

**Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting
held in Scarning Village Hall on April 15 2024**

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

1 Welcome

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

2 Minutes

The meeting confirmed the minutes of the meeting held 17 April 2023.

3 Parish Affairs

A member of the public noted three potholes on Fen Road. He was asked to report these to Norfolk County Council using its Report a Problem facility.

4 Chair's Report

Cllr Bradford delivered the following report.

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

The Parish Council's ("Council") full membership is normally 9. Unfortunately during the year this has fallen to 6.

The Council has met every month since April to conduct Parish business, with in depth discussions and decisions being made over differing matters.

In last year's report I mentioned that for the benefit of the Water Meadows the Council was to terminate its lease of the area with Breckland Council. This was finally completed, and a new lease signed relating to the play areas at Blackthorn Drive and Ted Ellis Walk.

The Council has pledged to improve the Blackthorn Drive play area. A working group has been set up and has investigated the types of improvements required in order to modernise the area and make the amenities more accessible and inclusive to all.

An initial costing has been obtained of £75,000 and with the realisation that the figure will be affected by inflation the Council has agreed the expense with monies being allocated to the project. However it will require substantial grant funding being obtained to successfully complete it.

The Parish Council has continued to support the Playing Field Committee with the provision of equipment and running costs and at their request has taken over responsibility of two oak trees at the tennis courts.

The Council has also promised support to the Village Hall Estate Trust in its aim for car park and access improvements and has given permission for the Trust to lay an access path on the playing field.

The PCC also received support from the Council and its tower project will need support from the community as a whole if it is to attract funding to complete the renovations.

Following on from Breckland's Local Plan meetings held last year the Parish Council gave its support to Bintree Parish Council in opposition to a proposed new town of 5,000 houses being developed between Bintree and North Elmham.

The Council unanimously objected to the application for a Care Home to be built on land east of Draytonhall Lane. It made verbal representation to the Planning Meeting at which the plan was rejected. Subsequently an appeal by the developer was made and the Council again sent written representation against the proposal.

In relation to roads, lighting, and verges the Parish Council has continued to liaise with Norfolk County Council especially to tackle the subsidence of the verge along Fen Road opposite the Broadway and the dips in Dereham Road just after the junction with Chestnut Road.

The failure of the led light at the bus stop opposite Chestnut Road as you go into Dereham continues to be a problem.

Parking at the School is of grave concern, with some parents parking in such a dangerous way that it puts other road users and indeed the children at risk. There is nothing the Council itself can do regarding this situation, but we have been in contact with Norfolk County Council, the Police and the Civil Parking Enforcement division in order to try and improve the inconsiderate parking of some parents.

The Council has come of age and is now using social media as a way to communicate with the community and our thanks go to Melanie Blackburn for setting this up.

The flower boxes located in various sites in the Parish are always a delight to see and our thanks go to Sharon Goldsworthy for volunteering to keep these well stocked and maintained.

Unfortunately, the Speed Watch Group had to be disbanded in December as a volunteer co-ordinator could not be found. There is some hope that it will recommence activities in July however this has yet to be confirmed and the Group's equipment has been handed back to the Police.

The Council has undertaken a full review of its policies and procedures, and these can be found on our website.

I would like to thank our Breckland Council and Norfolk County Council colleagues for attending our meetings when possible and their advice and assistance with matters is greatly appreciated.

As previously mentioned, membership of the Council has fallen to 6. Despite ongoing attempts to recruit additional members no-one has as yet come forward to join us. I really would urge anyone who feels that they would like to try and help the community they live in to contact the Clerk for details of what the voluntary post involves. Team work is at the heart of a good Council.

I would like to thank Cathy Geary, Tina Mallard and Chris Porter for the time and effort which they gave to the Council prior to retirement. I would also like to thank the existing members of the Council for their effort in not just attending meetings but by going out of their way to do things for the Parish which benefits the community as a whole. Obviously, my thanks go also to Nick, our Clerk, who ensures that the Council works to its remit and within standing orders.

5 Norfolk County Councillor's Report

Cllr Richmond submitted the following written report as he was unable to attend the meeting.

-Resurfacing/slurry seal works to the footways along Dereham Road are included in the draft Non-Principal Structural Maintenance Schemes for the 2024/2025 financial year.

-These works should have been carried out in the late summer of 2023, but due to the wet weather/grounds conditions the contractor could not complete the works programmed.

-The works are reprogrammed for summer 2024 and will hopefully be completed around the time of the school summer holidays.

-The works include sections of footway along Dereham Road between the Podmore Lane junction/A47 Bridge and Black Horse Close, outside the Church and the Village Hall.

-The Mobile Library Service calls at Mayfair normally every 28 days on Mondays on route number EDE 105.

-The arrival time at Mayfair is 13:20 and the departure time is 13:35.

