

# SHELFANGER PARISH COUNCIL

**MINUTES** of the Parish Council Meeting held on Monday 8 January 2024 at 7.30 pm at All Saints Church, Shelfanger.

**Councillors Present:** Cllr S Groom (Chair), Cllr Marion Paines, Cllr M Hurst, Cllr Mick Paines and Cllr P Chambers

**In attendance:** Elaine Tinsley (Clerk), County Cllr C Rowett and 1 members of the public

1. **To consider accepting apologies for absence:** Received from Cllr P Ross and Cllr D Leeder
2. **To record declarations of interest and approve any requests for dispensations for disclosable pecuniary interests or other interests:** None were received
3. **To approve the minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on Monday 4 December 2024:**  
The Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on 4 December 2023 previously circulated to all members, were proposed for approval by Cllr Mick Paines, seconded by Cllr Marion Paines and unanimously agreed.
4. **To receive the reports from the County Councillor:**  
**County Cllr Rowett** arrived at the meeting at approximately 7:45 and introduced herself and went through her report (attached).
  - Grit bins situated outside the Council Houses on Common Road were brought to County Councillor Rowett and she confirmed she would pursue the need to relocate it due to flooding in the bin.
  - Councillor Rowett also requested any flooding issues should be reported to her.
  - Road Safety Scheme to be considered to lower speed limits and use of speed restriction measures. Councillor Rowett to investigate which cameras can be used in Norfolk.
  - The Long Stratton Bypass is likely to commence development in the spring.
  - Councillor Rowett will look at the grille on Common Road and the culvert etc., where significant previous flooding has occurred.
  - A member of the public indicated photographs would be sent to Councillor Rowett with regard to the state of some of the signs in the village with missing letters, paintwork etc., she confirmed she would pursue both enquiries.
5. **To hear from members of the public:**
  - A request was made by the Chairman that following previous meetings, the members of the public refrain from going beyond their allocated 5 minute slot.
6. **To receive the Clerk's report: -**  
The Clerk brought to the attention of the Parish Council: -
  - Details of bus route 371 was shown in her report.
  - The cost of road closure signs was discussed. The Clerk was asked to request confirmation from Highways as to whether a road closed signed could be erected in the road was flooded.

- Footpath 9 & 10 – unfortunately the previously received email address was incorrect for the farmer, but had since been rectified and the farmer contacted.
- The new Lloyds account had been opened and funds have been transferred and all is running smoothly.
- Village Hall keyholders – the Village Hall Committee had confirmed that in the event of impending flooding, the WhatsApp group ensured that the gate would be open for public parking.
- Norwich Diocese – Ben Conway was no longer in office, a new lady has taken over – Hannah Middleditch.

**7. To receive Chairman's report and Councillors Reports:**

Cllr S Groom reported that Cllr Daniel Leeder has stepped down as a Cllr due to work commitments. There was no need to look for a replacement as the Parish Council would still be quorate.

Cllr Marion Paines reported that Cllr Ross and herself had walked round the village to check on waterways etc., to investigate what may have exacerbated the recent flooding. **Clerk to send reminder to riparian owners to ensure waterways kept clear.**

**8. Boyland Common Report** - Cllr P Ross was unable to attend the meeting, but had issued the Boyland Common Report as attached.

**9. Planning Matters**

**9.1.** Heywood Road opening had been reported to Planning – they have now confirmed the opening was part of a planning application approved in 2020 (2020/2421).

**10. Precept** – Precept was agreed at 7.5% and forms were signed.

**11. FINANCE REPORT**

**11.1. To approve payments (C):**

PAY TYPE	PAYEE	DESCRIPTION	ACTUAL AMOUNT	VAT	PAYE
Online	Elaine Tinsley	Salary (2 months)	350.24	0.00	
Online	HMRC	Clerk's PAYE (2 months)	87.60	0.00	
Online	Elaine Tinsley	Expenses	69.77	11.26	
		<b>TOTAL £</b>	<b>507.61</b>	<b>11.26</b>	

Payments proposed Cllr Marion Paines, seconded Cllr P Chambers

**12. Flooding:**

- The Flood Plan need to be updated and Cllr Groom proposed a sub-committee meeting to go through and change. **Clerk to action**

**13. To review Policies 2024:**

- The Policies on the website need to be reviewed/updated and Cllr Groom proposed a sub-committee meeting to go through and change as required. **Clerk to action**

14. Next meeting of the Parish Council is on Thursday 7 March 2024 at 6.30 pm at Shelfanger Village Hall.

Meeting closed at: 9.00 pm.

