

# NOWTON PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held 17 January 2024

**Present:** Councillor - Mr Henry Hopking (Chairman)  
Councillor - Mr Michael May  
Councillor - Mr Ross O'Hara  
Councillor - Ms Abigail Smith  
Parish Clerk - Mrs Pauline Stoddart

Prior to the meeting commencing, 10 Minute Public Forum – no members of the public present. In attendance: Cllr. Karen Soons – the meeting was adjourned and, whilst Cllr. Soons had not issued a formal report, discussion on issues included the growing problem of potholes, flooding of Nowton Road and the cutting of funding to the Arts and Museum sector by Suffolk County Council.

1. **Apologies for Absence** – none. All present.
2. **Declarations of Interest** – none.
  - 2.1 The Clerk reminded all Councillors to check their Register of Interests.
3. **Approval of the draft Minutes from the previous meeting held on 6 December 2023.** Having been circulated prior to the meeting, the minutes were approved as a true and accurate record. Proposed by Cllr. Smith, seconded by Cllr. May; duly signed by the Chairman.
4. **Matters arising from the Minutes of the meeting held on 6 December, not already on the agenda** –
  - 4.1 (8.1) The Clerk wished to ascertain the urgency for the purchase of the grit bin for High Green; Cllr. May confirmed that it was badly damaged and not fit for purpose. It was resolved that a grit bin be ordered as soon as possible and that Cllr. May would sign for the delivery at his address. **Action: Clerk**

Cllr. Soons offered funding towards the cost of the grit bin; the Clerk to email Cllr. Soons in this regard. **Action: Clerk**
5. **Public Forum** – no members of the public were present for this item.
6. **Co-option to the Parish Council** – no applications or expressions of interest had been received; this would remain a standing Agenda item until such time as the position was filled.
7. **Finance** – Current Account: £621.17; Business Account: £5,959.94 Total: £6,581.11
  - 7.1 Ratification of Precept, 2024-2025. Councillors resolved to submit a Precept request of £4,514. The application was signed by the Chairman and Clerk; the Clerk to submit the form prior to the deadline of 22 January. **Action: Clerk**

Five cheques were approved and signed:

100448	Nowton Village Hall, recycling	£152.46 (cheque given to Cllr. Smith)
100449	Clerk, Q3 salary Oct-Dec	£560.00
100450	Spoilt cheque	
100451	HMRC, Tax Q3	£90.00
100452	Suffolk Family Carers (s137)	£100.00
100453	Church of St. Peter, Nowton (s137)	£100.00

Cllr. O'Hara was given the bank statements and accounts documentation in order to undertake the quarterly internal audit report, to be presented at the next meeting.

**Action: Cllr. O'Hara**

8. **Planning** – no planning applications to hand.
9. **PCC Precept Survey 2024** – Whilst not all Councillors were in agreement with the proposal by the Police and Crime Commissioner of an increase to the policing element of Council Tax bills by £13 a year (for a Band D property) it was agreed that the Clerk should complete the Survey on behalf of the Parish Council, stressing that whilst it was essential to support the police, the Council hoped that the newly introduced policing model, plus the proposed further uplift in the monetary annual increase, would result in an increased law enforcement presence in the area. The Chairman reminded Councillors that they could also complete the survey individually as parishioners.  
**Action: Clerk**
10. **Flooding, Nowton Road** – Councillors were very disappointed that flooding had reoccurred, due to the drain being blocked. Despite the efforts made in 2023, without regular clearing of the drain, Councillors felt the work undertaken previously had been a waste of time and investment. Vehicles had tried to go through the flood and two cars had blocked the road, potentially resulting in a risk to life as emergency vehicles were unable to get through.

The recent communication with Highways (circulated to all Councillors) resulted in a negative response to the request for the drain to be examined on a monthly cycle. The recommendation was to report any flooding via the online reporting tool each and every time the problem occurred – the Chairman had done this, but there had been no speedy inspection or remedial work carried out.

