



Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on Wednesday 28th April 2021 at 6.30pm via Zoom.

Present – Cllr Harrison (Chairman), Cllr Snape (Vice Chair), Cllr Hall.

Cllr Peter Overton & Cllr Marianne Overton.

1 Member of the Public.

1. The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting. Making comment that no Annual Parish Meeting had been held last year due to COVID. It is hoped that a further parish meeting will be able to be held toward the end of the year when the village hall is reopened, and we can all meet safely face to face.
2. Notes of the Annual Parish meeting held on Wednesday 20th March 2019, it was **Resolved** to approve the notes as minutes – All agreed (show of hands).

3. Chairman's Annual Report.

Sitting down to write my annual report, it was a time for reflection - reflection on a year like we have never experienced before.

Covid-19 has impacted the lives of each one of us, in our community and all around the world, – things were put on hold; many things have changed, and some of those changes will remain, and we will live with a new normal in the future.

Life for the Parish Council changed quickly too, no longer could we all meet in person and Government had to react quickly and change the way in which we did work – full council and working meetings were held via initially via Skype, and then by Zoom. Emails, messages, and calls were much more prolific. We did not miss a meeting and the service we provide for our residents and community continued without disruption.

We still managed, when requested and appropriate to get out and meet residents to speak to them about their concerns. We saw many more families out and about walking in the village, and the whole village came together with a great sense of community; we stood outside our homes on a Thursday night clapping for carers, and the village Victory in Europe Street Party took place with us all sitting in our own front gardens across the village. A sum of £628.00 was collected by Cllr Snape for SAFA on the day, whilst he walked the village with his collecting bucket – thank you all for your generosity.

We were one of the first villages in the area to have a working Covid support group, before a request from NKDC or LCC to set up support groups was received – all brought together by Cllr Jason Snape – areas zoned with co-ordinators and volunteers via a Facebook group – provided such valuable comfort and assistance to not only our residents but to residents in our close villages – Jason being awarded with an NKDC community award for his efforts. The group is still in operation today.

We have been in, out and back into lockdown again – things slowly opening again, hopeful now that the vaccination programme will keep us all safe.

In November, our Remembrance Day Service was held via Zoom, Cllrs Snape, Branagan and former Cllr Fenney, all serving members of the RAF in attendance to lay wreaths on behalf of the parishioners, with Rev Jeff Parr conducting the Service. £200 was raised online for Royal British Legion. We registered 198 views on the day.

So, what have we been doing since my last report which was in May 2019 as we could not hold an APM last year?

- We appointed a new clerk, Rachel Popplewell. Rachel comes from outside the village and with that came the challenge of getting to know the village and all the work that comes with a new(ish) village. Rachel has been instrumental in challenging NKDC to provide us with maps showing all our areas of responsibility across the village, and still today, despite already being provided with “final” plans on a couple of occasions, NKDC have told us again that the information provided needs to be changed.
- One of the important items for us, was seen back in July 2019, when we met with NKDC and their solicitors to review the Section 106 document for Phase 3 as we were unhappy with some of the terms. We successfully negotiated changes to the document, which will see the parish council agreeing to the play equipment to be installed in the new “superpark”. We also negotiated 50% on or occupation of the 200th dwelling and 50% of the S106 payment for the community facilities contribution to be on or before the occupation of the 300th dwelling. The initial offer was over 5 payments up to 1000 homes, this has reduced the time from approximately 12 – 15 years before full contributions received to approximately 3 years; and for Witham St Hughs to be included in NHS medical facilities should the strategy change. Richard Wright Head of NKDC commended us for our tenacity in pushing for the changes.
- We went out to tender for our open spaces (most of Phase 1), this time appointing two contractors, one for the grass areas and one for the trees and hedges. At the same time Strawsons appointed the same contractors for their areas within the village (Phase 2) The contract is new, and we are monitoring their work.
- We now have new swings in the playparks, and the surfacing following vandalism has been replaced in the Warren Lane/Hedge Lane Park
- The old telephone box on Nettleton Drive, now houses the 2nd defibrillator in the village.
- Cuckoo Walk has had a face list and the benches replaced, thanks to County Councillor Marianne Overton for providing one of them.

- 4 additional benches now sited in the village.
- Additional multi waste bins have been provided.
- Grit bins provided for the ex-officers, and former Airmen's Quarters.
- All bush shelters have had a facelift – disappointing to see graffiti appear a couple of weeks later though.
- Overgrown and self-set bushes have been thinned out in areas of the village – although the look is drastic, two arborists assured me that it was for the best, and that nature will do its thing and they will grow back – I am pleased to see that this is starting to happen.
- Some of the periphery paths under our responsibility have been repaired, our thanks to Thomas Bow – the contractors currently working on the roads for Phase 3
- Speed signs on Camp Road/Warren Lane/Hedge Lane
- Phase 3 contractors – we have already had Zoom meetings with Avant Homes and Countrywide properties, the first two home builders who have planning applications in with NKDC. Lessons learnt regarding open spaces in Phase 1 giving us good in-site on what to look for, with our recommendations being looked at favourably with both companies. This is something that we are looking to put into process for all future home builders.

