County Council for a reduction in the speed limit on Dereham Road to a uniform 40mph.

He had contacted the Highways Agency about improvements to the junction of the A47 and Draytonhall Lane. The Highways Agency noted it had carried out the following improvements:-

In 2019, replaced existing post mounted keep left signs at the junction with yellow reflective bollards incorporating the keep left sign.

In 2018, carried out route improvement measures between Scarning and Dereham, comprising new road signs, enhanced road markings to highlight the junctions (including the Draytonhall Lane junction) and introduced some new centre road hatching to the east of Draytonhall Lane.

The Highways Agency noted that continued monitoring has confirmed a reduction in the number of injury collisions and there are no plans to deliver further safety improvement measures at this time. Data collection and analysis continues as part of a wider A47 speed limit review of which the Draytonhall Lane junction is part. The review is expected to be concluded by the end of the calendar year.

6 Finance

6.1 The Council approved the following payments in accordance with its Budget:-

N Hartley, clerk's salary, £917.81

HMRC, clerk's PAYE, £11.80

PKF Littlejohn, audit fee, £252

SCS Accounting Solutions, payroll services, £18

D Bracey, play inspection reports for Blackthorn Drive play area, Ted Ellis play area and Shipdham Lane play area, £240

Royal British Legion, Remembrance Day wreath, £50

N Hartley, reimbursement for payment to Anglia Computer Solutions for repair to Council photocopier, £20

Wensum Valley Electrical Ltd, reposition defibrillator at Scarning School, £246

TT Jones Electrical Ltd, street light maintenance, £71.20

Npower, street light energy, £312.45

6.2 To note the following payments received:-

Breckland Council, part precept, £21,000

Scottish Widows, interest received, £162.82

A Buckingham, rent of the former Broadway Allotments, £375

S Eagle, rent of former Highway Surveyors Land at Chapel Lane, £15

6.3 The meeting received a report of actual to budgeted expenditure (copy attached).

6.4 The Council noted the completion of the external audit with the following observations from PKF Littlejohn:-

The smaller authority has not addressed the 'except for' matters raised by the external auditor when qualifying the prior year annual return. Information received from the smaller authority in the prior year indicated that the PAYE payments to HMRC have been incorrectly included in Section 2, Box 6 rather than Box 4. The figures in Section 2, Boxes 4 and 6 for the prior year should read £10,275 and £37,645 respectively. The AGAR was not accurately completed before submission for review. The smaller authority has not restated the 2021/22 figure for Section 2, Box 9 assets, where an asset has been incorrectly accounted for twice.

Other matters not affecting our opinion which we draw to the attention of the authority: We note that the smaller authority did not comply with Regulation 15 of the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 as it failed to make proper provision during the year 2023/24 for the exercise of public rights, since notice regarding the period for the exercise of public rights was not published before the start of the period. As a result, the smaller authority must answer 'No' to Assertion 4 of the Annual Governance Statement for 2023/24 and ensure that it makes proper provision for the exercise of public rights during 2024/25.

7 Planning

7.1 Applications considered:-

The Grange, Dereham Road New field shelter/log store	3PL/2023/0717/F No objection
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Scarning Village Hall & Estate, Dereham Road Proposed additional car parking area to Village Hall/playing field	3PL/2023/0891/F No objection
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Cllr Blackburn said she will contact Norfolk County Council to request a sign to the existing car park.

8 Appointment of a Contractor re Shipdham Lane Playing Field Oak Trees

The Council had instructed Norfolk Trees to carry out the work in accordance with the Tree Preservation orders.

9 Shipdham Lane Playing Field Oak Trees

The Council had received an email from Scarning Playing Field Committee regarding the branches overhanging the tennis courts. The Committee said that the 'time of year when the leaves are starting to fall rapidly' was approaching and noted it could not pay someone to sweep the courts. It was noted that a member of the Committee had entered a team into the Castle Acre league and was unable to play any games at home because 'not only do the trees drop debris on the court, the overhanging

branches also interfere with play.’ The Committee noted it was concerned about the safety of persons hiring the courts and was unsure if it would be covered for any accidents under its insurance policy. The Committee asked if it would be possible to have a meeting with the Tree Officer and a member of the Parish Council to discuss further actions.

