

MINUTES OF THE BOUGHTON ANNUAL PARISH MEETING HELD IN THE ALL SAINTS CHURCH, ON TUESDAY 6th MAY 2025 at 7.30pm

Present: Mr Paul Coulten (Chair)

Parish Councillors: Neil Matthew, Tam Payne, Sarah Miller and Sue Pogmore.

Parish Clerk – Mike Inder

Apologies: Cllr Phil Boyle

Borough & County Councillors – CC Martin Storey and BC Sue Lintern.

Public – 2.

1. Introduction

Cllr Matthew welcomed everyone and explained the background to the 'Parish Meeting' and provided context to its role in informing the PC of public concerns, ideas and issues, all of which serve to provide the PC with a mandate to act on those that it determines worth further consideration.

2. Election of Chairman

Cllr Matthew asked for the nomination of anyone that wished to chair the meeting Mr Coulten offered and was duly voted to chair the meeting.

3. Apologies

As above.

4. Minutes of the previous meeting

The draft minutes of the previous Annual Parish Meeting were published on the Council website and circulated prior to the meeting; Mrs Christine Matthew proposed them as a true record, seconded by Cllr Payne and agreed.

5. Report from the Chairman of the Parish Council

At the last Annual Parish Meeting, one matter was raised by members of the public for the Parish Council's attention and I will address this first.

Through Traffic on Wretton Road. The gate at the bottom of Wretton Road, installed when the A134 was built to allow farmer access to their properties, was being left unlocked and open. It was being used as an unofficial route into Boughton and for parking by dog walkers. The council contacted the Highways department at the County Council to confirm that this does not constitute a road junction and that Wretton Road is not a through road. Keyholders were contacted and reminded of their responsibility to keep the gate locked – a new lock has subsequently been installed.

Finance

As last year, the council remains in good financial health thanks in no small part to our responsible financial officer, Mike Inder and the treasurer of the Fen Committee, Angela Faherty. As always, all transactions carried out by the council and its Fen committee are properly recorded, reviewed, and audited. Our regulatory submissions were made in good order and on time.

In April, the precept that we raise on the Council Tax was again increased. Although in percentage terms this year's demand looks high it is still a very small part of the overall Council Tax residents pay overall. It has become necessary at this time to create a larger contingency against arboreal works (removal of infected trees) and equipment replacement.

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Environment

Playground

The playground equipment continues to be monitored by councillors and volunteers and the annual report by our external inspectors showed no immediate cause for concern. The railings have been repainted.

The Wishing Well had to be removed as it had been left in an unsafe state with exposed nails by a resident performing unauthorised changes to it, and without informing the council.

Any proposals from residents for a replacement will need to be agreed by the council.

Pond and Green

I am happy to report that the second part of our three-year silt reduction programme has been implemented. Councillors and volunteers again applied Siltex to a third of the pond. The event was covered by the Stoke Ferry Village Pump.

We will again be applying Tam Payne's barley straw extract to control the algae.

The circular bench seat dedicated to Frank Savage has been replaced after having become unsafe due to rotting in the seats. The other bench seat may need to be replaced in the medium term.

We are gradually replacing the posts around the pond and raising the level of the chain to improved grass mowing clearance.

Thanks are due to all that help with maintenance, but I must remind residents to check with the council before undertaking any work on council assets, including application of herbicides and any additional planting.

Fen

I will not say much about Boughton Fen as we will receive a report from Councillor Pogmore in due course. Suffice to say that the council's Fen Committee with its volunteers have again done a sterling job in maintaining that site of special scientific interest and public amenity for the village.

Roads

With regards to roads maintenance, the council keeps a close relationship with the county highways department. We report issues with verges, potholes drains and road surfaces. You will have seen filling of potholes, and the patching of the landslides on Mill Hill Road.

Personnel

With five of the seven council seats filled, we are quorate and can operate as a full council.

However, the two vacancies provide the council the opportunity of co-opting a couple of residents to join the council. If you are interested, please contact the clerk.

Engagement

Residents should know that there are several ways that you can learn what your council is doing for you.

First of all, the village noticeboard is used to post information about upcoming meetings and other events.

For more information, including meeting minutes, speed sign data, notices of vacancies, police advisories, news of local events, make sure to check out the council website from time to time.

You can sign up to be sent an email automatically every time a new post is made. The address is boughtonparishcouncil.norfolkparishes.gov.uk

Finally, you can get in touch by phone on 01366 683017 or e-mail.

Speed Sign

We have been running the speed sign for several years now and have collected some useful data. Data summaries are produced and posted on the council website.

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It captured just about 100 thousand vehicles in the year to 1st May, the majority of which were behaving themselves and the average speeder doing 34 miles per hour. This is below the level needed to attract police attention and bring an official speed camera to the village.

However, despite the presence of the sign and while at extremely low numbers we do get the occasional driver being reckless.

