

Ditchingham Parish Council

PARISH COUNCIL MEETING

Ditchingham Village Hall

Monday 16th September 2024 - 7.30 pm

Councillors: Keith Weston (Chair), Andrew Evans-Hendrick, Fred Hartwell, Gill Oliver and Tony Swan

Clerk/Responsible Financial Officer (RFO): Sally Chapman

Also Present: Four members of the public

Public Forum – for Members of the Public

- A parishioner reported issues around the village, including overgrown hedges and bushes between Chicken Roundabout and the Bungay Roundabout. He said he will report this to Norfolk County Council (NCC).
- A parishioner asked if the dog bin near Windmill Green could be moved to a flatter area closer to the pavement. Action: Clerk
- A parishioner asked when the grass banks of The Dip would be cut (scheduled for October) and reported litter amongst the grass. He also informed that the footpaths along Woods Close and Thwaite Road are in poor condition. Action: Clerk
- A parishioner mentioned that the grass in the Community Orchard has been cut, but the grass around the fencing and gates remains uncut and is three feet tall. Action: KW

External Reports

- No reports

MINUTES

1. To Approve Apologies for Absence

Apologies were Approved and Accepted from Cllr Bernard and Cllr Gifford.

2. Declaration of Interests and Consider Requests for Dispensation

None

3. To Approve the Minutes of the Meetings held on 15th July 2024

The Minutes from the Meeting held on 15th July 2024 were confirmed 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 Vacancies

None

6. Finance

a) Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) External Audit Notice

The Chair read out the External Report and Certificate 2024 (*attached*). The Chair and Councillors thanked the Clerk for her thoroughness in managing the Parish Council's affairs with no issues.

b) To Receive the Current Financial & Budget Reports & Approve Receipts & Payments

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

Signed _____

Date _____

Ditchingham Parish Council

c) To Consider the Status of Restricted and Earmarked Reserves – c/f

i) Should some be changed?

ii) Review amounts

d) To Consider Selling or Moving The Dip's Youth Shelter

It has been reported to the Clerk and Councillors that the Youth Shelter has been used by adults for drinking and drug taking for some time.

Councillors Resolved to sell the Youth Shelter and requested the Clerk to advertise it on Facebook Market Place.

Action: Clerk

e) New Bin/s at Ditchingham Dam - (subject to NCC approval)

Councillors agreed to purchase two new rubbish bins for Ditchingham Dam using the Clean Up and Bloom Grant, and the Clerk will apply for a street licence.

Action: Clerk

f) Banking Arrangements

The Clerk advised that the Barclays Bank Saver Account has been closed, and a new Saver Account has been opened with Redwood Bank.

g) Poppy Wreath for Remembrance Sunday

The Clerk provided a new poppy wreath, which Mr Mulley will place on the village sign on Monday, 11th November, Armistice Day, at 11 am. A notice inviting parishioners to attend will be placed in the Parish Magazine and on the noticeboard.

Action: FH/Clerk

7. To Receive the Planning Applications & Decisions Report

The Chair read out the 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>.

a) 2024/2592

Location: The Wood House Free Lane Ditchingham Norfolk NR35 2DW

Proposal: Rear single storey extension

Application Type: Householder

Councillors Recommended the plan for approval with no comments.

8. To receive Internal Reports from Committees (if required)

a) Chair's Report

The Chair gave a verbal update of his report (*attached*).

- Cemetery Grass Cutting

A parishioner has raised a complaint in the Parish Magazine regarding the grass cutting at the cemetery. The Chair will provide a response in the October issue.

b) Community Chair's Report

- Play Areas Inspections – scheduled for October

- Thwaite Road Play Area - BMX Track

The Chair has noted that the BMX track at Thwaite Road Play Area appears unused and will write a consultation notice in the Parish Magazine, asking parishioners whether they wish to keep it open or have it removed.

c) Planning & Highways Chair's Report

- NCC Hamilton Way 20 mph Signs and Roundels Request – no update c/f

The Clerk has contracted NCC, no response, as yet.

9. To Note Correspondence Received

a) Barclays Bank

The Clerk informed the Councillors of the various difficulties she encountered with Barclays Bank, which led to the decision to close the account.