The Clerk had noted that the Parish Council had taken the following decisions at its June and September meetings.

Council decision of June 2023

The Council had been asked if it will cut back branches overhanging the tennis courts. It was **RESOLVED**, subject to planning permission being granted, to cut the branches to the height of the fence surrounding the courts.

The Council had been asked if it will cut back branches around the street light on Shipdham Lane. It was **RESOLVED** that no action is necessary at present.

It was noted that members of the Tennis Club have previously said they will brush up acorns from the courts.

The Council will make the above requests to Breckland Council regarding the overhanging branches and the ivy.

Council decision of September 2023

The Council’s request to cut back the lower branches of the oak trees next to the two tennis courts had been approved by Breckland Council. The Council will obtain quotes to carry out the work. It was agreed that the quotes can be agreed by email in order to speed up the process. Cllr Hewson agreed to remove the cuttings off site to reduce the overall cost. Cllr Abel suggested that the action will not rectify the problem regarding the branches and asked if the higher branches could be cut back. It was **RESOLVED** that the Council will take the action above in accordance with the TPO and see what difference it makes. If required, the Council will apply to the Tree Officer for additional branches to be cut back.

The Chair reiterated the decisions of the Council.

In accordance with the decision of June 2023, the Parish Council had applied for and been granted permission to cut the branches to the height of the fence around the tennis courts.

Cllr Abel said that in his view cutting back the lower branches alone would not solve the problem caused by leaves and acorns falling onto the courts. He asked if the Council would delay the work agreed in the decision of September 2023 and for which a contractor had been instructed (see note 8 above).

Cllr Abel informed the Council that the Vice Chair of the Playing Field Committee had arranged a meeting with the Tree Officer. The Chair asked him in what capacity he was attending the meeting. Cllr Abel said he was attending as 'a concerned representative of the village.'

There was an exchange of views involving the Chair, the Clerk and Cllrs Hewson and Abel. The Clerk questioned the nature of the problem given that leaves and acorns are not falling throughout the year. It was noted that as per the minute of June 2023 (as above) members of the tennis group had previously said they would brush the acorns from the courts.

The Chair suggested there might be less use of the tennis courts in the upcoming months (when the leaves are falling) at which Cllr Hewson's reaction was to start to shout and in a very aggressive manner accused the Chair of suggesting that the Playing Field Committee's accounts were inaccurate in relation to the income from the tennis courts.

The Chair stated that was not what she was suggesting at all.

The meeting was then suspended due to the behaviour of Cllr Hewson.

When the meeting re-opened, the Clerk asked what the aim of the Playing Field Committee was. Cllr Hewson (as Chair of the Playing Field Committee) said the aim was 'not to cut down the trees.' He said the aim was to 'get the courts into a playable state.'

Cllr Abel questioned who would be responsible if there is an accident on one of the courts. The Playing Field Committee, as a separate entity, has its own insurance and would need to check if an accident would be covered under its policy. As the Parish Council is responsible for the two oaks the Clerk will contact its insurers regarding this to see if this is covered in its policy.

Cllr Abel said that he had originally asked to meet the Tree Officer when the initial request was made to cut the lower branches. The Clerk noted that this request had been made to the Tree Officer by email, but that the Tree Officer had visited the site without informing the Clerk.

The Clerk and the Chair both noted that in accordance with the rules governing the actions of a Parish Council, the Council cannot change a decision without a resolution of the Council. Cllr Abel noted that the decision taken in September 2023 had no date on it as to when the action will be taken.

It was **RESOLVED** to carry out the following actions. The Council will reply to the Playing Field Committee noting that its comments have been taken into account and understood. The Council will seek the views of the tennis group as to whether or not the members of the group are still willing to brush the acorns/leaves from the courts. In the meantime, the Council will contact its agreed contractor, Norfolk Trees, and request that no works are carried out until after 30 November.

Cllr Hewson apologised for raising his voice. The Chair accepted his apology.

The Clerk asked for the date of the meeting with the Playing Field Committee so that he could attend, as the two trees are the responsibility of the Parish Council. Cllr Abel declined to state the date and time, and it was made clear the Clerk was not welcome at the meeting.

