

WALSOKEN PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Walsoken Parish Council Meeting held at the All Saints Church Community Room on Tuesday the 9th of January 2024 from 7.00pm

Present :

Councillors – Fred Leach - Chair, John Woolley, Andy Houghton, Chris Luff, John Harwin, Yvonne Cocks, and Lynn Clarke.

Cllr Julian Kirk , Cllr Richard Blunt

One members of the Public

1. Welcome from Chairman to everyone and to the new Parish Councillors.

Public Participation – to allow public participation (3 minutes per speaker, up to a maximum of 15 minutes in total).

Resident of Burrettgate Road asking for support to object to the Battery Storage Facility. The details state that 2 large passing HGV's can access the road, but this is not the case, and the school children walk to school with no pavement for protection. Concerns raised regarding The toxic run off into the waterways and surrounding land which is currently flooded and it well known that lithium iron and water to not mix. The batteries cannot be recycled so will go into land fill and there is no solar farm in the area to benefit. The issue with a fire was also raised as to access.

2. Apologies Cllrs Snow, Taylor, and Dawson.

3. Declarations of Interest of any items on the agenda and to consider any requests for dispensations. None

4. Approval of the Parish Council Meeting held on the 7th of November 2023 were proposed by Cllr Clarke, seconded by Cllr Cocks and approved by all present at that meeting.

5. Matters Arising – to record matters arising from the last meeting:

5.1 Meerdyke Solar Farm update – appeal hearing set for 16th January in King's Lynn.

5.2 Incinerator Response – update due by the end of January

5.3/4 Black Bear Lane & Lynn Road Bus Stops – The new bus shelters have been ordered and awaiting installation dates due end of January subject to weather conditions. The Lynn Road stop is being used and we need to check if a rubbish bin is required. ACTION: Clerk

5.5 Sleights Drive basketball area – following emails from the Borough Council it was decided to advise them that we are willing to remove the basketball stand, level the ground and reseed the grass. Maintenance would then continue by the Borough Council.

ACTION: Clerk

5.6 Broad End Junction – the clerk has received a response from Liz Truss regarding the warning lights not working and she will be writing to the UK Highways on this matter.

5.7 Passing places signage – The email from Andy Wallace will be followed up as still no signs to date. Cllrs Leach and Woolley to follow this up.

6. To receive reports:

6.1 Councillors' reports of villagers' concerns, highway issues, allotments, and street lighting.

A number of pot holes have been reported including outside Strattons Farm.

6.2 County and Borough Councillors reports-

Cllr Blunt reported that he attended the Local Plan Task Group Meeting last night with one phase on the consultation on gypsy and traveller sites. The site assessment has been completed with 70 new sites required and the call for sites gave 120 site locations. The formal consultation is due to start on the 26th of January and run until the 8th of March. We need to check the site list and make any relevant comments via the link, or we will be unable to speak at the following meetings. The inspectors will review the comments made. We need to consider appropriate use of the land, infrastructure etc. It is proposed that this will be a gradual process.

Of the 70 plots required, they will house 1-10 caravans in the main.

The Local Plan will go ahead once this Gypsy and Traveller consultation has been completed.

Wheatley Bank – what is the definition of being a Traveller?

CIL funding available with match funding required.

The Borough budget process is going to be challenging.

Cllr Kirk advised that the that the recent flooding issues are still very prevalent. The bungalow on Wheatley Bank needs Highways to dig out and the neighbouring farmer has helped hand dig a trench. The Internal Drainage Board are also working on this.

Not sure if the new £25m pumping station is working. Cllr Clarke mentioned that her garden was flooded due to the dykes being full. Cllr Kirk and Leach advised that the Riparian drains belong to the landowner and the Internal Drainage Board can make contact if the Riparian owner is holding up water.

At County the elected leader is going through with a pot of £17m not £20m which is not index linked.

6.3 Clerk Report –

a. Have updated the 24.25 budget, produced the third quarter financial review. The budget/precept are to be approved under finance tonight.

b. Working on the Financial Reservice Policy which will be updated following the budget approval.

c. Completed the Biodiversity Policy for approval along with the Planning Policy.

d. Images for the website submitted and well received.

6.4 Churchyard matters – Clerk advised that only 1 quote had been received and it was agreed to go with this – all in favour. Clerk to advise.

