

Caston Parish Council

CHAIRMAN: Mr Chris Cook VICE CHAIRMAN: Mrs Mary Howell

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL MEETING OF THE PARISH OF CASTON MONDAY 13 MAY 2024 AT CASTON VILLAGE HALL AT 7.30 PM

Councillor's present:- Chris Cook, Mary Howell, Sarah Fletcher, Graham Moss, Simon Spanyol, Rob Trown

Also present:- Two Members of the Public

1. **Apologies for absence**
DC P Cowen.
2. **To approve the Minutes of the Meeting held on Monday 15 May 2023.**
The Minutes of the Meeting held on Monday 15 May 2023 were approved.
3. **Chairman's Report from Mr Chris Cook.**
"Chairman's Report, Caston Parish Council AGM 2024"

The 2023, 2024 season of Caston Parish Council has been an interesting year. The major issue facing the good people of Caston has been one of flooding along The Street.

Norfolk County Council finally got out of their deck chair and after eight years of trying fixed the 'Caston Water Splash' at Dukes Lane in December. The final part of the scheme, resurfacing the road to hopefully remove the puddles takes place later this month. This will help at Dukes Lane junction but will do little for the constant flooding next to the school.

In other related news:

Thanks to the efforts of Simon and Mary we now have a data base of riparian rights owners and a letter reminding householders of their obligations regarding culvert and ditch clearing that is going out shortly. We are also in contact with Mid Norfolk Flood Partnership and our MP George Freeman with regards to flooding issues.

Breckland, Norfolk County Council and the Environment Agency still seem to be indifferent to flooding in Caston, with the addition of the three houses next to School View and the four houses (yet to be built – hopefully never) next to the Old Chapel. Both built on what would appear to be a flood plain. I feel we need to continue to hammer the point home (as best we can) regarding any new builds as they will simply make the flooding along The Street a greater problem.

The developer of the houses next to School View has also tried to reduce the drainage provision, but I think we headed that one off.

CHAIRMAN.....

DATED:

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

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In other housing news:

Caston would seem to be under siege with any scrap of land seen as a potential housing plot. As a resident pointed out a couple of years ago 'Caston is fast becoming a suburb of Cambridge'. Houses need to go somewhere, but one of the great curiosities of the planning process is no account can be taken regarding provision for doctors, hospitals, schools, traffic increases, power provision or indeed where people are going to work.

In the 1989 film Field of Dreams the tag line was optimistically 'if you build it they will come', Kevin Costner also didn't have to provide for doctors and schools before commencing building, but sensibly didn't build his baseball ground on a flood plain.

In other news:

The Parish Council and the masterfully inept County Broadband would seem to be close to an agreement regarding outstanding issues. As to why it takes five years to run a cable through Caston, dig up the village green without asking, put poles on private land and generally annoy people would seem to prove that County Broadband does indeed employ 'the brightest and the best'. Perhaps that is why they effectively went bust.

Finally:

As ever I would like to thank my fellow councillors, Jo for her diligent work, speed watch, the SAM sign team and the playground team. In conclusion, its not the cards you are dealt but the way you play them. Whilst not necessarily holding aces we are getting much better at playing the game.

Chris Cook – Chairman”

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

No report was received.

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

“Some highlights of achievements and work streams ahead of annual parish meetings across Breckland.

- **Thetford £20m funding** – Cabinet is reviewing a report to help set in motion the key steps to mobilise the funding – received as part of the Government's Long Term Plan for Towns Programme. The first step will be to setup a new 'Town Board' in Thetford, by June, and then for that board to oversee the development of the approach to defining spend priorities for the funding.
- **O.C.O Technology** - just obtained planning permission from Norfolk County Council this month for their full ambition (of 100,000 tonnes p.a.) at their Larkshall Mill site in East Wretham.
- **Snetterton NetZero project** - completed last month by Opergy and EP Group, funded (£58k) via the Greater South East Net Zero Hub (GSEZH), identifying investment opportunities in the delivery of power infrastructure while maximising the role of renewables
- The new **Housing Allocations Policy** came into force from the 1st April for new applicants. Officers are working their way through existing applications and contacting the customers who are affected by the changes. There are currently 1500 applicants on the housing register, with 400 waiting assessment.
- All available **Council Tax Support Funds** were distributed during 2023-24 and additional support was also available through Breckland's Exceptional Hardship Fund. In total almost £214,000 additional support was provided to those on low incomes.

