

Rocklands Parish Council (RPC)
Minutes of Annual Parish Meeting (Annual Assembly) held on
on Monday 3 May 2021 at 7.00pm
(A virtual ZOOM meeting)
Immediately before the Annual Parish Council Meeting (AGM)

Present:	David Howie	Chair
	Nickie Southgate	Vice Chair
	Richard Harrison	
	Sarah Martin	
	Tim Ford	
	Bryan Swaddling	
	Kim Austin	Clerk
	Ed Connolly	Norfolk County Councillor
	Sarah Suggitt	Breckland District Councillor

Also present: 13 members of the public

The meeting started at 7:10pm

The Chair Cllr. David Howie welcomed everybody to Rocklands Annual Parish Meeting.

1. To consider accepting apologies for absence

There were no apologies for absence.

2. To approve the minutes of the last parish meeting (Annual Assembly) on Monday 8 April 2019

It was noted that an Annual Parish Meeting was not held in 2020 due to the Covid pandemic, therefore the minutes to be signed off were from the year before last, 2019.

It was agreed to approve the minutes that had been circulated prior to the meeting, as a true and accurate record and as this was a virtual meeting, it was agreed they would be signed by the Chair, Cllr. David Howie after the meeting.

3. To discuss any matters arising from the minutes, not on the agenda

There were no matters arising from the minutes.

4. To hear Chairman's report

Cllr. David Howie delivered his report.

Because of the Pandemic it has been two years since my last report.

This period has been a difficult time for us all, but in my view as a Parish we have fared better than most. Our meetings have been conducted via Google Duo and Zoom, a media I have found difficult and somewhat limiting, this has meant only a few residents have attended, and then only when they wished to make their views known about particular issues. Hopefully, this will soon be at an end.

If I remain as Chairman, I will continue to conduct meetings in a manner that gives an opportunity for all to have their say, and to reflect the views expressed. This is far from easy, as you cannot please everyone all the time.

Our funding position is good, my clerk keeps a tight rein on me and our spending. We still make donations to other groups in the Parish, but that is always under review.

Signed

Date

One outcome of the pandemic is as a Parish we have had less planning issues to contend with, but the Neighbourhood Plan has continued to stall, this is partly due to Breckland's Plan being delayed and agreed and council officers working from home, but we continue to keep a watchful eye on all planning matters. When applications are received, we always make comment and contact any residents who maybe concern ,for their views, this we will continue to do. I thank Nicola Southgate my Vice Chair, and Richard Golke Chairman Neighbourhood Plan Committee for their input, this makes my life a lot easier.

We have had excellent support from George Freeman MP, Edward Connolly County Councillor I hope he will still be in place after May election, and from our relatively new District Councillor Sarah Suggitt, long may it continue.

First Time Sewage Scheme for Rockland St Peter has moved on, all surveys done, and we are hopeful for a start date of early 2022.

Flooding has been a major issue in the Parish as it has in other areas, and we have purchased sandbags for residents to use. Norfolk County Council have formed a committee of all concerned agencies to hopefully deal with the problems, Councillor Richard Harrison is our representative on the committee. I thank him for the excellent work he is doing on the flooding issue. But in our view, we need a survey done to ascertain what needs to be done in our Parish, and this will cost money, hopefully we will be able to get this done by way of a grant from County.

We are still experiencing traffic problems, speeding and in particularly heavy lorries and tractors, this I fear will only get worse. Traffic numbers were down during the pandemic but are now on the rise. This will be exacerbated by the development of more housing nearby, more industrial development and during the coming summer, the construction of a roundabout at Great Ellingham, with traffic diverted. You will have seen the SAM 2 speed signs in Attleborough Road and in The Street, I thank Councillors Richard Harrison and Tim Ford, for continually moving them and collating the information obtained which can be sent to Police and Highways for dissemination.

