

NOWTON PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Annual Assembly of the Parish held 17th May 2023

At 8 p.m. in Nowton Village Hall, Nowton

Present: Councillor - Mr Henry Hopking (Chairman)
Councillor - Mr Mike May
Parish Clerk - Mrs Pauline Stoddart

In attendance and presenting reports: Andrew Tucker, Cllr. Karen Soons, Liam Judd, Pc Lee Andrews-Pearce, Sarah Peacock. Four parishioners were also in attendance.

1. **Apologies for Absence** – Cllr. Abi Smith.
2. **To ratify the Minutes of the Annual Parish Assembly held on the 18 May 2022**, as approved at the meeting held 6 July 2022. Resolved and signed by the Chairman.
3. **Annual Report of the Parish Council**, by the Chairman of the Parish Council.
The Chairman spoke under the headings of Nowton Park collaboration, Crime Analysis, Road Conditions, The Queen, Flooding, Speeding, Planning, Finance, Housing Development and Highways. He thanked the two recently retired Parish Councillors, David Flatt and Sarah Peacock, and spoke about the need to recruit new Councillors. Thanks were given to County Councillor Karen Soons for her continued help and support, and Andy Tucker, Area B Safer Neighbourhood Watch Coordinator, for his tireless work in keeping everyone so well informed. He acknowledged the hard work undertaken by all Councillors, the Clerk and the Internal Auditor, and thanked them for their support over the past year.

The full report can be read in Appendix 1.

4. **Annual Report of the Village Hall Committee**, by the Secretary, Sarah Peacock.
Sarah reported that bookings continued to grow, with a large number of birthday parties and celebrations held in the Hall, together with a number of regular weekly meetings. The grounds had benefited from the lower branches of a tree being lopped and there had been wildflowers and bulbs planted. The purchase of a village bench and hall sign had been made and plans were being considered for the official placement. The Hall has benefitted from new blinds, crockery, chairs and a baby changing table. In the coming year it was hoped to redecorate the inside of the hall and add some additional equipment to the kitchen. Sarah concluded her report by advising that financially the Village Hall continued to do well, affording the changes already made and those planned for the future.
5. **Annual Police Report**, by Pc Lee Andrews-Pearce, Community Engagement Officer.
Pc Andrews-Pearce began his report by quoting some recent crime statistics for the area and dispelling any fears residents might have, by explaining the method used by Suffolk Constabulary of how crimes are recorded and described. It was encouraging to learn that Nowton's crime figures were in fact relatively low in comparison with surrounding areas. Pc Andrews-Pearce's key message, which he wished to emphasise, was that **all** crimes should be reported.

The Chairman highlighted the fact that Nowton was a small village, but that it attracted an enormously high number of visitors to Nowton Park, which distorted the actual crime statistics for the village. Pc Andrews-Pearce said that he would be happy to differentiate the figures, separating those crimes occurring within Nowton Park that were committed by visitors.

A question from the Chairman referred to psychological abuse, asking how it could be better monitored, reported, and victims supported by the Police. Pc Andrews-Pearce advised that an initial victim need assessment would be carried out, to identify the needs of that victim.

He went on to explain that many victims wanted restorative justice, which was often more appropriate than a Court case, resulting in a fine.

A parishioner raised concerns about a crime which had been reported, to which there had been no response as to the next steps to be taken. Pc Andrews-Pearce advised that he would look into the investigation and would update the parishioner if there was some meaningful information. The Chairman summed up the dialog by confirming that Pc Andrews-Pearce would contact the parishioner outside of the meeting, which was agreed, and the parishioner was happy that a pathway forward had been established.

The Chairman suggested that it might be beneficial if Pc Andrews-Pearce could attend future meetings with the Parish Council, in order to continue dialogue. Pc Andrews-Pearce agreed this would be useful and that he would also at some point join Liam Judd, the Head Ranger of Nowton Park, on patrol and instigate other such initiatives, such as a pop-up gazebo with a Police presence in the Park, for instance.

Annual Suffolk Neighbourhood Watch Report, by Andy Tucker, SNWA BSE Area B Network Coordinator. Andy Tucker began his report by advising that he oversees six Parishes, all of which use Nextdoor and four parishes use Facebook. Andy reported that he was now electronically reaching more than 3,500 residents, with the network increasingly healthy and working well. He reported an increase in the percentage of crimes last year and gave the locations of these crimes. Andy advised that he had written to the Home Office concerning how crime statistics were recorded and presented to the public, and was delighted to report that the Home Office had recently published a statement from the Minister for Policing, which included changes to be implemented as soon as possible to the Police UK crime recording system. Andy concluded his report by advising that Suffolk was now the seventh lowest in terms of crime, having previously been the tenth lowest.

Nowton Park Report, by Head Ranger, Liam Judd. Liam, who had been in his position at Nowton Park since August 2022, began his report by outlining his background, qualifications and previous employment, which included working in a wildlife park in Africa. He summarised his duties for WSC advising that he patrolled all the public park areas within Bury St Edmunds and Newmarket, for which he was responsible for, and went on to describe some of the projects and new initiatives that were ongoing within Nowton Park, including the planting of swathes of wildflowers and reinstating Meadow Pond; the Park was now also the main clone bank for the Black Poplar. Pc Andrews-Pearce reiterated his offer to join rangers on patrols which was accepted as an excellent pro-active initiative.