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- **Inspiring Communities Match-Funding:** Inspiring Communities Match Funding Grant Scheme is now live. First round of applications is open until 14th June. The successful applicants will be given up to £5,000 each to help them deliver projects that reduce vulnerability and health inequalities.
- **Household Support Fund 5:** The Household Support Fund 5 is now open to applications. The fund will be issued across 2 rounds: the first running from now until the end of June, the second from July until the end of September. Awards are for a fixed amount of £300. As with previous rounds, referrals can only be made by professionals who have identified eligible residents.
- **Council AGM** – This will take place on May 23, and will include appointment of new Council Chairman and Vice Chairman, as well as appointments to Council committees.
- **Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) Review** – Thursday 7 May) the LGBCE has officially responded to our submission, confirming the number of Councillors for Breckland from the election in 2027 onwards will be 51 (previously 49). A proposed warding pattern will be considered by Council later in the year.
- **Future Events**
 - **D-Day (80th Anniversary)** flag raising – Thursday 6 June
 - **Armed Forces** flag raising – Monday 24 June

Local Plan Update

- The Local Plan is due for Cabinet review on 13th May to enact the next – “Reg 18” – consultation which will be the first draft of the plan
- This has been shaped following the extensive consultation and engagement work to date, and sets out the key suggested options in terms of where housing growth is planned to take place, and which sites may receive allocation
- A substantial enhanced consultation process has been designed alongside, which will include diverse range of in person and online events for stakeholders

Nutrient Neutrality:

- The Councils has worked with partners to bid for a further £12m of funding through the Government’s Nutrient Mitigation Fund, this comes as projects have been identified for the first tranche with EOIs to be received following the schemes formal launch in May
- The Council has also bid for c. £2.5m of Brownfield funding to help mitigate the cost implications for affordable housing developers within Breckland catchment

6. Financial Reports.

The AGAR for 2023-24 has been submitted and the balances at the close of business on 31 March 2023 were as follows:-

Caston Parish Council £7,908.90
Highway Surveyors £15,026.63

The precept for the financial year 2025-26 is £11,600.

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7. **Speedwatch report from co-ordinator.**
No annual report available.

8. **Caston Village Hall Charitable Trust.**

“Caston Village Hall 2023-2024 Chairman’s Annual Report

Overview

Having completed the new room and Bar facility, The hall has been able to use its new facility for several functions and community events. Use of the Village Hall has gradually increased over the year and is now once again a valuable centre for the village’s social life.

Activities

Caston Camera Club never restarted following Covid shutdown but most other activities are running regularly again. The Friday morning Coffee “Drop In” is now fully operational again thanks to the many volunteers who man the event and Kay Farmbrough who oversees the rota and supplies.

Yoga Club is again meeting on Monday Mornings. The Women’s’ Institute meets every month and some private events use the hall on a regular basis.

Thanks to the keen input from Dawn Hill, John Hill, Lynsey and Philip Doughty we were able to offer full English Breakfasts on the first Saturday of each month during the winter which has proved to be very well supported. It is planned to reintroduce them again in the Autumn.

Apart from the regular events, the hall has offered regular quiz evenings, Whist Drives and special commemorative events. Booking Secretary, Dawn Hill, manages many private bookings as well. We have been very grateful to the organisation done by Lynsey and Philip Doughty together with John and Dawn Hill, supported by other committee members, who have made these evenings possible. A first event of a horse racing evening was well supported and much enjoyed, Thanks to John and Phillip for running that.

Sadly, our Bar Manager, Steve Farmbrough, has been somewhat incapacitated this last year so John and Dawn have overseen the Bar matters but we are glad to report that Steve’s steady recovery is enabling him to take on some of the workload again
Building and Structural Work

Following the completion of the new extension, we have levelled and surfaced the car park and made good the access path to the north of hall thus enabling folk to walk from the car park into the hall without using the vehicular access.

An extensive fire and safety survey has been carried out and the hall is routinely checked monthly for a safety survey. All results are recorded.

A new automatic smoke alarm has been fitted in the main hall and is ganged with those in the kitchen, foyer and extension.

Management and Finance

Sadly, three of our Trustees resigned during the year – Bridget Hall, Graham Penfold and Malcolm Valentine. They had been trustees for many years and we were very sorry to lose them but have been grateful for their valuable input and support in the running of the hall. We were grateful that Philip Doughty took on a trusteeship of the hall in August 2023 and very much welcome Philip’s valuable contribution. The trust now has five trustees who are registered with the Charity Commission; Philip Doughty, Francis Ulrich, Steve Hendrie, John Chapman and David Blincow.

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Financially, we were able to pay off three thousand pounds from our charitable loan and it is expected that a second tranche will be paid shortly and the loan cleared later with a final payment.

We are grateful to our treasurer David Leach who oversees the hall's accounts and has progressively been growing our reserves again following the expense of the building works.

Summary

Many activities are being planned for the coming year. The management and running of the hall is achieved by volunteers to whom I am extremely grateful. The committee members, David Leach, Lynne Leach, Wendy Edwards, Kay Farmbrough, Steve Farmbrough and Stephanie Blincow, together with the trustees, give tremendous support and service to the Hall Trust which enables us to keep Caston Village Hall as an essential facility for the social life of Caston Village.

David Blincow, Chairman, Caston Village Hall Trust

9. **Open Forum for public participation.**
None
10. **The agree the date for the next Annual Meeting of the Parish Monday 12 May 2025**
Agreed.

Jo Blackman
Parish Clerk

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