Signed _____

Date _____

Ditchingham Parish Council

b) Highway Rangers

The Clerk has received a notice advising that NCC 'Highway Rangers' will be attending to defects in the village. Cllrs and Clerk to provide a list. Action: Clerk

10. To Consider Issues Not Decided by Committees

a) Antisocial Behaviour at The Dip

As Minute 6. d).

b) Maintenance Contract for Year 3 (2025)

The Clerk reported some issues and proposed amendments to the grass cutting contract. Councillor Swan advised that he will meet with the contractors and liaise with the Clerk. Action: Clerk/TS

c) Proposed Closure Of St Mary's Church Graveyard – update

The Chair informed Cllrs that South Norfolk Council (SNC) has objected to the closure of St Mary's churchyard, as there appear to be unoccupied areas and the church wall is considered a potentially dangerous structure. The Ministry of Justice has also confirmed that the churchyard is not 'unofficially closed', as claimed by the Parochial Church Council (PCC) and will not proceed with the closure until it is proven that there are no remaining burial spaces.

d) Village War Memorial– update

Cllr Evans-Hendrick is working on this project independently, as DPC does not have a power to provide a war memorial.

Cllr Evans-Hendrick reported that the project is progressing well, and he has raised enough funds to commission a war memorial to be placed outside the village hall on Earl Ferrers' land. The Clerk said she would check whether a street licence is required. Action: Clerk

11. Any Other Business

None

12. To Receive items for the Next Agenda

a) The Dip's Trees

b) Budget & Precept Setting

The Chair requested a Finance Meeting. Action: Clerk

13. To Confirm the Next Meeting Dates (*Planning Meetings arranged as required*)

- Monday 18th November 2024 - 7.30 pm

The meeting ended at 8:55 pm

Signed _____

Date _____

Ditchingham Parish Council

6. a) Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) External Audit Notice

Section 3 – External Auditor's Report and Certificate 2023/24

In respect of **Ditchingham Parish Council – NO0128**

1 Respective responsibilities of the auditor and the authority

Our responsibility as auditors to complete a **limited assurance review** is set out by the National Audit Office (NAO). A limited assurance review is **not a full statutory audit**, it does not constitute an audit carried out in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (UK & Ireland) and hence it **does not** provide the same level of assurance that such an audit would. The UK Government has determined that a lower level of assurance than that provided by a full statutory audit is appropriate for those local public bodies with the lowest levels of spending.

Under a limited assurance review, the auditor is responsible for reviewing Sections 1 and 2 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return in accordance with NAO Auditor Guidance Note 02 (AGN 02) as issued by the NAO on behalf of the Comptroller and Auditor General. AGN 02 is available from the NAO website – <https://www.nao.org.uk/code-audit-practice/guidance-and-information-for-auditors/>

This authority is responsible for ensuring that its financial management is adequate and effective and that it has a sound system of internal control. The authority prepares an Annual Governance and Accountability Return in accordance with *Proper Practices* which:

- summarises the accounting records for the year ended 31 March 2024; and
- confirms and provides assurance on those matters that are relevant to our duties and responsibilities as external auditors.

2 External auditor's limited assurance opinion 2023/24

On the basis of our review of Sections 1 and 2 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR), in our opinion the information in Sections 1 and 2 of the AGAR is in accordance with *Proper Practices* and no other matters have come to our attention giving cause for concern that relevant legislation and regulatory requirements have not been met.

Other matters not affecting our opinion which we draw to the attention of the authority:

None

3 External auditor certificate 2023/24

We certify that we have completed our review of Sections 1 and 2 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return, and discharged our responsibilities under the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014, for the year ended 31 March 2024.