During the pandemic, the school, the village hall, the playing field/play area, churches and the White Hart Public House have had to close. They now are reopening; grants were obtained to assist the village hall and the playing field during this closure period. However, the Community Shop remained open, and has done sterling work supporting the community, I thank all involved.

Neighbourhood Watch is still working well, circulating information of frauds and crime, it would be great if all residents were involved.

There continues to be conflict between residents in respect of the wildflower meadow and pond at Chapel Green, I have tried to get the pond cleaned out and the banks made up by way of a grant from county. This work has been delayed due to Covid and because of weather conditions and will now not be done until August.

The Parish Council has been operating with two councillors short, but now two new councillors have been co-opted and we are up to full strength.

I thank all councillors for supporting me, and for all their hard work and advice. And Kim Austin, Parish Clerk, for all her hard work, support, advice and for putting up with me.

And finally, I urge all residents to get involved, and to tell us of any concerns so we can attempt to address them. Thank you.

5. To receive reports by County & District Councillors

5.1 Breckland District Councillor's Annual Report 2021 - Cllr. Sarah Suggitt

The past year has been one like no other and I would like to offer my sincerest thanks to all the volunteers and workers who have tirelessly kept going throughout.

At Breckland our top priorities were to protect the lives and livelihoods of our residents.

Over the past year we have issued over £50m in financial support. We want to make sure every business in Breckland gets the help it needs to recover from the pandemic and continue to thrive.

Signed

Date

In addition to this we have delivered food parcels, set up welfare calls for the vulnerable and isolated, taken on covid support officers to offer advice, support and guidance and introduced a covid safe scheme helping consumers feel assured that businesses have in place the appropriate PPE, screens, masks, training etc.

We have recently introduced the Spring Back Programme offering up to £5k to businesses to invest in equipment, training, websites, payment systems and start-ups to enable recovery on our high streets and surrounding areas.

We have agreed our Sustainability Strategy with a £500k budget showing our commitment of being carbon neutral by 2035.

Our new purpose built, temporary accommodation project in Elm Road, Thetford will see an investment of £1.8m offering advice and support to single adults, couples or families who find themselves in the most vulnerable of situations.

The first community supermarket was opened in the area with a £40k boost from Breckland. Working in partnership with the Norfolk Community Foundation support can be offered to those who the pandemic has hit the hardest.

Our Council took the decision to end the 10-year partnership arrangement with South Holland Council following the retirement of our Chief Executive and different ways of working brought upon us by Covid. This was an amicable decision by both parties and we are very much looking forward to the future.

We have continued to invest in our frontline services which includes the great work being undertaken by the fly tipping team, the recruitment of an animal welfare officer and offering online and evening appointments to our residents.

Our new waste contract went live in April after a very successful three - way partnership contract was agreed. This will see efficiency savings and benefits as well as the opportunity to offer a trade waste service.

Democracy has not been forgotten in the current climate. We have continued to hold our council business in the virtual world of Zoom. As part of our WorkSmart programme we have made the most of Elizabeth House being empty and carried out works to the council chamber which will allow livestreaming of meetings. The remaining workspace is being adapted to give officers and members some flexibility with their working arrangements including how we can meet the needs of our residents.

It is a real testament to the dedication of officers and members that whilst stepping up to a pandemic, addressing an Avian Flu outbreak, dealing with unexploded bombs etc. that so much has been achieved in our programme of works.

If anyone should have any questions or would like to know more information please do get in touch.

5.2 County Councillor's Annual Report 2021 - Cllr. Ed Connolly

Cllr. Ed Connolly mentioned the County elections and the Police and Crime Commissioner elections on 7 May 2021. He thanked everybody for their support and hoped that he would be re-elected and able to support us in the future.

Cllr. Connolly did not present an annual report but had diligently provided excellent reports throughout the year which we thank him for.

6. To receive comments from the public

There were no comments from the public.

The meeting closed at 7:30pm.

Signed

Date