

Ditchingham Parish Council

PARISH COUNCIL MEETING

Ditchingham Village Hall

Monday 3rd March 2025 – 7.30 pm

Councillors: Keith Weston (Chair), Brendon Bernard (Vice Chair), Margaret Clifton, Angela Gifford, Gill Oliver and Tony Swan

Clerk/Responsible Financial Officer (RFO): Sally Chapman

Also Present: Four parishioners

A. Public Forum – for Members of the Public

- A parishioner raised concerns about difficulties caused by cars parked over the dropped kerbs on Thwaite Road in front of her home, which obstruct her use of a mobility scooter. The Chair advised that a notice would be placed in The Parishioner, the village magazine, requesting the public to be more considerate when parking. **Action: Chair**
- Mr Richard Mulley, a war veteran, has kindly offered to bring some of his extensive collection of war memorabilia to the VE commemorative event in May. Cllrs agreed this would be a wonderful addition to the event and expressed their gratitude to him.
- A parishioner complimented the recent grass cutting and maintenance of the Community Orchard beside Hollow Hill Road.

B. County Councillor, District Councillor and External Reports

County Councillor Barry Stone sent apologies and a report.

- The Chair expressed gratitude to County Councillor Barry Stone for awarding a £2,000 grant towards the installation of solar panels at the village hall.
- The Chair discussed the County Councillor's Devolution Priority Programme (*attached*) and raised several questions.
- Councillors agreed that the Chair and Vice Chair would draft a response to the consultation and publish it in The Parishioner to raise public awareness.

District Councillor Brendon Bernard gave a verbal report. Main points:

- South Norfolk Council's budget review for 2024/25 is balanced, with an increase of £150,000 in special grants. This is positive news for community buildings, sports groups, and the installation of solar panels on district council buildings. Additionally, the District Council, which owns 40 public parks, plans to renovate play equipment.
- The May elections have been postponed for a year due to upcoming plans for a unitary authority, which may take 2-3 years to implement. This delay is expected to save £1 million. The government intends to establish a single unitary authority covering Norfolk or Suffolk, with one mayor. Three new committees have been appointed to develop and present plans for their respective areas. Parish Councils will remain; however, County Councillors will each be responsible for approximately 40 parishes. As a result, Parish Councils will have a more remote role in local decision-making.

MINUTES

1. To Approve Apologies for Absence

Apologies Received and Accepted from Councillor Andrew Evans-Hendrick and Councillor Hartwell.

2. Declaration of Interests and Consider Requests for Dispensation

None

Signed _____

Date _____

Ditchingham Parish Council

3. To Approve the Minutes of the Meetings held on 20th January 2025

The Minutes from the Meeting held on 20th January 2025 were Approved unanimously as a true and accurate record and signed by the Chair.

4. Matters Arising

None

5. To Consider Co-option to fill the Casual Vacancy

Mr. Neil Humphries submitted a résumé to the Council for co-option and answered questions.

Councillors Approved his Application unanimously and welcomed him to the Council.

After signing the Declaration of Acceptance of Office he joined the meeting.

The Chair noted that, for the first time in 11 years, the Council was at full membership with no vacancies.

6. Finance

a) To Receive the Current Financial & Budget Reports & Approve Receipts & Payments (*attached*)

Councillors Resolved unanimously to Approve the Finance & Budget Report and Receipts & Payments.

b) To Consider Cemetery Lychgate Roof Repairs Quotations

Cllr Swan reported that he had approached local builders for quotations for the required roof repairs and was awaiting their responses.

c) To Consider General Reserves Balances

Councillors Agreed to Authorise the Clerk to vire any excess General Reserves to the Restricted Reserves.

d) To Note the Internal Auditor's Inspection Date – 14th April 2025

Cllrs noted the above Internal Audit date.

e) Norfolk Armed Forces Covenant 2025 Commemoration Fund Grant - *update*

The Clerk confirmed that an application for the £500 grant had been submitted. Additionally, the Norfolk Community Foundation has requested that the Council adopt a Safeguarding Policy, which has now been included in the policies below.