10 Play Area Inspection Reports

The Council's Play area safety report had been carried out. The following had been noted in the report. The Council **RESOLVED** to carry out the following actions, as stated against each item.

Blackthorn Drive Play Area

Recommend cutting back the overhanging timbers of the Youth Shelters – low risk. Test wood beneath the surface. It was noted that the Youth Shelters did not form part of the proposed grant application for improvements to the area. It was agreed this would form part of the Budget discussions for 2024/2025.

Infill holes by one of the Springys – Some soil had been added, but this will need longer term attention and the addition of turf (recommended in report) – low risk. It was noted the Springys are to be replaced in the proposed improvements to the area and would form part of the Council's grant application.

Replace matting under the swings in enclosed play area – low to medium risk. It was noted the matting is to be replaced in the Council's proposed improvements to the area and would be included in the grant application.

Check roots/rocks on entrance from Blackthorn Drive – this is outside the area maintained by the Council. The Council had forwarded the comment to Asset Management at Breckland Council.

Monitor cracks in the timber- various pieces of equipment. This is already carried out as part of the weekly checks of the equipment.

Add soil to the edge of the matting in front of the football goals to eliminate trip hazards. It was agreed to carry out this work.

Rub down rust/flaking paint from the Air Skier. It was noted that this piece of equipment has since been removed off site by Norfolk Games & Frames as it is damaged beyond repair. The Council will consider replacing it.

Remove from the sign on the Air Walker the wording that children can use it under Adult Supervision – The wording has been taped over and will be monitored.

Ted Ellis Play Area

The inspector recommended the removal of the wire that was originally inserted between the wooden slats. Some of these areas are loose and have exposed wire edges and the report noted the timber fencing is adequate without the wire. The report recommended removal of the wire as a cost-effective means to reduce the hazard of the loose ends. It was agreed the Council will obtain costs.

The inspector proposed treating the weeds on the safety surface in front of the two goals. Top Garden quoted £60 to carry out this work and to weedkill/spray around the enclosed play area at Blackthorn Drive.

It was **RESOLVED** to ask for a revised quote to weedkill from Black Horse Close to Hill Rise – the work on all areas to be carried out in the Spring.

Shipdham Lane Play Equipment

The inspector recommended a 'Children Playing' sign. It was agreed the Council will ask Norfolk County Council if it can move the existing Children Playing sign at Dereham Road to Shipdham Lane.

The report recommended replacing the matting under the Zip Wire with bonded rubber surfacing. This is a low to medium risk. The Council will monitor this and agreed no action is currently required.

11 Bench at Blackthorn Drive

It was noted that there was damage to the Council installed bench at Blackthorn Drive. It was **RESOLVED** to contact the manufacturer to see if the bench can be repaired.

12 Blackthorn Drive Working Group Update

Cllr Bradford reported that she had approached Vattenfall seeking funding through its Community Budget. It was noted that applications cannot be made to this organisation until September 2024. Gressenhall Parish Council had recently applied for funding for play equipment and had kindly provided details of the organisations it had contacted. It was noted that Scarning Parish Council did not meet some of the funding criteria under which Gressenhall Parish Council had made its applications, which reduced the number of opportunities available.

13 Grant Application Scarning PCC

The Council had received an application from Scarning PCC to cut the grass in Scarning churchyard. The Clerk noted, as in previous years, that the Council has no obligation to cut the grass. It was **RESOLVED** to approve the grant application.

14 Appointment of a Grass Contractor 2024

The Council considered quotes from three contractors. It was **RESOLVED** to appoint TOP Garden Services to cut the verges/Meadows play area and other agreed areas.

It was **RESOLVED** to appoint TOP Garden Services to cut the grass in Scarning churchyard.

15 Community Food Box

The Council had received an email from Sue Rockley. The Council had previously agreed to suspend use of the Community Food Boxes over the summer months. The Council was asked if it wanted to reinstate the boxes over the winter months. The Council acknowledged that there had not been much call for using the boxes and that on at least two occasions the contents had been taken to Dereham food banks. It was **RESOLVED** not to continue with the food boxes.

16 BCS Mower

The Clerk had approached Tom Mansfield to see if he wishes to make an offer for the mower. Based on this, the Clerk will then contact DRP Horticultural Services and report back to the Council before any further action is taken.