External Auditor Name

PKF LITTLEJOHN LLP

External Auditor Signature

PKF Littlejohn LLP

Date

31/07/2024

Annual Governance and Accountability Return 2023/24 Form 3
Local Councils, Internal Drainage Boards and other Smaller Authorities*

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Signed _____

Date _____

Ditchingham Parish Council

6. b) Finance Report

Ditchingham Parish Council Finance Report - September 2024					
Community Account balance from the last meeting - b/f				£	5,956.88
Receipts since the Last Report					
Date	Ref.	Payee	Amount		
15/07/2024	credit	VAT Reclaim - 01/04/2024-30/06/2024	£ 301.54		
23/08/2024	BACS	Rosedale/FJ - Burial	£ 300.00		
			Total	+	£ 601.54
Payments since the Last Report					
15/07/2024	13	Clerk's Expenses - July	£ 42.00		
15/07/2024	15	Cozens (UK) Ltd - LED Lantern Replacement no. 9017	£ 474.00		
24/07/2024	16	ICO - Data Protection	£ 35.00		
30/07/2024	credit	SSE Energy Refund	£ (114.12)		
05/08/2024	17	Fenland Leisure Products Ltd - Cableway seat	£ 106.80		
05/08/2024	18	PKF Littlejohn External Auditors - Audit	£ 378.00		
05/08/2024	19	Cozens (UK) Ltd - Street Light Maintenance (June-August)	£ 108.00		
05/08/2024	Transfer	DPC's Redwood Bank Saver Account (test)	£ 1.00		
02/09/2024	20	Excite Solutions Ltd - Grounds Maintenance July	£ 549.49		
02/09/2024	21	Clerk's Expenses - August-September	£ 84.00		
02/09/2024	22	RBL - Poppy Wreath	£ 19.99		
02/09/2024	23	Community Action Suffolk - Play Equipment Inspection Training - JH	£ 60.00		
July-August	S/O	Staff Costs	£ 2,362.68		
			Total	-	£ 4,106.84
			Total		£ 2,451.58
Community Account Statement Balance				£	2,451.58
Uncleared receipts				£	-
Unpresented payments				-	£ -
			Total		£ 2,451.58
Unity Business Saver Account				£75,575.71	
Redwood Bank Business Saver Account				£70,030.17	
Total Savers Accounts					£ 145,605.88
Total Balance in All Accounts					£ 148,057.46

Signed _____

Date _____

Ditchingham Parish Council

6. b) Budget Report

Ditchingham Parish Council - Budget Report 2024-25		September	2024		
Year End		Budget	Actual	Forecast	% of
2023-24		2024-25	Year to Date	2024-25	Original
			2024-25		Budget
	Receipts				
40,000.00	Precept	47,000	23,500	47,000	50%
3,275.00	Cemetery	1,500	945	1,500	63%
322.00	Allotment Rents	308	18	308	6%
1,984.68	Business Accounts Saver Interest	1,700	1,269	2,500	75%
3,765.86	VAT Reclaim	5,000	1,269	5,000	25%
49,347.54	Total Budgeted Receipts	55,508	27,001	56,308	49%
51.75	Wayleave Payment	0	0	0	-
-	Thwaite Road Play Area Cashbox	0	0	0	-
549.56	Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)	0	0	0	-
1,500.00	S106/Grants	0	0	0	-
51,448.85	Total Receipts	55,508	27,001	56,308	-
	Budget Variance		-28,507	800	
	Expenditure				
14,446.81	Staff Costs	14,059	5,867	14,059	42%
504.00	Clerk's Expenses	504	252	504	50%
1,893.84	General Expenses/Internal Audit/Subs/Bank Charges/Defib/etc.	2,000	1,225	2,000	61%
100.00	Allotment Rent to Land Owner	150	0	150	0%
1,238.70	Dog Waste Bin Servicing Charge	1,250	0	1,250	0%
849.38	Insurance - 3 year contract 2022-2025	900	873	900	97%
200.50	Miscellaneous	500	60	500	12%
750.00	Parishioner Magazine & Website Production Costs	750	0	750	0%
1,981.61	Cemetery Maintenance & Grass Cutting	2,755	572	2,755	21%
2,194.55	The Dip Maintenance & Grass Cutting	2,755	752	2,755	27%
2,174.56	Thwaite Road Play Area Maintenance & Grass Cutting	2,755	572	2,755	21%
2,413.92	Village Maintenance & Grass Cutting	2,755	572	2,755	21%
456.00	Tree Survey & Maintenance	2,600	0	2,600	0%
2,037.97	Street Lights Energy Contract to 31/05/2024 & Maintenance Contract 2022-2025	3,000	66	3,000	2%
2,720.00	Local Projects Grants - S137	1,000	0	1,000	0%
4,483.42	VAT Expenditure	5,000	666	5,000	13%
3,341.25	General Maintenance (Handyman)	5,000	0	5,000	0%
356.81	Community Projects (Jubilee/Coronation Events)	0	0	0	-
5,570.18	Play Area's New Equipment & Repairs	5,500	-75	-75	-1%
3,590.00	Street Lights/Columns -Repairs/LEDs/Removal/Replacements	2,000	395	395	20%
42,143.32	Total Budgeted Expenditure	55,233	11,798	48,053	21%
9,305.53	Budget Variance		-43,435	-7,180	
549.56	S137/CIL Expenditure	0	0	0	-
910.25	Chicken Roundabout Lectern	0	0	0	-
52,763.31	Total Expenditure	55,233	11,798	48,053	-
(1,314.46)	Total Variance	275	15,204	8,255	
				0	
	Community Account Balance b/f		4,631.11		
49,464.17	Total Receipts per cashbook (less interest)		25,732.16		
52,763.31	Total Payments per cashbook		11,797.57		
4,631.11	UTB Community Account Balance		2,451.58		
128,335.56	UTB & Redwood Bank Saver Accounts (including interest)		145,605.88		
132,966.67	Total in Both Accounts		148,057.46		
20,000.38	General Reserves (should be at end of year 50% of precept - £23,500)		34,696.17	-14,696	
112,966.29	Restricted Reserves		113,361.29		
132,966.67			148,057.46		