Councillor's comments included: that the drainpipe possibly needed to be a bigger diameter; queried whether the flint wall was listed or had any protection by Law; that Highways need to put Road Closed signs up much sooner, to deter cars entering the flood water; and also that vehicles have churned up the edges of the area around the village sign, using it as a turning area when they saw the Road Closed signs, further damaging and reducing the size of an already small village green. The Clerk was instructed to write again to Highways, with a copy to Cllr. Soons, asking what steps can be taken next to rectify the problem of Nowton Road flooding. **Action: Clerk**

Cllr. Smith advised that she had reported a drain filled with gravel, from previous road works, which with rainfall subsequently caused flooding in Cooper Lane. The response from SCC Highways was that this had been assessed against SCC's Highway Maintenance Operation Plan (HMOP) and at this time they were unable to take further action as it did not meet their intervention criteria. The location would, however, continue to be monitored as part of their routine inspections. The Clerk was instructed to contact Highways to ascertain what the village jetting schedule was. **Action: Clerk**

11. **Speed Survey, results** – The survey was funded by Cllr. Soons and the results had been circulated to all Councillors. Overall, the data showed that there was not a particular problem with speeding vehicles through Nowton, although it was noted that the survey indicated there was high traffic volume early in the morning. The Chairman asked Councillors whether, in light of the results from the survey, the Council still wished to pursue the installation of a Speed Indicator Device (SID)

Councillors considered that a SID would still be beneficial, particularly if one could be borrowed, as indicated from a neighbouring Parish Chairman, during the Nowton Parish Council meeting of 27 September 2023. The Clerk was instructed to share the Speed Survey with that Chairman, and investigate the offer of borrowing that Council's SID.  
**Action: Clerk**

The Clerk was instructed to contact Cllr. Soons to enquire as to whether funding might be available for a post to be erected, to hold the SID. The Chairman outlined the best positioning of the post, which Councillors agreed to be the corner of Cooper Lane and Bury road, adjacent to The Sanctuary. **Action: Clerk**

12. **Strengthening Community Engagement** - The Chairman advised that a date had been offered for the training of Leaders in respect of the Community Self-Help Scheme. At the present time only the Chairman and Cllr. O'Hara had volunteered for this training and, unfortunately, the date offered was not feasible. The Chairman was keen that more parishioners become involved, as the Scheme was not viable with just two Parish Council volunteers, for a scheme which should be community led.

The Chairman explained that whilst the Parish Council needed to concentrate on its statutory public duties, he did wish to strengthen community spirit and, to this end, he advised that he would be publishing a regular newsletter, as a resident of Nowton, and pieces would be included from the Village Hall Committee, local businesses, Nowton Court, the Parish Council, etc., in an effort to foster good relationships with members of the community and collective action for the common good of the village.

The Clerk was instructed to confirm that, whilst the invitation to attend training for the Community Self-Help Scheme was welcome, the date was not feasible for the Chairman and Cllr. O'Hara, and that the commencement of the Scheme for Nowton would be delayed until further volunteers came forward, hopefully as a result of its inclusion in the forthcoming newsletter. **Action: Clerk**

13. **Road Safety, Crime/Public Nuisance** – Cllr. May reiterated the damage to the edges of roads caused by lorries carrying sugar beet. It was noticed that there had been an increase in litter along the Bury Road, and a reported case of fly tipping at the Anglia Water pumping station had been swiftly removed.

The Chairman commented on the recent Local Crime Report, for November, and was disappointed to see that three crimes had been attributed to NCC, which he knew not to be the case.

14. **Correspondence** – All email correspondence had been circulated to Councillors as and when received by the Clerk; the *Clerks & Councils Direct* January issue was handed to Councillors to read and circulate. The Chairman highlighted recent correspondence respect to EV charging points and raised the question as to why no charging points had been erected in the main car park of Nowton Park.

14.1 The Clerk advised that every three years an employer must put certain staff back into a pension scheme; the Clerk confirmed that she would complete this on-line process, between the dates given by the Pension Regulator, and that the re-declaration would be for her not to be included in a pension scheme. The Chairman asked for sight of this documentation after implementation. **Action: Clerk**

15. **Date of next meeting – Wednesday 28 February, 7pm Nowton Village Hall**

Future meetings in 2024: 17 April; 22 May (Annual PC meeting, followed by Annual Assembly of the Parish) 3 July; 4 September; 16 October; 4 December. *All dates subject to change.*

There being no further business to discuss, the meeting was closed at 8.15pm

(original signed)

(original dated 28/2/2024)

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Signed

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Date