We have been asked what the costs of the sign are to run. The sign was bought through a parish partnership match-funding arrangement for a cost to us of £1600. It was sourced as a direct result of an Annual Parish Meeting that identified speeding as a primary concern. There are no ongoing costs, save a potential battery swap in the near term.

Do you think it works? What do you do when it lights up? There's your answer.

Planning

Over the year the council has responded to many planning applications, both within our own parish and in neighbouring parishes where developments might affect Boughton village or Fen. Notably the Shepards Hut development on the Oxborough – Stoke Ferry Road adjoining the Fen. Our comments are based on planning issues, and we consider if planning guidelines are being applied consistently, and if the conservation area is adversely affected. As a consultee we can voice your opinions, but all decisions are ultimately taken by the Borough Council.

Finally

Finally, as your continuing chair, I pledge your new council to act in the village's best interest, to protect its assets and do so in way that is respectful, lawful and transparent.

Thank You

Cllr Neil Matthew; Chair, Boughton Parish Council

6. Report from the Fen Committee

In some respects, this has been an easier year than last. The weather was generally kinder, although now it is far too dry. The late summer cut was achieved before the rain started. The fen filled up with water, and then at the beginning of this year, we were able to open the outfalls, get the reed cutting done, and close them again in time for the remains of the winter's rain. Strong winds have again taken their toll, and one of our own trees came down across the river. Our regular tree contractor successfully removed it using a winch and a chain saw, and some help. We had contacted the EA, who thought it could only be done using a track machine, and had no idea when they could assist.

Working parties went pretty well – we did some much needed repairs to the board walk in the autumn, before it got waterlogged; and very recently a litter pick was held, which generated 16 bags of litter and some other bits and pieces, subsequently collected by the District Council. Other routine work was done, both in the week and at the weekends, and a lovely seat, designed and made by Stephen Eyles was installed in memory of Dave Golly Cooper.

On Lower Fen, there are very boggy areas on the footpath which can become almost impassable. This has been alleviated by the construction of several temporary boardwalks, which can be simply lifted and moved out of the way once that part dries up. These have worked well and have avoided the need to get complicated permissions from Natural England, with the added benefit that they can be moved about to wherever they are needed most.

We have had a variety of volunteers over the winter and are grateful for all their help. Sadly, we have also had a few problems. Someone decided to off roading with a large four track vehicle down the top of the riverside bank, doing significant damage, and judging by the look of it, was very lucky not to end up in the river. The damage rendered the path both dangerous and

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unmowable. Our contractor, fortunately, owns a machine with which he was able to level the site, over about half its length. The grass is now recovering, but it was effort and expense that need not have happened.

At about the same time, some equally thoughtless person fly tipped a fridge into the fen. A horse has been ridden around part of the path, leaving deep holes where it has sunk into the mud, and making it difficult for walkers. It should be remembered that it is not a public bridleway, but a site of Special Scientific Interest, as well as being totally unsuitable for riding, with a steep bank into deep water on both sides.

On the positive side – the birdlife this spring has surpassed last year, with even more rare species being seen and heard. The sightings being reported by expert birders are impressive, and many more of them are making repeated trips to Boughton Fen to see and hear what their colleagues are reporting. This is good news for the volunteers who work so hard to keep the habitat in good order.

Sue Pogmore

- 7. Reports from Borough and County Councillors:** The County Cllr provided a report on the year's significant events, his involvement and his activity as a Borough Cllr, albeit not in this Ward. County Council elections: these were postponed as part of the local government re-organisation, he abstained on that vote as he believed that members should not serve beyond the mandate given to them. Albeit he supported the County Council decision to put itself forward for a mayoralty authority with Unitary authorities in place of the County and District Councils at the earliest opportunity to get the best deal.
- The Cranswick Planning Application for intensive livestock agriculture – He supported the BC decision to refuse it, citing “wrong place, wrong time and wrong location”. The level of objection from the public was significant (c6,100) with a petition raising over 42,000 signatures objecting. Pylons across Norfolk and Suffolk and Solar farms – He expressed his concerns regarding the 50m tall pylons running over 140kms to take Norfolk generated power to London and the amount of arable land being used for these project (c.8.5k acres)
- Local Government re-organisation – whilst taking a large amount of time he stated that both the County and Borough Councils are remaining focused on delivering services.
- He finished by complimenting the pond and green in Boughton for its well-kept appearance and invited questions.
- Mr Coulten queried the judgement of “food versus power supply” with the refusal of the intensive livestock planning. Cllr Storey responded that the outcome may have been different if the applicant had separated the Chickens from the Pigs in the application but overall, the expert consultees were 7/10 against the application in the form presented.
- In all matters, the BC and CC Cllrs vote with local opinion considered highly.
- Cllr Payne and the Clerk asked if there were alternative solutions to electricity transmission had been considered ie underground cables or an Offshore Transmission Network? The response was that the former was too expensive, and the latter was a decision that was made at Government level by the former Government.