Signed _____

Date _____

Ditchingham Parish Council

8. a) Planning & Highways Chair's Report September 2024

Highways

- i.) A parishioner has reported when the weather is wet, there is flooding and standing water from the soakaway drains near the big tree and railings outside Scudamore Place's Common Room.
NCC response - New Status: No action has been taken at this time but we will continue to monitor the problem -We have assessed that the defect does not currently meet our intervention criteria. We will continue to monitor as part of normal scheduled inspections.
- ii.) **Local Member Fund (LMF) Budget – April 2024 update**
What can the money be spent on?
The LMF can be spent on a wide variety of highway and environmental related aspects, up to a total combined value of £11,000 each year. The LMF is capital so there needs to be an asset as a result of the funding.
Typical uses could include:
i.e. 20 mph signs outside schools, would be possible;
Should the PC request a 20 roundel for Hamilton Way from this fund?
- iii.) **Village Cluster Housing Allocation Plan**
DPC objected to the original proposal to build more dwelling on the site north of Hamilton Way unless the access is changed from Hamilton Way. The Council repeats its objection with the extra proposed dwellings.
No more dwellings should access the site via Hamilton Way/Rider Haggard Way. Instead, access should be via Waveney Road or Thwaite Road.
- iv.) **Water Leak in Thwaite Road**
I reported this to Anglian Water on 29th Aug. Repair scheduled for 20th September
v) Surfacing of the road and footway has been completed in the new part of Hamilton Way.
vi) Hollow Hill Road is crumbling away (opp. the bus shelter) a traffic light controlled one-way system is operating. At the time of writing, I have no knowledge about when repairs will be actioned.
- v.) **Ditchingham Dam Footway**
Having personally, and on behalf of DPC, engaged with NCC over the state of the Ditchingham Dam footway I am very pleased to report that improvements are in hand that are making a huge difference.
- vi.) **Ditchingham Crossroads**
A suggestion was made to change the "Give Way" status to "Stop." NCC has advised that this junction does not meet the criteria to justify this change.

Planning

Enforcement orders outstanding – Two addresses in Windmill Green; land off Hamilton Way.

2024/1910 Location: 21 Wildflower Way Ditchingham Norfolk NR35 2SF

Proposal: Two storey side extension, front porch and internal alterations Application Type: Householder

Status: Refused

DPC did not oppose this planning application.

Keith Weston
September 2024

Signed _____

Date _____