**ALBY WITH THWAITE PARISH COUNCIL**

**Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting on 29 May 2018 at 7.00 pm at Alby Horse Shoes Inn, Cromer Road, Erpingham, NR11 7QE**

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

Councillor’s Stephen Jordan, Alistair MacKinnon, Christine Yeomans,

Sheila Goodly

Clerk Rosalyn Dawson

Members of the public

**1.** The Minutes of last year’s **Annual Parish Meeting on 24 May 2017 were agreed and signed as an accurate record of the meeting.**

**2. Apologies for absence:** Councillor James Buchan

**3. Chairman's Annual Report 2018**

The last twelve months saw a controversial planning application which caused considerable ill feeling between neighbours. Members of the Parish Council did their best to reconcile the differences and a number of site visits were held. It is not clear if we have been successful but I hope that we have helped to take the heat out of the situation and I am grateful to those councillors that gave their time to assist.

Also a piece of land with the old billiard hut on was sold on the open market despite efforts made by some of the Parish Council to find out the true ownership of the land and the "trust" that was said to exist. Sadly records were not easy or clear and the agent less than helpful.

As you know planning applications are now dealt with digitally by the planning department in Cromer and this has led to some delays caused by the information not being conveyed to our clerk in good time. We have also experienced the information provided being in a format that was not immediately accessible. I remain concerned that these changes are not in the interests of the parishioners some of whom do not have the use of home computers.

Thwaite Common continues to require the attention of the Parish Council. It is the major asset of our community and deserves the time that we all give it. At the moment we have provided better signage which alerts users of the common to take care particularly when exercising dogs during the bird nesting season and as an experiment we have cautioned vehicle drivers about keeping their speed down. If this is not successful we will need to think about installing illuminated speed signs. This will be expensive unless we can obtain funding. A number of Parishes are looking at this option.  Internet van deliveries are something that we all use but this has meant an increase in traffic often at the expense of road safety. Delivery drivers as we all know are required to meet very tight schedules and it may be worth the Parish looking at making some of the lanes and corners safer. We have also needed to warn dog owners that the Old School Pond at the east end of the common is infected with New Zealand Pond Weed. This weed is extremely virulent and if not treated will kill the pond.

We work with the NNDC using an Advisory Committee that has been set up to monitor and manage Thwaite Common. Despite a good start, I am concerned that of late this Committee has not met on schedule and the absence of Minutes means that it is difficult to monitor what is happening. We are overdue a meeting date at the moment and several members of the Parish are concerned at the delay in implementation of some of the decisions that have been taken. Cattle have been re-introduced on the West End of the Common but little progress has been made to plan rotating the grazing with the other sections.

During the last 12 months I have advised and supported our Clerk in producing policies: a Complaints Procedure, Standing Orders and currently Financial Regulations which are available on our Parish Council website. In addition we are now compliant with the internal auditor requirements and our Clerk has a contract of employment that meets requirements. These are changes that were long overdue.

I hope that it will not be necessary to increase the Parish Precept next year but residents of the Parish need to be aware of the financial demands that we face. For example if we need to hold a ballot to elect a councillor the minimum cost of this is £600 each time.

We are not impressed with the service that is provided by Highways who seem to have a permanent shortage of funding. This has meant delays and a failure to keep ditches clear and mud moved from the roads as well as the seasonal edge cutting.

In conclusion, can I thank Will Cutts, Deputy Chair of the Parish Council. Will and I often work together and I value the contribution that he makes.

**4. Open Forum**

A parishioner highlighted a matter that was agreed at last year’s Annual Parish Meeting that had not been adopted. Parishioners made it quite clear that they wanted the Parish to be represented in the ‘In Touch’ magazine. The Clerk apologised for this omission saying that the dates of meetings did not always correspond with the publishing of the magazine and that some reporting would be out of date. But she accepted that this matter should be treated as priority and will put this into action.

**Vehicles speeding in the Parish:** Concerned parishioners suggested a 30 mph speed limit be introduced because speeding vehicles were causing serious safety issues for drivers and walkers and that it is a Conservation Area. The Chairman agreed with the consensus that there needs to be some form of speed restriction. The Chairman will make relevant enquiries to resolve the matter.

**The cutting of grass verges** was raised as a matter that requires urgent attention and one that also poses safety issues. Verges are so overgrown motorists cannot see the gullies and this is presenting safety hazards especially when speeding. This matter was reported to Highways but is still outstanding. Councillor MacKinnon said he was willing to undertake cutting the verges and clearing mud deposits. This was welcomed by parishioners. There was some concern that this is a service which is funded from Council Tax.

**Increase in the Precept.** A parishioner expressed her concern that much of the income the Parish Council receives is spent on administration and nothing of direct benefit to the parishioners and since the precept has been raised by 20% this year asked what plans the Council has that will benefit parishioners this year.  A discussion ensued. The Parish Council responded advising that apart from last year when the precept was raised by £100, there had been no increase for more than 10 years. The Chairman stated that if the Parish Council was required to have an election for a new Councillor the cost could amount to £600 and that the Council should allow for this. Furthermore the matter of administration costs had been explained at a previous meeting.

However it was suggested that the Parish Council could earmark some affordable funds for improvements within the Parish and that this be advertised in the ‘In Touch’ magazine asking parishioners to come forward with suggestions.  No decision was made and the item will go on the Agenda for a forthcoming Parish Council meeting.

No other matter was raised.

**Close of Meeting:** 7.40pm