-Upcoming dates include 22 April 2024, 20 May 2024, and 17 June 2024.

6 Breckland Councillor's Report

Cllr Turner delivered the following report.

A detailed report of all Breckland Council achievements for the past year, is on the parish website.

Breckland Council has a balanced budget for 2024/5 and has no debts, unlike many other councils. This is due to the prudent housekeeping within the Council, income from its property portfolio and ensuring every grant going is applied for. Thanks to the intervention of our current Leader and other council leaders, the government's Household Support Grant has been extended by six months to help those on lower incomes. As an example of external grants, we were awarded £250,000 to provide solar panels at Dereham Leisure Centre, as an energy saving, and to reduce our carbon footprint. Thetford was awarded £20M in the recent budget to improve and promote our largest town in Breckland.

A number of groups in the village have benefitted from or had the opportunity to apply for a range of grants during the year, including those for celebrating the Coronation, and commemorating D Day, and many individuals have received financial assistance from a number of government grants.

Probably the most important item for Scarning is the revision of the Breckland Local Plan, taking the district through to 2046 for housing, growth and commercial development. Villagers have been encouraged to take part in the consultations, and your Councillors have attended many member briefings. We both feel that over the next couple of years the Local Plan will be one of the most challenging of issues in Scarning and the Greater Dereham area, impacting our community for the next 20 years, and we will keep you informed as plans continue to develop at every stage.

Following a serious incident in Shipdham last week, we would remind you all that no councillor, be they parish, town, district or county will tolerate physical or verbal abuse, threats to their safety, or intrusion into their home. Any such behaviour will be reported to the relevant authority.

Finally, Breckland Council celebrated its 50th anniversary as your District Council on 2nd April, with a reception for members, officers and past chairman, with a congratulatory message from Norfolk's Lord Lieutenant, on behalf of The King.

7 Report of Scarning School

The Chair of Governors, Chris Price, delivered a report on behalf of the school's head, Nick King, who was unable to attend the meeting. Before delivering the report, Mr Price noted that Scarning is a Voluntary Controlled school, not an academy and not part of an academy trust. He said that Scarning has worked very hard to stay like that and that the school currently sees no benefits in being part of an academy. He said that Scarning is a thriving school, with twelve governors, half of whom live in Scarning. He noted the school has an extremely good Head

and experienced staff. He noted the school experiences no difficulty in recruiting staff. He noted the Pre School plays a massive role in attracting pupils/parents to the school. He delivered the school's report as below.

I am pleased to report that for Scarning VC Primary School the last 12 months have been very positive.

Our school remains a popular school. Attendance and outcomes have been strong (both above national average) and parent surveys positive.

An Ofsted inspection in February reported positively and we were proud of the outcome. As an appendix to this note I have included the letter I sent to parents and carers on receipt of the report.

The opening line of the report was that 'Children flourish at this school.' We were, perhaps more than anything else, pleased with this simple observation. Overall the judgement was that we remain a 'Good' school.

We would normally expect to see Ofsted again in 4 years time. However, we know that the Ofsted framework may well be changing in the near future, so this date could shift.

The school roll remains at over 400 and we remain popular, with an intake of 60 anticipated for September.

The governing body has continued to provide invaluable support and challenge to the leadership of the school. We have been able to attract new recruits and the governing body continues to be a strength of the school.

The Seckar Trust has maintained their support in a range of ways and we remain thankful for any financial assistance that they give us.

I note last year that I reported: 'It is fair to say that financially the current educational landscape is the most challenging it has been in my experience.' The financial picture remains difficult, but the school continues to be led well by the Finance Committee and the school-based finance team. This is enabling us to feel confident that we will be able to operate on a stable footing in the coming years.

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

- Multiple sports events attended within the Sports Partnership
- An artist in residence project which will soon see the front of the school improved with the installation of 7 mosaics that the children have helped produce
- Assembly interviews with a vet, a historian and a police officer

- Some excellent termly debates. (The most recent of which saw the motion 'It would be best if every day was warm and sunny' rejected by 263 votes to 113)
- The Playground Proms project visiting for a special performance to the whole school

As ever the staff at school remain a pleasure to lead - the families we work with crucial to the overall team effort – and the children a delight.

8 Report of Scarning Parochial Church Council

Sue Rockley delivered the following report.

In some ways, the last year has been relatively quiet for the PCC – although the church has hosted three splendid concerts. The Dereham Brass Band made full use of the splendid acoustics, we enjoyed Carl Simon's tributes to the likes of Frank Sinatra and Michael Bubl , and had a taste of Christmas music from around the world with the return of the Big Heart and Soul Choir in December.

Once again, the church resounded to the sound of joyous singing when years 1 and 2 from the School visited before Christmas, and we are looking forward to the older children coming for a special service in May. Revd Laura Purnell's post includes working with schools and she is making huge strides in building up relationships with schools in the benefice.