**Shelfanger Parish Council Meeting 8.1.24**  
**Boyland Common Report**

Since our report dated 4.12.23, due to the weather conditions, there has been little opportunity for getting jobs done on the Common.

We do try to minimise the effect of invasion by willow saplings in the ditches, and we also try to coppice the willow trees where their growth threatens to dominate in one particular area.

In all conservation issues, it is necessary to consider carefully the reasons for, and the extent of, intervention in the natural development of the site. However, if the celebrated diversity of the site is threatened by nature's 'thugs'; the strong dominant species like willow and blackthorn that will overpower the less robust species of plant that can colonise the area, then perhaps a little intervention is acceptable.

Following advice from Chris Batey, our 'Owl man' we will be looking to cut back the branches that are beginning to obscure the South Easterly approach to the owl box. This must be done on a dry day, as it is possible that an owl is sheltering in the box, and will fly out at the sound of intervention. It will return, but, driven out on a wet day it will suffer, as Owls do not have the same weatherproof plumage as many other birds.

We are now working towards creating a replacement information board for the Common, and we are hoping that this will be funded by the District Council. We are hugely indebted to Rita and Sandy at Lime Tree Farm for their meticulous and in depth research into the historical aspects of the Common as well as details of the flora and fauna.

Having now made contact with Jamie Henry, Community Assets Officer for the District Council, we have now been approached by the Marketing and Communications Officer, Debbie Storey, and are currently looking to organise a meeting with her up at the Common.

All of these activities and connections will help to raise the profile of Boyland Common, and increase the awareness of how important this site is, both historically and environmentally.

Pam Ross, Chairperson for the 'Friends of Boyland Common'

## Councillor report, January 2024, from Catherine Rowett

January 5<sup>th</sup> 2024

### Wet weather and floods

The wet weather and flooding problems are not letting up yet, it seems. Do let me know if you have had problems with drainage on the roads or in your own property over the festive season. As usual we need to keep reporting these on the County Council website at [Report a flood - Norfolk County Council](#)

### Other problems in winter

There's lots of information about staying safe during cold spells on the county council website page called Norfolk Winter, which is [here](#). Take care to avoid burst pipes by ensuring that outdoor pipes are lagged, and that improved insulation hasn't left the pipes out in the freezing cold of your loft. Make sure you take warm clothes, rug, shovel etc when out driving in winter. Don't rely on the car's heating system to keep warm, in case you break down or get stuck. It's a good idea to follow the County Council social media, which will use the hashtag #NorfolkWinter for updates and advice relating to winter weather.

### Council "devolution deal" plans

The Cabinet at the County Council have been considering the options available if they accept one of the so-called "devolution" deals that the government is using as part of its so-called "levelling up" plans. Cabinet decided to recommend that Norfolk accepts a "level 3" deal, which adds a range of additional responsibilities to the council's work (things that were formerly done by central government) and provides a longer term guarantee of some funding to deliver them over the period of the funding agreement that comes with the deal, but they opted to postpone implementation of the new arrangements until 2025. The current situation where councils are looking at year on year cuts and no long term plan for how they can make ends meet make it seem attractive or even necessary to go for this promise of some investment in Norfolk and some replacement of the funds that have been lost since Brexit and with cuts to local authority funds and with rising inflation eating away at what we do have the right to raise in local taxation. But there are grave doubts as to whether the funds (which are not index linked) will actually be sufficient to deliver any significant improvements, and the deal comes with some unsatisfactory constraints on the democratic functioning of the Council, including a leader directly elected by the people of Norfolk, who won't be a council member and might be at odds with the majority view of the Council, despite having to appoint a cabinet from elected members of Council.

There are differing views on whether this is just a pointless gimmick by a government that has run out of ideas and run out of money, whether it is the first step on a slippery slope to something seriously problematic, and whether we have to say yes to it anyway (as many other councils are) because the bribe is money that we can't afford not to have. At Full Council on 12<sup>th</sup> December we discussed and voted on the proposals put to us by the Cabinet. In the event Council voted for the proposed deal, but there were divergent opinions in all parties. Further votes on the constitutional changes that are required will follow next summer, by which time we may have a different government in Westminster.

