

Caston Parish Council

CHAIRMAN: Mr Chris Cook VICE CHAIRMAN: Mrs Kay Farmbrough

**MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL MEETING OF THE PARISH OF CASTON
MONDAY 9 MAY 2022
AT CASTON VILLAGE HALL AT 7.30 PM**

Councillor's present:- Chris Cook, Kay Farmbrough, Mary Howell, Graham Moss, John Hill,
Richard Ives

Also present:- District Councillor Phil Cowen
Members of the Public

1. **Apologies for absence**
CC Claire Bowes.

2. **To approve the Minutes of the Meeting held on Monday 5 May 2021**
It was **RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the Meeting held on Monday 5 May 2021 be signed, by the Chairman, as a true and correct record. Proposed by Cllr Farmbrough and seconded by Cllr Cook, all voted in favour.

3. **Chairman's Report from Mr Chris Cook**
"I would like to report on the considerable achievements of Caston Parish Council for the past year. Sadly, disappointment is the difference between expectation and reality. It is not for the want of trying by all councillors, but a year on we still have a couple of major problems in the village.

The road at the corner of Dukes Lane, known locally as the Caston Water Splash, has been waiting repairs for seven years. Highways agreed in 2016 to repair the drainage and allocated the budget, still nothing happened. Every month the agenda includes requests to Highways and finally in October 2021 we met with the representatives of Highways who agreed (yet again) that work was needed and it should be completed by early in 2022.

We now hear from Highways, as the road needs to be closed they require extra time to think about it some more. This is both disappointing and unbelievable.

The village of Caston, like Brigadoon, is invisible to Highways. It only appears on the map every hundred years and then can't be found because all the sign posts pointing the way have been knocked down and are awaiting replacement.

The land next to Caston Primary School is a five year long running saga. The Parish Council opposed this original application for numerous reasons, but outline planning was granted. To nobody's surprise, the original plan was revised and transformed from 5 x two bedroom houses to 3 x three bedroom houses and 2 x four bedroom houses, a 70% increase, on the basis that to quote the revised application 'the site is sufficiently large'.

A curious case of land being big enough for five small houses, but once permission is granted the land has somehow expanded to allow five big houses.

CHAIRMAN.....

DATED:

CLERK: Joanne Blackman, Daisy Barn, 42 Long Lane, Feltwell, Norfolk, IP26 4BJ

Tel: 01842 829821 Email: parish.clerk@castonparishcouncil.gov.uk www.castonparishcouncil.gov.uk

District Councillor Phil Cowen and the Parish Council objected (again) and called for a new planning application to be submitted due to the substantive change. Breckland Planning's response was essentially 'nothing much has changed, step away, nothing to see here' and the request was denied. Similarly following the flooding in December 2021 the validity of the entire development was called in to question due to water run off. Again, a 'nothing to see here' attitude prevails. The fact that numerous videos exist of the flooding counts for nothing as it is not designated a flood risk – history has recently proved them wrong. The project is now referred to by come in the village as The Caston Marina Project.

So what, if anything, have we achieved?

To start with, Caston still has a Parish Council, which for a moment last year it was a real possibility the Council would cease to exist. Since then we have added a fine team of councillors with complementary skills. Being a Parish Councillor is a thankless task so I am grateful to my fellow councillors for staying the course.

Looking through the agendas for the past year we have done what we are allowed to do. Maintained parish council land. Maintained and monitored the village playground. Inspected and removed dangerous trees and branches. Discussed and commented where necessary on numerous planning applications. The village gates are being refurbished and numerous items that individually don't amount to much but hopefully keep the village of Caston in a better state than we found it. We would like to do more but are as ever constrained by district and county rules and regulations.

I would like to thank the Clerk, Tony Ash for co-ordinating the Speedwatch team, playground volunteers and the numerous volunteers who carry out jobs in and around the village.

To end on a literary flourish, if you will forgive me, in the words of Hanif Kureishi, it is 'all that is was and all that it could be'.

4. **County Councillor's report from County Councillor**

See separate report.

5. **District Councillor's report from District Councillor**

See separate report. DC Cowen summarised his report for the meeting. There are 17 Ukranian families now in Breckland with paid host families.

There is a balanced budget and the County Council are confident that services will continue as they are.

As reported last month, a letter from Natural England in relation to nutrient neutrality was received which has caused all planning applications involving overnight accommodation to be halted at the current time. It affects approximately 90% of Norfolk. The Councils are working together and taking advice to resolve matters. They are also lobbying Government to resolve matters. It is estimated that it could take up to 2 years for some applications in the catchment areas to be resolved.

There has however been an update today, as follows:-

- Applications lodged within the specific catchment areas will not be determined for a minimum of a year.
- Applications outside of the catchment area a further extension of three months has been given to determine the application.

I

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It is likely that commercial/agricultural applications which do not involve livestock will go ahead however, discharge of conditions in relation to drainage will be held up.

It has the potential to hold up essential development and also to put people out of business and as a consequence others out of work. Expenses to individuals who have invested in plots of land will be large.

There has been investment at Snetterton. Problems were encountered in relation to years of under investment into the power supply. There is no grid system in place which means that when power supply comes on land, the supply comes from Norwich to Attleborough but drains on the way down and the generator does not have capacity to link it all together. Thetford was exactly the same. There is some Government funded assistance.

6. **Financial Reports**

Current figures had previously been supplied to the Council.

7. **Speedwatch report from co-ordinator Tony Ash**

“During April the speed watch volunteers undertook 4 checks at various times and locations and assessed 312 vehicles, 10 offenders were reported to the constabulary for processing.

During one of the checks on 20/4/22 a local resident took photographs of the volunteers and the signage for the check and stopped at the site of the check and gave personal abuse to the volunteers in an aggressive way. The matter was promptly reported to me as coordinator. I informed the constabulary of the altercation.

The volunteers give up their own time instead of engaging in hobbies such as gardening and leisure activities and they don high-viz jackets and monitor speeding vehicles through Caston and Northacre and report their findings to me for referral to the constabulary.

The result of my complaint was that the individual team members should lodge a formal complaint to the constabulary via the 101 non-emergency number or online. Not being a team member at this check and being, a third party, I as coordinator could not report the incident

The team volunteers involved in the check, decided individually not to pursue the matter any further, which I can fully understand.

The abusive driver has since made a complaint to the constabulary in relation to the signage for the speed check and the location of the volunteers, producing the photographs. This complaint has been investigated. by the Community Speed Watch administrator and the driver concerned, informed of her findings. He has also been advised re his future conduct. The matter is now closed”.

8. **Caston Village Hall Charitable Trust**

See separate report read by Cllr Hill.

9. **Open Forum for public participation**

None.

10. **The agree the date for the next Annual Meeting of the Parish**

Monday 8 May 2023

Meeting closed at 8.10pm

Jo Blackman
Parish Clerk

CHAIRMAN.....

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