

SPARHAM ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

Minutes of the meeting held at 7.30pm on Tuesday 9th May 2023 in the Old School Room.

The meeting was chaired by Cllr Leona McConnell, Vice-Chairman of the Parish Council, with District & County Cllr Bill Borrett and five members of the public present.

1. Welcome and apologies for absence.

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting. Apologies were received from Cllr Adam Pryke (Chairman of the Parish Council) and District Cllr Gordon Bambridge

2. To confirm the minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on 10th May 2022.

The minutes of the meeting held in 2022 were accepted as a true record of the meeting and duly signed by the Chairman.

3. Chairman's Report.

The Chairman's report is attached.

4. Reports from District & County Councillors.

A report from D/Cllr Gordon Bambridge is attached.

Cllr Borrett, in respect of District matters, thanked everyone for their recent support at the local elections. He said there were many changes in Norfolk with Breckland now being just one of two conservative run councils. He said Breckland was well-run with the lowest council tax in the region due to the wise investments in previous years in commercial property which raised as much in rental income as the council tax. Working with D/Cllr Bambridge, he will continue to be the voice of Sparham at Breckland and will always attend parish meetings when necessary, however, with 19 councils to look after, they are unable to attend every meeting.

In respect of County matters, Cllr Borrett said a new leader had been elected as the previous leader had to step down because of poor health and he wished him a speedy recovery. The demand for services increases rapidly with 60% of the budget being spent on social care, both children and adults. With an aging population, those over 85 in Norfolk will double within 20 years. The County Council is promoting independence and working with the NHS to focus on prevention, rather than cure. Cllr Borrett is the new Cabinet Member for Public Health and Well-Being and was pleased that the walk-in centre in Norwich has been saved and wants more walk-in centres in local towns.

In response to a question, he confirmed that the Greens have launched a judicial review on the dualling of the A47.

The Chairman thanked Cllr Borrett for the work he does on behalf of Sparham.

5. Old School Room Report.

The Old School Room report is attached.

In response to a question, the Chairman confirmed that the hire rates were very low when compared with surrounding village halls.

6. Village Green – Wildflower Project Report.

The Chairman reported that a second grant had been obtained, most of which had been spent on seeds. She thanked Cllr Sayer for killing off the grass and the Clerk's husband for rotovating the area. The weather has been suitable for wildflowers this year and it was hoped that there would be a much better variety of flowers. A request from residents for a bench had been received and this will be considered by Council.

7. Open Forum – an opportunity for residents to express their views on matters of interest or concern relating to the village and to suggest ideas for the future.

No matters were raised by members of the public.

8. To note the date of the next Annual Parish Meeting- Tuesday 14th May 2024.

The date of the next meeting was noted and the Chairman then closed the meeting at 7.49pm.

Signed:

Date:

Sparham PC Report 2022-2023

Author: Adam Pryke

Date: 20th April 2023

The year picked up momentum after recovery from the pandemic period with initiatives moving slowly at first

The PC continues to respond to the needs of the Parish with new ideas at PC level and from the community, although attendance at Parish meetings is poor.

We continue to build some reserves that will allow us to take on more ambitious projects in time and the repair of the wall is still very much on the agenda. In order to do this, we increased the precept again this year and this will allow to contribute to the reserves and cover our minimal costs.

Some highlights -

The Defibrillator has now been installed after financing this ourselves. With increasing ambulance wait times we feel this will be a valuable asset.

We installed the Dog poo bin for dog walkers and this is now being regularly emptied by the district council services.

We monitor the pot-hole situation on our roads and report issues.

We provide financial support to the permissive access path and access to the meadow for walkers and dog walkers – this has been and continues to be a vital asset for the village. Thanks must go to Charles Sayer for granting us all access. Please be aware that this is not commonland and we have no permanent right to roam so its essential that we respect this and make sure that dog poo is picked up and disposed of in the poo bin.

We are taking an eco-approach to developing the Village green, by planting wildflowers to encourage insects and wildlife. Further planting of wildflowers will continue this year, along with fruit trees.

In response to issues raised by residents we have pursued the authorities regarding speeding motorists on the 1067. We have had a positive response with Speed camera vans visiting regularly. The objective is to push for a further speed restriction as traffic builds. This will take time. We have had County and District support on this matter, so the system can work.

In addition, we have changed the framework to allow up to seven Parish councillors and these two seats will be filled in 2023. This will bring a wider perspective and new ideas.

As a caveat we are still restricted by what we can do as finances allow and in these difficult times from a cost-of-living perspective we are focused on controlling costs.