### Road Safety Schemes:

My list of requests under the Road Safety Community Fund went in for consideration in November, after much consultation and calculations by Adam Mayo, our highways officer. There were lots of requests, but few will be funded, probably only one per councillor unless they are very cheap, or unless some councillors get nothing. I am hoping to hear the results soon.

My next task is to work with Adam to try to find other ways of delivering some of the schemes that won't win, or were too low down the list to stand a chance. I have not yet spent my highways allowance because I have been saving it for these urgent safety schemes. More on this anon.

Meanwhile I also put in a motion to Council for December 12<sup>th</sup> asking for a cross-party working group to be set up with a view to making it easier for villages to get safer speed limits where they wish to have them, and rewriting the Norfolk Speed Management Strategy to prioritise safe speeds in rural areas, and to proactively reduce accidents before they happen instead of after. Ten times as many people die on rural roads as on motorways. Cyclists are almost three times more likely to be killed on a rural road than on an urban one. My motion did not get debated in December because time ran out on discussing the devolution deal, so I shall put it in for Full Council at the end of January instead. I was on Radio Norfolk at breakfast time talking about it on Monday 11<sup>th</sup> December.

### Cost of Living Payments - winter fuel help for pensioners

The Department of Work and Pensions has announced that pensioners across the country are to receive up to £600 to help with energy bills this winter.

Most Pensioner Cost of Living Payments were made in November or December. Everyone eligible should have received it by 26 January 2024. Further details [here](#).

The government advises that pensioners who do not receive a payment by 26 January 2024 should contact the [Winter Fuel Payment Centre](#).

### Buses and active travel

I am pursuing some enquiries on behalf of some villages concerning the provision, or lack of it, of Flexibus and Borderhopper services, and the unsatisfactory timing of bus journeys (which are sometimes useless for the purposes one might travel for).

The Council has now extended free bus travel for those who hold a concessionary pass on grounds of disability, so that it covers travel before 9.30 a.m. This is good news and will allow those with disabilities to get to work and training opportunities for free, if there is a bus that works for that.

### Bus travel stats

Latest figures show that passenger numbers increased throughout 2023, with the number of fare-paying passengers now exceeding pre-covid levels. Obviously, passenger numbers across Norfolk and the UK fell dramatically during Covid, so getting back to where we were before is important for making bus services viable again.

In Norfolk, overall bus passenger numbers have increased by 18% in the last year, with the number of fare-paying passengers now at 107% compared to pre-pandemic baseline figures. Norfolk is bucking the trend, as nationally, bus usage figures are at between 89% to 98% of pre-pandemic levels.

Approximately £12 million of our extra DfT funding was allocated to providing new or expanded bus routes and increased service frequencies on key routes, including more evening and weekend services. But I am aware that many small rural places are not seeing useful buses at useful times. See above on my efforts to get help with that. It's also worth thinking about ways to mix some cycling with a bus or train journey, for those who would normally commute to work by car. The Travel Norfolk journey planner website might be able to help you with planning that though disappointingly it doesn't yet seem to calculate the mixed mode journeys they have been promising (so Google maps might be better at that!).

### Long Stratton Bypass

Various hurdles have been jumped towards actually beginning on this long-awaited road. Planning permission is now in place, and the Officers were in the process of deciding which contractor would get the job, just before Christmas (having received four bids). The department for transport has approved the side road orders, for diverting roads and footpaths to join up in new places, and there is a 6 week challenge period for that. There is still uncertainty over how much funding will be received from central government. It's part of the diversion of funding from rail to roads associated with the truncated HS2 rail scheme. If only we were getting a rail link from Fornceff and Great Moulton instead to shift traffic off the road... That would only be a matter of re-opening the old stations, at a fraction of the cost you'd think.

### Contact me

You can contact me on [Catherine.rowett.cllr@norfolk.gov.uk](mailto:Catherine.rowett.cllr@norfolk.gov.uk) for Council-related business, and I look forward to helping with a range of issues that people have already brought to my attention. I'm always delighted to attend award ceremonies, events, centenaries, lectures, exhibitions, conferences, debates, litter picking parties, campaign events and protests, so don't hesitate to add me to your mailing lists! I also have a facebook page which includes updates on what I am working on, posts about events and opportunities relevant to residents, and a place where you can comment and leave your views on things I want to ask you about. The link is [here](#).