7. To Receive the Planning Applications & Decisions Report

The Chair read out a list of planning applications and decisions made since the last meeting. Full details can be found on DPC's website: <https://ditchinghampc.norfolkparishes.gov.uk/category/planning>.

8. Annual Review of Policies & Statutory Documents

Councillors Agreed to Approve the following Policies and Statutory Documents.

a) Asset Register - *updated*

b) Cemetery Fees

c) Council Policies

d) Code of Conduct

e) Data Retention Policy

f) Financial Regulations Policy - *updated*

g) Online Banking Procedure

h) General Data Protection Regulations Policy

i) Publication Scheme

j) Risk Assessment

k) Safeguarding Policy – New

l) Standing Orders

m) Sub & Advisory Committees Terms of Reference

n) Subject Access Request and Procedure Policy

Signed _____

Date _____

Ditchingham Parish Council

9. To Receive Internal Reports from Committees (if required)

a) Chair's Report – *no report*

b) Community Chair's Report

- VE & Victory VJ Commemorative Event - Sunday 11th May at the Village Hall

The Chair agreed to convene a working party meeting to finalise the details and will inform the Clerk accordingly. Event details/poster will be advertised in The Parishioner. **Action: AG**

The Clerk informed the Council that South Norfolk Council was offering a £300 grant to support the event.

Councillors Requested the Clerk to Apply for the South Norfolk Council's Grant.

Action: Clerk

- Thwaite Road Play Area BMX Track Consultation – *c/f*

The Clerk confirmed a sign has been made for the gate of Thwaite Road Play Area and is waiting for the handyman to put it up.

Cllr Humphries spoke of the antisocial behaviour in Thwaite Road Play Area.

- Baker Lane Sign

The Chair confirmed the replacement sign is now in place.

- The Dip Play Area

A parishioner requested to speak and raised concerns about antisocial behaviour from individuals gathering at the picnic bench near the skate park, which discourages children from using the facility. The Clerk suggested relocating the bench to the site of the former youth shelter, further away from the skate park. The Chair agreed that this could be done. **Action: Chair**

c) Planning & Highways Chair's Report – *no report*

10. To Note Correspondence Received

a) River Waveney Trust – Flood Management

A letter was received from Ed King, Catchment Resilience Officer for the River Waveney Trust, seeking to engage with local communities. Councillors agreed to invite him to attend the May meeting to provide further information. **Action: Clerk**

11. To Consider Issues Not Decided by Committees

a) Annual Website Statistics

Cllrs noted the following information:

- Total views in 2023/24 – 2,509 / Average per day 7 views / Visitors 1,025
- Total views in 2024/25 – 2,389 / Average per day 7 views / Visitors 1,036

b) Village War Memorial – *c/f*

c) The Parishioner Village Magazine – *update*

The Chair spoke about the relaunch of the parish magazine, now called 'The Village Magazine'. The first bi-monthly issue was circulated in February and had been well received by parishioners. He mentioned that future improvements and suggestions would be ongoing and welcomed.

d) Handyman – *update*

The Clerk reported that the handyman was working through a list of minor repairs, including re-staining the Thwaite Road Play Area gates and wooden benches, as well as cleaning the recycled benches across the village. Cllrs reported that the fence along Cheyne Walk requires attention. **Action: Clerk**

e) Defibrillator – *update*

The defibrillator has now been returned following a software update and the installation of a new battery. The Clerk expressed her thanks for the immense support received from Alan Rudd, the Community First Responder, for liaising with the defibrillator manufacturers.

12. Any Other Business

None

Signed _____

Date _____

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13. To Receive items for the Next Agenda

a) Agenda

The Chair requested the addition of a new heading on DPC's agendas titled 'The Parishioner' - *Items for the next edition*.