6.5 Village Hall – Cllr Woolley reported that the last meeting was held on the 21st of November 2023 and the Treasurers report stated that the current account has £541.59, with the reserve account at £27,208.66. The reduced amount in the reserve account is due to the repairs to the outside of the hall including painting to the soffits and new guttering at a cost of £1,400.

Also paid out was the removal of tiles and rendering on the outside of the hall. The extractor in the kitchen has also been replaced.

The Charity Commission has a note on their website that states that no committee members or trustees are allowed to take payment for work done or benefit from any monies made through the charity.

The Christmas Tree was in and decorated with thanks to Jonny Leach who provided the tree and Steven from Martin Works for his assistance getting the tree up.

The loft area in the hall has no insulation at all and no lagging on the pipework. Quotes for this are being obtained.

The cost of hiring the hall is to increase to £20 per hour from the New Year but the full day rate of £190 is not to be increased.
A meeting with David Ball from the Robert Hall Foundation is planned with regards to the funding of air conditioning and solar panels.
The next meeting will be in January – date to be decided.

6.6 Communications and Correspondence:

- a. Royal Mail recognition – no update received, clerk still chasing for a contact.
- b. Land review – Cllr Leach gave an update on the boundary dispute the NCC and the Garage owner. The land register shows that the garage owns the land, and the owner is looking to sell and needs this sorted out. Cllr Dawson is also looking into this on our behalf.
Cllr Clarke raised the possibility of splitting the land into smaller allotments or used as amenity land, but Cllr Wooley advised that the Waterlees allotments have a large number of available plots which are in a poor condition. Cllr Houghton advised that there is already a community orchard and will forward contact details to Cllr Clarke.
- c. Churchyard maintenance contract – as discussed under item 6.4
- d. Upkeep of the bench by the Memorial – this is owned by Fenland District Council and their Open Spaces department should deal with this.
- e. NALC membership 24/25 – This would cost £253.53, and it was decided to defer any decision to the March meeting.
- f. Parish maps – the clerk had printed some large copies of the map provided by Cllr Woolley for all councillors.

7. Planning:

7.1 Applications:

23/02302/FM – Construction and installation of a battery storage facility, associated infrastructure, landscaping, fencing, site access road and biodiversity enhancements at land E548418 N309503 Burrettgate Road, Walsoken. – as discussed under item 1 but no planning notices have been seen in the vicinity and Cllr Blunt will check as photographs should be taken when notices are put up. It was decided to object to this application on the same basis as the previous application. A zoom meeting might be required to discuss this further.

23/01090/F - Land W of Wheatley Bank, Walsoken – Issue raised by Planning Officer going back to August 23. Cllr Blunt will discuss this with the planning officer. ACTION Cllr Blunt

7.2 Decisions: None

7.3 Enforcements:

23/00589/UNOPDE | Alleged Unauthorised Operational Development | Sibily House Station Road Walsoken Wisbech Norfolk PE14 8DL – PENDING CONSIDERATION

8. Finance

8.1 Approve payments, receipts, bank reconciliation and statements for November/ December 23. Proposed by Cllr Clark, seconded Cllr Cocks, and all in favour with £35,522.27 in the bank to the 31.12.23

8.2 Approval of payments for January(to date)– due to the meeting being so early in the month, the clerk will issue a further payment listing, if required, later in the month. Proposed Cllr Cocks, seconded Cllr Harwin, and all in favour.

8.3 To review the third quarter financial report – overall we are £4k under budget. The review was agreed by all.

8.4 To review and approve the budget and precept for 2024/25. A 5 % increase in the precept was agreed as proposed by Cllr Harwin, seconded Cllr Bettinson, and all in favour.

9. To receive items for the next agenda by the 5th of March 2024:
- a. Bus Shelters update
 - b. Sleight's Drive

The next Parish Council Meeting will be from 7.00pm on the 12th of March 2024 at the Church Community Room.

The Chairman thanked everyone for attending. Meeting ended at 20.43

PAYMENTS JANUARY 24

Salary	£ 280.13	Standing Order
HMRC	£ 70.00	Standing Order
Cozens – streetlight replacement	£ 474.00	Standing Order
Scribe subscription	£ 331.20	
Clerk Expenses December 23	£ 26.00	
Cozens – light maintenance	£ 30.00	Standing Order
Npower	£ 408.57	Direct debit