**ALBY WITH THWAITE PARISH COUNCIL**

**Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting on 24 May at 7.00 pm at The Horse Shoes Inn, Cromer Road, Erpingham, NR11 7QE**

**Present:** Chairman Barry Fitzpatrick, Vice Chairman Will Cutts,

Councillor James Buchan, Councillor Stephen Jordan,

Clerk Rosalyn Dawson

Members of the Public/Visitors

**1.** **Minutes of last year’s Annual Parish Meeting on 4 May 2016**

The minutes were signed as an accurate record of the meeting.

**2. Apologies for absence**

Councillors Will Mellor and Christine Yeomans

**3. Chairman's Annual Report 2016/17**

The past year has been an active period for the Parish Council with a number of controversial planning applications and a great deal of time being given to Thwaite Common and its management structure.

Dealing with the controversial planning applications I believe that the Parish Council was able to make some improvements to the original proposals but in the case of The Wedding Venue these were largely cosmetic and in another case it took nearly 6 months just to get the Planning enforcement department in NNDC to act on its own decisions. I believe that we have not been served well by the District Council Planning Department and already with the new digitalised format for issuing notice of planning applications mistakes have occurred. This is a worrying development and I think that budget cuts will make the Planning service fall short of the expectations of local communities. It is difficult to see evidence that The District Council genuinely takes account of resident's views on their environment and then all too frequently it seems willing to ignore its own policies and guidelines. This may only be my opinion but I think that the communities of Norfolk face many challenges and if we are to protect the unique qualities of our locality the District Council needs to listen to the views of Parish Councils more than is evident at the moment.

This new digital system for issuing planning applications could mean that the Parish Council will need to invest in a display screen for Parish Council meetings and upgrade the Clerk's laptop facility. These are items that will require further consideration in the coming year.

I would like to pay tribute to the diversity of our Parish Council which contains members with a wide range of local knowledge and experience enabling them to make a positive contribution to our decisions on such matters as planning regulations, conservation, grazing and the tree population of the Parish. In the past year we have said goodbye to one of our longest serving members Lesley Hennessey due to her retirement and I thank her for the contribution that she made. We also welcome two new members, William Mellor and Christine Yeomans, by co-option.

Turning to Thwaite Common after much discussion and the involvement of The Friends of Thwaite Common formed in 2016, a new advisory body has been created to give advice and guidance to NNDC. The Parish Council has representation on this body which includes the Right Holders, Norfolk Wildlife Trust and Friends of Thwaite Common. So far it has met once to consider recommendations for the future management of the common. Time will tell if this advisory group manages the common in a more transparent way than in the past. So far the experience has been positive and the common has benefited from the activities of the volunteers and a more direct involvement by NNDC. The relationship of NNDC with the Parish Council requires more clarity which I hope that the Parish Council achieves in the coming year.

One of the early decisions taken by the Parish Council was to change the venue for Parish Council Meetings. We have been given the use of a meeting room at Alby Horse Shoes Inn and the owner has kindly let us have the use of Wi-Fi and the possibility of conference call facility. This change has proved popular with the councillors and members of the parish and I would like to thank Richard and Margaret Rushmer for providing the Parish with this facility.

Can I also take this opportunity to thank our new Parish Clerk, Rosalyn, who has dealt with her duties in a very responsible manner and coped with a very steep learning curve being new to the post and learning the complications of being a Parish Clerk.

**4. Open Forum**

Parishioners presented their ideas for consideration by all parties present.

**‘In Touch’ magazine**

Mr J Mims suggested that advertising in the ‘In Touch’ community magazine would be beneficial to the Parish. He said that this used to happen when he served as a Councillor. He suggested brief headlines of meeting content as an outline of the Parish Council’s activities. Councillors and members of the public unanimously agreed with the idea. The Clerk agreed to put this into action and make enquiries about the deadlines.

**Naming Ponds on Thwaite Common (for ease of reference)**

Mr T Moore presented an idea which he thought would be helpful for identifying ponds on the Common. He suggested naming them appropriate to their landmark on the Common, for example Hall Pond, Middle Common Pond, Old School Pond and East Pond. Other suggestions were made. The idea is being held in abeyance to be raised at the next Parish Council meeting.

**Cattle Grids**

A conversation began concerning cattle grids on the Common; something that had arose at the Advisory Group meeting. Councillor James Buchan enquired of a visitor at the meeting from Hanworth parish on cattle grids and fencing and how effective they were. The response was that due to the logistics of Hanworth Common cattle grids were very effective but cattle grids may not be conducive on Thwaite Common due to its nature and that fencing was likely to be the most suitable form of barriers there.

**Website upgrading**

Mrs Y Moore submitted an enquiry about a matter in the Parish Council Minutes dated 21 September 2016 which she felt required further clarity. Her concerns were in relation to item 7 and a figure stated of £1,000 for potential spending on a new Parish Council website and asked if this expenditure was still pending and necessary. The Chairman and Councillors gave their assurances that the Parish Council would not be allocating such extensive funds for a new website but that improvements to the existing one may be an option subject to cost at some future date.

**Footpaths**

Mrs J Holmes from Erpingham raised the issue of public footpaths (across agricultural land) in the area which they were not being reinstated by local farmers and this was causing issues for walkers. The Clerk responded saying that this was a matter in-hand and being dealt with. She would keep Mrs Holmes informed of the outcome(s). Mrs Holmes’ contact details were taken.

No other matter was raised.

**Close of Meeting:** 7.40pm