CLLrs agreed the following articles for the next edition:

- Parking Next to Dropped Kerbs on Thwaite Road
- Devolution Consultation
- VE Day Event
- River Waveney Trust – Flood Management

14. To Note the Meeting Dates (*Planning Meetings arranged as required*)

- Monday 12th May 2025 - 7.30 pm
- Monday 14th July 2025 - 7.30 pm
- Monday 8th September 2025 - 7.30 pm
- Monday 10th November 2025 - 7.30 pm

The meeting ended at 8.50 pm

County Councillor Barry Stone

Devolution Priority Programme

By now I expect you will have seen that we have been accepted onto the Devolution Priority Programme. There are only 6 areas who have achieved this out of the 16 that applied.

Alongside DPP they will now postpone our elections this year for a period of 12 months, to enable us to set up the new Mayoral County Combined Authority for Norfolk and Suffolk. Any by-elections that have to be held will be on our current boundaries; the new boundary changes are also delayed until 2026.

Next week the government will be starting a consultation with the public and other stakeholders, we are a consultee in this, not doing the consultation. We do not know what the questions they will be asking are, but we are expected to help get the consultation out to the widest possible audience. The consultation will run for 8 weeks.

Governance proposals for the way an MCCA will work will be suggested to us by government. They have indicated that there will be two representatives each from the upper tier authorities in Norfolk and Suffolk. We can have our say on these proposals during the consultation process.

We will know in the summer, after the spending review, what monies we will get in our investment fund. I am told that this will be similar to other areas who have already had devolution (there is a formula) and am hopeful this may be at least as much as we were offered previously, although there is no guarantee (no matter what Steve Morphey says). We will get the full range of devolved powers, such as Adult Skills, strategic transport, regeneration etc., as per the White Paper published last December and after our mayor joins the Mayoral Council, there will be more powers devolved and more money too.

Signed _____

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We will also receive some capacity funding for 2025/26 to help with the process. A letter will be sent to us outlining all of the above.

We are anticipating a separate letter from the minister on Local Government Reorganisation, which should arrive later today and will go to all councils, county and district in two tier areas.

We will be asked to consider how LGR should look in our area and come up with some initial proposals in March 2025, these should be firmed up by end September 2025.

The City and Districts are working independently to draw up their suggestion for LGR which is disappointing sine that this is not being done collectively, as the Minister wanted and could delay a final solution as a result.

My reaction has been that this is good news for Norfolk, as we have been trying to get this done for many years, so as to bring more economic prosperity to our residents.

Signed _____

Date _____

Ditchingham Parish Council

6. a) Finance Report

Ditchingham Parish Council Finance Report - March 2025					
Community Account balance from the last meeting - b/f					£ 7,270.32
Receipts Since the Last Report					
Date	Ref.	Details	Amount		
10/02/2025	credit	VAT Reclaim - 01.10.2024-31.01.2025	£ 3,350.45		
			Total	+	£ 3,350.45
Payments Since the Last Report					
10/01/2025	D/D	Tomato Energy - Street Lights December 2025	£ 13.78		
13/01/2025	D/D	Tomato Energy - Street Lights December 2025	£ 62.50		
15/01/2025	D/D	Tomato Energy - Street Lights December 2025	£ 177.74		
29/01/2025	43	Playquip Leisure - Play Equipment Repairs	£ 19,200.00		
29/01/2025	44	EPS Transfers - TRPA Consultation Sign	£ 21.60		
29/01/2025	45	John Harper - Overtime Training Course	£ 34.32		
29/01/2025	46	Ditchingham Village Hall - Grant Solar Panels	£ 3,412.00		
29/01/2025	47	The Parishioner Magazine - Grant Production Costs	£ 750.00		
29/01/2025	48	Clerk's Expenses - Water-butt & No Dogs Sign	£ 67.67		
31/01/2025	DD	Bank Service Charge	£ 6.00		
Dec-January	S/O	Staff Costs	£ 1,158.53		
03/02/2025	49	Tomato Energy - Street Lights January 2025	£ 13.78		
03/02/2025	50	Tomato Energy - Street Lights January 2025	£ 54.10		
03/02/2025	51	Tomato Energy - Street Lights January 2025	£ 154.22		
20/02/2025	52	Tomato Energy - Street Lights December 2024	£ 28.56		
20/02/2025	53	Tomato Energy - Street Lights January 2025	£ 28.56		
20/02/2025	54	Excite Solutions Ground Maintenance - TRPA	£ 252.00		
20/02/2025	55	Cozens (UK) Ltd - Street Light Maintenance (December-February)	£ 108.00		
20/02/2025	56	Clerk's Expenses - December - March	£ 168.00		
			Total	-	£ 25,711.36
Transfers		From Saver Account to Community Account			£ 24,200.00
			Total		£ 9,109.41
Community Account Statement Balance					£ 9,637.41
Uncleared receipts					£ -
Unpresented payments				-	£ 528.00
			Total		£ 9,109.41
Saver Accounts					
Unity Business Saver Account			£47,407.44		
Redwood Bank Business Saver Account			£86,421.94		
Total Savers Accounts					£ 133,829.38
Total Balance in All Accounts					£ 142,938.79