### County Council campaigns this month:

Look out for promotion of a campaign to get people taking steps towards becoming more healthy during 2024. More details here: [Ready to Change - Norfolk County Council](#)

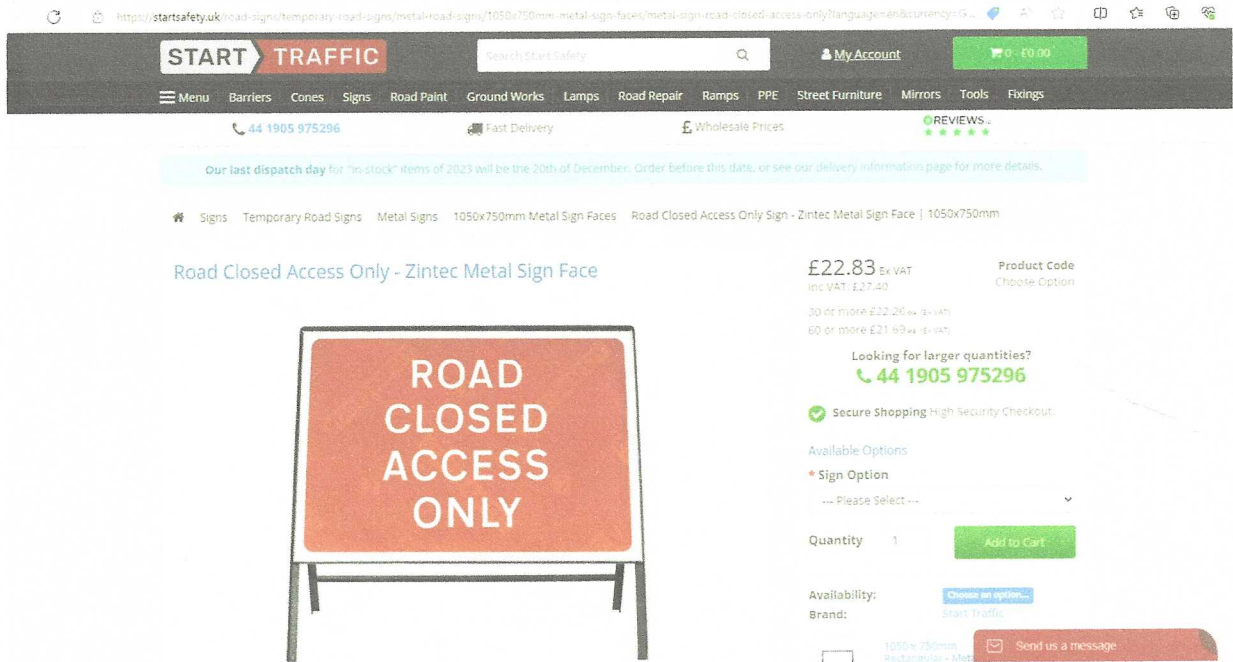
It's worth advertising on the village noticeboard or parish magazine if there are local opportunities for people to volunteer to get out and become active, with litter picking, drain clearance, maintaining hedges and ditches and so on, since that kind of group activity can contribute to motivation to improve active lifestyles. In addition, I would welcome offers of help to distribute local leaflets for me as a councillor (a newsletter) or for the Green Party (for election campaigns) if anyone is so moved. Contact me on my party email address (not my councillor address) if that's your kind of thing. [Catherine.rowett@greenparty.org.uk](mailto:Catherine.rowett@greenparty.org.uk).

*Catherine Rowett*

*2<sup>nd</sup> January 2024*

# Clerk's Report – Meeting 8<sup>th</sup> January 2024

1. **Bus Route 371** – There are two Diss High School bus routes. Both run by Simonds Route 371 (which is a local bus service picking up in Shelfanger at 08:15, returning at 15:35), plus the dedicated High School bus.
2. **Road Closed Signs** – These can be purchased from "Smart Sign" at a cost of £27.40 each. Metal signs on a stand.



3. **Footpath 9 & 10** – The local farmer was contacted again – no still no response has been received. Clerk to chase again.
4. **Heywood Road Opening** – Contact was made with the Planning Department concerning this opening. It has been put in the hands of Andy Baines at the Planning Department and he has been chased for an update.
5. **Banking** – The funds have now been moved to the new Lloyds accounts and all is running smoothly from there.
6. **Highways** – were contacted regarding the grit bin on Common Road. They responded to say the grit bin maintenance had been contracted out and all bins had been dealt with in October. There is a possibility, if the weather indicates, that there will be another check on them in January.
7. **Environment Agency** – as requested, a list of farmers was put together and sent to Rob at the Environment Agency.