

Extraordinary Mtg Minutes: 10 Dec 2018

Attendance. Ben Banks, Philip Barrett, Simon Brock, Phil Cane, Rose Cane, Mike Chapman, Gloria Clarke, Celia Daniel, Graham Eaglesham, Linda Eaglesham, Adam Flack, Kevin Green, Tracy Green, Ray Howe, Alan Hughes, Graham Lewis, Dick Malt, Sue Malt, Ivan Mayes, K.Patchett, M.Patchett, Roger Patchett, James Sayer, Ralph Stephan, John Tuckwell, Carl Watling, Glenys Watling, Harry Witcher, Jane Witcher, David Williams, Trevor Wood.

Chairman's report. The chairman informed the meeting that he would not ask the parish meeting to consider him for re-election as chairman after the AGM in May. That left some six months to find a replacement and to resolve outstanding issues which were included in the agenda notice displayed regarding the meeting, one of which had become urgent.

1. The chairman then outlined a long-standing highways issue in Holt Road, which threatened the safety of residents. This had been the subject of extensive correspondence over many years and all promises made to introduce speed management measures had come to nothing: those promises extended back to 2005. Several accidents had taken place near the homes concerned and after one coincided with another just within the 30mph restriction in Dereham half a mile away in mid 2017, it became clear that the circumstances appeared to allow for the possibility of a 'buffer' or 'intermediate' reduced speed limit. The chairman then outlined the extensive work that had been undertaken by the parish meeting to bring this about and the difficulties that had been encountered.

Principally those difficulties arose because a considerable body of correspondence on the issue sent to our councillor and others, along with a lengthy paper on the subject have repeatedly gone unanswered. The chairman provided a report of the result of a meeting with the councillor on another issue when the chairman raised this issue but all attempts by the parish and the residents concerned, to secure the co-operation of our councillor to campaign on the issue or account for not doing so, have failed.

At previous parish meetings reports have been provided regarding the failure to respond to the issue or answer correspondence and in the absence of county council representation the impossibility of discovering what action was being taken outside of the public domain. During a recent inexplicable outburst by one of the county councillors for Dereham at a police forum, it became clear however that a considerable amount of action had been taking place. This appeared to include that a buffer speed limit may be introduced that will stop at the Dereham parish boundary. There is now an increased fear among our residents who live near to the Dereham boundary that the danger they experience will increase as vehicles accelerate away from the buffer zone past their homes at an even greater speed than they had previously.

In the circumstances there is clearly some increased urgency to support our residents' safety and the chairman informed the meeting that he had exhausted all avenues available to carry out the strong mandate of the parish meeting to rigorously pursue the matter, other than complaining. He therefore asked the meeting what action, if any, it proposed should now be taken.

There was a lengthy discussion about the whole issue and the meeting made several suggestions. Those present resolved that the chairman should seek to instigate an open debate by writing an open letter to the local newspaper outlining the problem which should be copied to our MP seeking his involvement. The letter should make it clear that the parish meeting took the view that our councillor had consistently failed in his duty, that he should visit the homes concerned, pursue the long- promised speed management measures, actively campaign on our behalf, account for his actions and keep the parish informed and answer our correspondence. Every parishioner present asked to have their name associated with the letter which should make it clear that the parish now demands, rather than requests the actions agreed and is aware of the alternative of complaining.

The chairman agreed to compile the letter as requested and submit it to the local press.

1. The chairman outlined that some of the information provided to the meeting in answer to questions about council tax and county

councillor allowances had proved to be inaccurate. After he summarised the inaccuracies the meeting discussed the matter and unanimously decided that it would not require any further action as it was not possible for the parish to have any effect.

2. The chairman provided an account of the background to a recent issue where 10,000 new homes might have been proposed in neighbouring parishes. He indicated that he had liaised with the other parishes who had opposed any development while our parish meeting had decided to take no view unless it was in response to a defined proposal and then only after debate. From an early point the whole issue had raised several questions and these were on the whole comprehensively answered by Breckland's chief executive but one question regarding Breckland's conduct remained unanswered. It was also widely believed that the developers would make a future attempt and the chairman asked the meeting to consider whether to pursue the outstanding issue with Breckland and whether he should continue to liaise with other parishes ahead of any future submission being made.

After discussing the matter at some length the meeting unanimously resolved that no other action should be taken unless a future proposal was submitted.

1. The chairman outlined how well the system of having an elected body to consider planning issues had worked in providing him with support when the news of the 10,000 homes broke, with the erroneous indication that parishes had to act with extreme urgency if they objected. After undertaking research and preparing a discussion paper the chairman was able to discuss every development at every stage with easy access to those elected by the parish to act on its behalf. This substantially improved the confidence of the chairman that he was acting with approval as he represented the parish in this fast-moving issue.

He indicated however that in respect of matters other than those affecting planning there was not the same level of support for the chairman and he was anxious that the meeting should consider how that deficiency could be addressed to assist the next chairman to be elected at the AGM.

The meeting unanimously resolved that a further body, accessible for the chairman to consult for advice, should be elected by the parish meeting.

Date of next meeting. Wednesday 29th May 2019.