Report from Cllr Sue Lintern, Borough Councillor for Wissey Ward

It's hard to believe it's already been two years since I was elected — time has certainly flown! Let me start with some updates from the Borough Council.

Leadership and Management Changes

At the start of the year, we saw significant leadership changes at the Borough Council. Cllr Alistair Beales was elected as Leader, with Cllr Ring appointed as his Deputy. In June, we also welcomed

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a new Chief Executive, Kate Blakemore. Later in the year, we carried out further senior management restructuring to improve clarity and responsibility within the Council's operations.

Cabinet Focus and Key Projects

The Cabinet has faced several serious challenges this year. We've been pushing forward with a major £100 million housebuilding programme. We've also made progress on upgrades in King's Lynn as part of the Town Deal – now known as "Vision King's Lynn." Other key areas have included a review of the Alive Sports and Leisure company, bringing this in-house and a wider look at the Council's long-term strategy.

Financial Situation and Achievements

As with many councils, finances have been a major concern. The cost of running the Borough Council is over £50 million per year, yet our core income from Council Tax, Business Rates, and Government grants is under £22 million. This means we rely heavily on income from services like estate rent, parking, and commercial waste.

Despite this, I'm pleased to say we've delivered a balanced budget while still maintaining strong community support. Over £500,000 has been allocated to projects such as community transport and local festivals.

Planning and Housing

A major milestone was reached on 27th March when the Government formally approved our new Local Plan for 2021 to 2040. This plan is now the basis for all planning decisions and is available on the Borough Council website, complete with an interactive map to check development boundaries for each parish.

We're also working on additional guidance to show how this Local Plan aligns with existing Neighbourhood Plans.

Grants and Community Infrastructure

We've kept our £500,000 grant programme going for community projects and have allocated £2.3 million of Community Infrastructure Levy funding for the 2024–2025 year.

Local Government Reform (LGR)

Local Government Reform (LGR) continues to be a key area of work. KLWNBC has submitted an expression of interest to form part of a proposed three-unitary authority model for Norfolk, alongside Breckland and parts of North Norfolk District Council.

This proposal will require a detailed business plan to be submitted to the government by late September — and understandably, this is taking up a lot of time and resources from both Councillors and officers.

Despite these challenges, our priority remains the same: to look after the welfare and wellbeing of residents and continue delivering essential services.

New Cabinet Role

On a personal note, I'm honoured to have been appointed to the Borough Council Cabinet, where I now hold the portfolio for Culture and Events. I've also been given responsibility for liaising with Parish and Town Councils — a role I'm especially passionate about.

Our local councils play such a vital role at the heart of our communities, and I'm committed to working closely with them, offering support and helping to strengthen those important local connections.

Representing You

I continue to serve on the Borough Council's Planning Committee, where I take part in the discussions and decisions that directly affect our area. I've made it a priority to keep Boughton Parish Council informed about any Borough-level matters that could have an impact locally. One of the key promises I made when I was elected was to ensure that Parish Councils have easy access to advice, support, and a strong voice within the Borough Council. As part of my new Cabinet role, I'll be taking on the responsibility of Parish Liaison representative. I'm committed to continuing the face-to-face meetings with the Leader of the Council, which have been very well

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received. These sessions provide a valuable opportunity for councillors to raise local concerns, share ideas, and discuss the issues that matter most to their communities.

Looking Ahead

I'll continue to keep the Parish Council and residents updated on the progress of Local Government Reform and any other developments that could affect this village.

My commitment to representing Boughton remains as strong as ever.

Thank you, as always, for your support and for the opportunity to serve this fantastic community.

Warm regards,

Cllr Sue Lintern

Borough Councillor for Wissey Ward

Cllr Pogmore asked why the Festival programme had not been announced in full yet? Cllr Lintern offered to find out.

Cllr Matthew asked if the Local Plan would carry over to the new Unitary authority? Cllr Lintern said that the review takes place every 5 years and the process has already started, there would need to be some alignment with the other district Councils that are included in the new Unitary authority.

Cllr Matthew and the other cllrs gave a vote of thanks to Cllrs Lintern and Storey for their support and regular attendance at meetings.

8. Reports from Public Organisations: None received.

9. Public Forum:

Mrs Matthew raised a concern regarding an area of FP1, the clerk informed her that it could be reported on the NCC Report a Problem webpage.

Mr Coulten expressed a preference for the removal of the Flag Irises and less vegetation around the pond. Cllr Payne addressed the matter, stating that aside from the complexities and significant expense of either dredging or using herbicide to significantly alter the appearance of the pond that it would impact on biodiversity of wildlife and as such the management of the pond as has been agreed and carried out over the last few years is the only view supported by the Council.

10. The Chairman thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting at 8.08 pm.

Chairman

Produced by Mr Mike Inder

Date

Clerk to Boughton Parish Council

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