Revd Rachael Dines arrived in the summer. She has particular responsibilities for Swanton Morley, East Bilney, Beetley and Hoe and has made an excellent start. Canon Paul Cubitt is the third member of the ministry team. He is very energetic and outgoing and keen to explore how Scarning and Dereham can complement each other's offerings in terms of times of services etc. The benefice is very fortunate in its ministry team which is ably supported by lay readers.

There has been some progress on the major project around the repairs to the tower and the wish-list of facilities – a toilet and storage in the base of the tower, a raised ringing floor, and a kitchenette. An architect has been appointed and we now have a topographical survey of the building and the churchyard. The next stage is for the architect to produce draft plans for the internal work and for us to commission a structural survey of the tower to give a more accurate idea of the likely costs. We will then begin the quest for funding and bring together the people who have kindly offered to help with the project. The tower has been placed on the Heritage at Risk register which should count in our favour in terms of grants.

We are planning a number of fund raising events and hope that the church will be open as part of this year's Heritage Open Days.

As ever the PCC is very grateful to the Parish Council for funding the grass cutting in the churchyard and for maintaining the clock. Once again, the Christmas tree provided by the Council, combined with the decoration of the Village Hall, made a splendid focal point for the village over Christmas.

The monthly coffee mornings continue to attract people with the promise of exceptional bacon butties and other delights. The next one on 4 May will also include a plant stall. We hope to see you there! If anyone would like a fun day out on 22 June, we are having a spring clean – everyone welcome.

We wish to record our thanks to everyone who helps the church in any way – including our bellringers, cake bakers, and everyone who runs and supports events. Together we can secure the future of our beautiful church.

9 Report of Scarning Village Hall and Estate Trust

Alan Glistler delivered the following report.

The Trust is pleased to report that Scarning Village Hall continues to provide a welcoming venue for an array of activities, celebrations, social gatherings and business use. The Trust works pro-actively in maintaining the Hall to a high standard and ensuring the Hall remains accessible for all.

Following extensive upgrades in recent years the hall has required minor updates during 2023-24. New energy efficient lights have been installed in the entrance corridor and all WC's, Smart meters have been fitted to enable the Trust to actively monitor rising utilities bills. Wi-fi Contracts have been upgraded to meet the increasing requirements of Hall hirers and a new community defibrillator has been installed in the red phone box to the front of the Village Hall.

The Trust was fortunate that, in this case, the failure of the AED fell just inside the Martek warranty period. Community Heartbeat Trust were able to loan a temporary defibrillator until the new equipment arrived. The new defibrillator is now in place for the benefit of the whole community and holds a one year warranty.

In early 2024 the Trust reviewed the Village Hall hire fees as previously set in November 2022. Commencing 1 April 2024 the Village Hall fees increased by £2.00 per hour with deductions available for regular hirers.

The Trust abolished the Non Scarning Resident Booking Rates to simplify the booking process and encourage bookings from the wider community. General public can now book the Hall from as little as £12.00 per hour with business rates commencing at £17.00 an hour.

The Trust has recently commenced further marketing of the Village Hall for event hire and would ask Scarning Parish Council to help in these efforts by signposting the general public and businesses to Scarning Village Hall whenever possible.

As a result of the Car Park Survey carried out in 2022 by Scarning Village Hall & Estate Trust, the Trust re-applied for and obtained Planning Permission, on 8 February 2024, to extend and

improve the existing car parking facilities on Shipdham Lane. The Trust remains committed to completing this project within the next three years and recognises the importance of updating the area to benefit the local community and neighbouring facilities. A permissive pathway, leading from Shipdham Lane car parking area onto Dereham Road, (directly through the grounds of Scarning Village Hall) will be funded and completed by Scarning Village Hall & Estate Trust within the next 18 months as the first phase of the project. Scarning Village Hall & Estate Trust kindly acknowledges the £9,200.00 ring-fenced during 2023 by Scarning Parish Council towards the car park project and looks forward to working cohesively with the Parish Council to ensure that these funds are fully optimised in the next stages of the car park project.

10 Report of Scarning Playing Field Committee

The Chair of the Playing Field Committee, Charles Hewson, noted the following. He said that the Playing Field Committee continues to provide good facilities. A highlight of the year, he said, was the replacement of the mower, which was much appreciated. He noted there is currently no football team using the facilities, but said this seems to be a problem in other villages. He noted the reduced useage of the tennis courts and the reduced income from the courts. He said that during the year, members of the Committee had cut and cleared areas at the rear of the Village Hall cottages. He said the Bowls Club had held a fund raising event and that there was another fund raiser, a Tractor Run, on 2 June, to raise funds for the Committee. He thanked the members of the Committee for their support and hard work.