Signed _____

Date _____

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Ditchingham Parish Council - Budget Report 2024-25	March 2025			
		Actual		% of
	Budget	Year to Date	Forecast	Original
	2024-25	2024-25	2024-25	Budget
Receipts				
Precept	47,000	47,000	47,000	100%
Cemetery	1,500	1,635	2,000	109%
Allotment Rents	308	338	338	110%
Business Accounts Interest	1,700	3,693	2,500	217%
VAT Reclaim	5,000	5,358	5,000	107%
Total Budgeted Receipts	55,508	58,024	56,838	105%
Wayleave Payment	0	0	0	-
Thwaite Road Play Area Cashbox	0	0	0	-
Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)	0	0	0	-
S106/Grants	0	0	0	-
Youth Shelter Payment	0	400	400	0%
Total Receipts	55,508	58,424	57,238	-
Budget Variance			1,730	
Expenditure				
Staff Costs	14,059	13,036	14,585	93%
Clerk's Expenses	504	504	504	100%
General Expenses/Internal Audit/Subs/Bank Charges/Defib/etc.	2,000	1,285	2,000	64%
Allotment Rent to Land Owner	150	100	100	67%
10 x Dog Waste Bin Servicing Charge	1,250	1,350	1,350	108%
Insurance - 3 year contract 2022-2025	900	866	866	96%
Miscellaneous	500	210	500	42%
Parishioner Magazine Production Costs	750	750	750	100%
Cemetery Maintenance & Grass Cutting	2,755	1,076	2,755	39%
The Dip Maintenance & Grass Cutting	2,755	1,210	2,755	44%
Thwaite Road Play Area Maintenance & Grass Cutting	2,755	1,269	2,755	46%
Village Maintenance & Grass Cutting	2,755	1,366	2,755	50%
Tree Survey & Maintenance	2,600	0	2,600	0%
Street Lights Energy Annual Contract & Maintenance Contract 2022-2025	3,000	1,882	3,000	63%
Local Projects Grants - S137	1,000	1,000	1,000	100%
VAT Expenditure (to reclaim)	5,000	4,738	5,000	95%
General Maintenance (Handyman)	5,000	206	5,000	4%
Community Projects (Jubilee/Coronation Events)	0	0	0	-
Play Area's New Equipment & Repairs	5,500	5,567	5,567	101%
Street Lights/Columns -Repairs/LEDs/Removal/Replacements	2,000	395	2,000	20%
Total Budgeted Expenditure	55,233	36,811	55,843	67%
Budget Variance			610	
Village Improvements Reserve	0	2,412	2,412	
Play Area's New Equipment & Repairs	0	10,357	10,357	0
S137/CIL Expenditure	0	0	0	-
Chicken Roundabout Lectern	0	0	0	-
Total Expenditure	55,233	49,580	68,612	-
Total Variance	275		-11,374	
Community Account Balance b/f		4,631.11		
Total Receipts per cashbook (less interest)		54,730.80		
Total Payments per cashbook		48,451.50		
UTB Community Account Balance		9,109.41		
UTB & Redwood Bank Saver Accounts (including interest)		133,829.38		
Total in Both Accounts		142,938.79		
General Reserves (should be at end of year 50% of precept - £23,500)		43,036.88		
Restricted Reserves		99,901.91		
		142,938.79		