17 Social Media Officer's Report

Cllr Blackburn noted comments on social media about the equipment used by the Speed Watch group. She noted recent comments about parking outside the school.

18 Speed Watch Coordinator

Cllr Blackburn noted the addition to social media and the website of the request of a coordinator for the Speed Watch. It was **RESOLVED** that this will be reissued with an addition to make clear that the group will be forced to cease if no coordinator comes forward. Cllr Mallard is currently acting as interim coordinator.

19 School Representative's Report

Cllr Porter had sent a report, which was read by the Chair. Cllr Porter had met the school's Head. He noted discussion over the proposed Council event in 2024 and that it would link with the school's Inspire Days. The request for a Speed Watch coordinator has been made in the school's newsletter. The school acknowledged that parking has been a long term issue and that numerous different attempts have been made to discourage parents from driving where possible, and to not park their vehicles in areas where vehicles should not be parked.

Cllr Abel noted the School Trust owns land near the school and questioned if this could be used to provide parking.

20 Civil Parking Enforcement Update

The Council had made a request to Civil Parking Enforcement to visit the school at dropping off and/or picking up times. No reply had been received and the Council was unaware if a visit had taken place, as no feedback had been forthcoming. The Council will make the same request again.

21 Bus Shelter Light (Dereham Road)

The Council was still waiting for an update on repairing the solar light over the bus shelter. This will be carried forward to the November meeting.

22 Items for Inclusion in the Next Agenda

Parish Partnership Scheme application for a speed sign.

Items as noted in the minutes and ongoing items as above.

23 Next Meeting

The next Council meeting will be in the Village Hall at 7pm on November 20.

There being no further business the meeting was closed at 9.20pm.

Scarning Parish Council Actual to Budgeted Expenditure

Running Costs	Budgeted	Expenditure	Notes
Insurance	750	708.10	
Clerk's salary & Paye	10,500	5,555.29	
Clerk's expenses	500	154.25	
Council phone	50	20.00	
Payroll services	100	36.00	
Office supplies	250	50.03	
Internal Auditor	150	120.00	
External Auditor	550		
Norfolk Parish Training Subscription	400	420.00	
Fee to Information Commissioner	35	35.00	
Microsoft subscription – Council laptop	60	59.99	
Council website - Wix	120		
Parish website Costs	100	25.00	
Hire of Village Hall	275		
Council Training	250	140.00	
Capital Costs			
Cutting roadside verges/meadows play areas (see below)	4,500	3,502.32	
Street lighting	2,500	523.50	
Street light maintenance	300	994.84	Includes two new Leds
Tree survey	500		
Tree works	1,000		
Solar lights – repairs	100		
Church clock maintenance	100		

Defibrillator costs	450	52.00	
SAM2	100		
Flower boxes	150	40.25	
General repairs	500		
Grit/dog bins	-	290.00	
Noticeboard spare keys	-	9.27	
Blackthorn Drive Play Area			
Grass cutting	Included in verges figure above		
New play equipment	5,000		
Repairs to play equipment	1,000	75.00	
Play Safety Report	250		
Maintenance of Outdoor Fitness equipment	500		
Ted Ellis Play Area			
Fence/gates	300		
Shipdham Lane Playing Field			
Outdoor Fitness equipment maintenance	250		
Zip wire maintenance	200	164.70	Replacement seat
Grants and Donations			
Grants	5,000	3,100.00	Grant to Playing Field Committee
Payment for Mower to Scarning Playing Field Committee		4,800.00	
Grass cutting in churchyard	1,500	1,039.50	
Remembrance Day wreath (Section 137)	50		
Additional			
Christmas tree	300		
Litter picking	75	23.50	

Elections		2,085	-	Funds not used as no elections held. c/f £2,085
Events (Coronation)		1,000		
TOTAL		£42,000	£21,938.54	
Bank reconciliation as at 1 October 2023				
Barclays Current Account £37,518.15				
Scottish Widows	£21,921.38	£59,439.53		
Balance c/f	£37,660.26			
Add receipts	£43,717.81			
Less payments	£21,938.54	£59,439.53		