Planning – Our approach has always been supportive and positive, but we are mindful of impact to existing residents.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank my fellow Councillors for their support during the year and a special thanks to Sheryl Irving our Parish Clerk who keeps us in order and on top of the latest regs and changes.

I appeal to parishioners to attend our meetings have your say and we are always looking for volunteers to play a part in our community and continue to make Sparham a fine place to live. There are also opportunities to join the PC.

Gordon Bambridge

Upper Wensum Ward - Breckland Council

Having represented this ward or its earlier incarnation for some 20 years and this being an election year I have decided to stand for another 4 years if the people of Upper Wensum continue to support me.

The past year in Breckland has been very positive despite the whole community still feeling the effects of the tail end of the covid pandemic, we will probably have some fall out from that for a few years. Breckland remains a council producing a balanced budget and still levies a low council tax.

With 15 villages in the ward attending parish meetings has been less regular than I would have hoped, and for this I am sorry, but I am always willing to attend village meetings at other times or arrange to meet with parish clerks or councillors, or indeed members or groups of the public between meetings. These can be in the parish or in the Breckland offices. Inevitably we often get two or more parish council meetings on the same evening, nobody is at fault it just happens, but I will normally attend if asked.

Planning within the ward has ground to a stop on housing applications because of nutrient neutrality limitations, although planners from across the county are hopeful we will have some better ideas of mitigation by the end of this year.

Two things have arisen in this area.

1/ The proposed new town, which is the biggest public issue in our area, I am opposed to the principle of it on this site and have recorded that at Breckland, plus if it goes any further I will oppose the fact of it on two wide ranging grounds - infrastructure matters and environmental matters - if re-elected I will be speaking to all parishes about these.

2/ The introduction of Exception Sites policies. That is 'Local homes for Local people' two villages in the ward are already going down the road of considering these and any village could talk to Breckland about this form of housing provision.

Breckland are still able to provide some grants and match funding, so please raise any questions or place bids if needed. The big project funding is still mainly coming from the lottery as that is how it is set up nationally, but except for things like new halls this is not often needed in villages. I am normally supportive of community efforts and willing to write support letters for your applications.

During the election I have been publishing a daily blog of almost 100 promises Breckland have kept in the past year. I believe Breckland administration has fulfilled its manifesto promises.

I continue to support all the villages of Upper Wensum in practical ways and by promoting them within the council wherever possible.

Apart from the normal ward work I serve on Breckland Cabinet with responsibility for Housing and Homelessness. This means I am pretty much a full time councillor, Cabinet meets weekly in some form or another and I also attend many Breckland committee meetings.

Also like many other conservative councillors I meet with other organisations and levels of government regularly. For me I am pleased to meet with:- MP's and County Councillors as well as parish councils and both national and local organisations who influence how we all live. Plus I represent Breckland on:-

Norfolk Police and Crime Panel,
Norfolk Rivers Internal Drainage Board,
Norfolk Strategic Flood Alliance,
Water Resource East Strategic Advisory Board,
A47 Alliance. (As substitute)

During my time as your councillor I have always regarded my prime job was to represent you to Breckland, I have a secondary duty and that is to represent Breckland to you. I do try and fulfil both these roles.

I hope we meet again after the election and will answer any questions anyone may have.

Gordon Bambridge
07540973229

Sparham OSR Report 2022-2023

Author: Adam Pryke

Date: 20th April 2023

Its been a steady year as we move back to normality and people resume many of the activities they pursued before the Pandemic.

The key focus has been on seeing our bookings increase to pre COVID levels and retention of regular users. This we are achieving but with increased costs we need to go further to continue to match our revenue and expenditure without the need for funding events.

2023-2024 will see us on track despite the hefty rise in electricity costs.

The generous support grants we received through the Pandemic period have enable us to refurbish the toilets and keep on top of maintenance requirements.

It has also enabled us to keep our hire charges at pre pandemic levels, which in the light of the cost of living rises it is a benefit for Sparham residents. We will monitor this in 2023 but may have to increase these.

In addition to private hire regular coffee mornings have been held with growing attendance and contributions from attendees which all helps.

Our aim is to hold social events hopefully without the need to raise support funds and we are proud of the fact that we one of few Village Halls that are self-supporting and always have been.

The upgrading we have done over the last few years makes the OSR an attractive option for small parties, business meetings and small groups that want something more intimate and less lofty.

Thanks to the OSR team who have contributed so much and shared out the tasks – always appreciated.

Anyone who wants to join the OSR team or help out – you will be most welcome.

Out finances are still buoyant, ending the year with approx. £3800 in the funds.