In response to a question from the Chairman concerning the large event held in the park in August 2022, Liam confirmed that WSC had no interest in running an event like that again; it was a country park and as such more appropriate events would be encouraged. After discussion, it was agreed to engage in more open communication between the Police, Parish Council, Parishioners and Nowton Park, particularly when large events were being planned.

6. **Annual Suffolk County Council Report**, by County Cllr. Karen Soons. Cllr. Soons, who had recently been re-elected, began her report with some statistics on the elections, saying that the turn-out overall for the Horringer Ward was 40.65%, which was extremely good. From a poll taken the turn-out for Nowton was 66.11%, significantly higher than any other area in the Ward. Cllr. Soons continued her report by briefly covering some of the work undertaken by SCC during the past year, including laying 150 miles of new road surfaces, in 173 different sites across the County; the planting of some 200,000 trees, at a rate of 272 per day, over the past two years; an additional £15.9 million to complete the funding for the creation of at least 879 specialist places for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) Cllr. Soons advised that this money was the

second phase of a £45 million five-year project to deliver specialist provision for SEND students in Suffolk; SCC voted unanimously to oppose the East Anglia GREEN proposal, put forward by the National Grid, for a 180km network of electricity pylons between Norwich, Bramford and Tilbury; new routes had been added to the Suffolk HGV map and Cllr. Soons advised it would be worth checking these updates. The Hole in Ipswich was now the new home for Suffolk archive records, much of which had now been digitised. Cllr. Soons ended her report by advising that many villages were installing EV charging points and that SCC had submitted a bid of £1.362 million to the Department of Transport, it was hoped communities would support the idea of installing EV charging points.

The Chairman queried why, when the car park at Nowton Park was being resurfaced, no EV points were installed, bearing in mind that the Park was owned by the Council encouraging small communities, such as Nowton, to install EV points.

Discussion followed as to the poor condition of particular road surfaces within Nowton, due to overgrown/overflowing ditches. Liam Judd reported that the Nowton Park workforce had already dug out the ditches on the Park side of the road and apologised for missing the start date for further work, owing to the nesting season for wild birds. He advised that the road would need to be closed, which required permission, but confirmed that work was now due to begin in the second week of September. The Chairman thanked Liam for all the work that had been carried out already, and was planned for the future.

7. **Financial Report of the Parish Council**, by the Responsible Financial Officer, Pauline Stoddart. A detailed Income and Expenditure paper had been previously circulated to Councillors and was available for those members of the public present. The Clerk/RFO reported that the year-end figure amounted to just under £5,000. As detailed in the Chairman's report, the Council had set a cautious budget for 2024/25 resulting in a slight decrease in the Council Tax for a band 'D' home. The Council had recently received a grant from WSC of £250 for works surrounding the bus shelter and the village sign.

8. **Particular issues for discussion –**

- 8.1 **Speeding –** including a request from the Nowton Road Community Speed Watch to site a post, for the purposes of mounting a Speed Indicator Device, the property of Bury Town council, within the Nowton parish boundary. A member of the Nowton Road Community Speed Watch Campaign outlined the background of the formation of the group of volunteers, of which eight were trained up to monitor four sites on Nowton Road in relation to speeding vehicles. The 'hot spot' was between Plovers Way and the entrance to Nowton Park where some 180 vehicles were recorded travelling at speeds of up to 60MPH.

The Chairman explained that Councillors had already discussed and agreed that the Parish Council was happy to support the positioning of a post within the parish boundary, but that it wished to also seek resident's approval at the Annual Assembly of the Parish. No objections were received and the meeting was unanimously in favour of this initiative. Written confirmation of this decision was agreed to be given by the Council.

Cllr. Soons offered to contribute towards the cost of a VAS, should the Council be considering the purchase of one. The Chairman advised that a re-visiting of a site survey probably needed to be conducted first. A traffic count was also suggested as a useful starting point and would be put as a future agenda item for discussion.

Liam Judd mentioned that at the entrance to Nowton Park there was no 'give way' sign or surface markings; Cllr. Soons advised that a sign could be put up without

permission on private land. Liam also offered to provide vehicle count data for visitors to the Park to the Parish Council, which the Chairman advised would be very useful.

8.2 Flooding, Nowton Road – The Chairman reported that the clearing of drains and working with the neighbouring land owner had already improved the situation, which appeared to have been caused by two drains, on the opposite side of the road to the Park, that were previously hidden and had become blocked. Liam Judd kindly offered to inspect the two drains as part of his regular patrols.

9. Any Other Business or questions from the floor –

9.1 A parishioner asked that the Annual Assembly of the Parish be better advertised in future; it was agreed to look at additional ways in which to publicise the Annual meeting, in addition to notices being displayed on the Parish Council noticeboard, the website, and at the end of all meeting minutes.

9.2 The pavement towards the Village Hall was presently being worked on and Cllr. Soons confirmed it was being cleared of overgrown vegetation; the Chairman suggested that perhaps working with Nowton Park the pavement could be kept clear in the future, to which Liam Judd responded that this was something that was entirely possible.

The Chairman thanked everyone for attending and the meeting was closed at 10.05 p.m.

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Signed

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Date