What are we currently working on:

- Early-stage planning process being undertaken for the new Phase 3 superpark – which will involve public engagement following meetings with landscape architects. Watch this space, it will come to life very quickly.
- Phase 2 adoption – Strawsons are looking for us to pick up responsibility for the open spaces in Phase 2 along with the new football pitch. Until we are happy with all areas, we will not agree to the adoption.
- We are in the process of obtaining quotes for the periphery paths under our responsibility, looking at better drainage for the rainwater runoff.
- The reopening of the Village Hall and MUGA. Ensuring we have everything in place to maintain Government recommended standards.
- Introduction of Parish Council Surgeries monthly on a Saturday for residents to talk to us initially via Zoom and then face to face when we can.

- Very soon it will be time to look at the expansion of the Village Hall as we need to be ready when the Section 106 Funds are released to us – we will be looking for help with this from residents in the form of a Village Hall Committee

I would like to thank our County Councillor Marianne Overton MBE, and District Councillor Peter Overton, for persevering with our remote meetings and being in attendance with us throughout the year – for their input and keeping us updated.

Thanks go to Rachel our clerk for keeping us on our toes and up to date with current legislation. Seems like we have never been without her!

Finally, I would once again like to thank my fellow Parish Councillors, for their endless hours of support throughout this unprecedented year – to new councillors, who have had to fit in whilst we hold remote meetings and hit the ground running. I know that the workload has been an eye opener for what we must do, so I thank you for hanging on in there.

Coming out of this lockdown situation is going to be difficult for all of us, please remember we are approachable and ready to help if we are able, let us continue to work together for the continued good of our community.

4. To receive reports from County and District Councillors.

Cllr Peter Overton - Annual Report: The Council has 42 elected members, of which 21 are Independents (14 Lincolnshire Independents) and 21 are “NK Administration”, elected as Conservatives. A by-election in Bassingham District on 6th May will bring the number up to the 43 full compliments. According to the website, we have no Labour and no Liberal Democrats. We are in “no overall control”, meaning that power is shared and no one party has all the answers!

Lincolnshire Independents and Independents have worked together in the NK Independent Group and maintain their right to speak and vote independently. Since the elections in the past two years, we have a new intake of bright and effective councillors bringing considerable experience and skills. Our members have worked hard to create a responsive Council, answering to what local people need and want.

Tackling Covid - We initiated and supported covid neighbourly groups to provide shielding residents with food and medicines. We actively engaged in and supported the Lincolnshire Resilience Forum and Public Health bringing support to our villages throughout the past year of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Our members created a think tank and produced a policy paper on recovery from covid for our communities, economy and environment, leading policy in NKDC.

We supported local businesses impacted by Covid restrictions with £28m in Government grants and made sure our local businesses were aware of the discretionary grants to apply.

As a member of the Whisby Natural World Steering Committee I have supported the access improvements and enhancement of the facilities.

Bringing fundamental changes to our Council's direction

I took a major role in helping the Lincolnshire Independents lead the change in Council policy to include the Environment and nature as a key priority and tackling climate change with a sound working strategy. The plan is now approved and progressed working to achieve carbon neutrality for the Council by 2030.

I wrote the Tree Strategy on behalf of the Independent group, which includes provision to maintain trees and increase tree cover. Trees to be in the right places and maintained appropriately in partnership with other landowners and trusts.

Making Council resources work well for you.

Our members supported a 10-year capital programme of £230m in investments in housing, infrastructure, economic growth potential and resources whilst scrutinising the council's capability to deliver. Our District part of Council tax is relatively low at £174.90 for a Band D property.

Supporting our Communities

Our members supported our communities in the Community Champion Awards, honouring the best in community endeavour, and organised local recognition.

Conclusion -In conclusion, the work of the Council is good, and elected members are pivotal in driving good performance. The Council tax is relatively low, with good housing and reliable services. All Councillors are important, but a vibrant Independent group, determined to serve their communities has brought a new sense of excitement and action. We will want to maintain that enthusiasm and drive into a better future.

Councillor Marianne Overton made comment that judgement had been received, confirming that no voting is to be carried out online, w.e.f from the 6 May 2021. Cllr Overton confirmed that half of the Lincolnshire County Council budget had been spent on Schools and Education. Highways continues to be an area for concern, although the time frames for repairs to be carried put had been reduced. Mental Health is going to be a priority over the next year, a helpline has been set up (Tel 0800 0014331) to support communities with the aftereffects of the pandemic.

5. No public questions were received.