

# Upwell Parish Council

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Minutes of Upwell Parish Assembly, Monday 13th March 2023, 6.30pm

Those Present: Cllr. Lester, Cllr. Aston, Cllr. Shorting, Cllr. Rose, Cllr Carr, Cllr K. Harrison, Cllr A. Harrison, Cllr Harmer, County Cllr C Dawson, Clerk M Hilton.

Public: thirty-two

Apologies: Cllr. Robinson, BCllr Spikings, Cllr Shaw, Mike Turner

## MINUTES

1. **Welcome and to consider apologies.**
2. **Declarations of Interest by Councillors:** none were given.
3. **Agree the Minutes of the meeting held on 14th March 2022:** these were approved and signed by the Chair.

### 4. **To receive a report from the Chairman of the Parish Council:**

The past year has been memorable and not just for our Parish. Last summer saw us all celebrating Queen Elizabeth II milestone jubilee. The Parish and Borough Councils jointly presented souvenir mugs and medals to the school children, and there were activities across the parish for all to enjoy. Who would have expected, sadly, that only a couple of months later, we would be mourning her passing.

We have had a change in Councillors over the last 12 months with resignations from Paul Williams, Richard Melton and Bill Pugh. They are thanked for their work and commitment whilst on the Council. We advertised for applicants for casual vacancies to be co-opted onto the council and as a result we welcomed back Brian Carr and welcomed new Councillors Mike Turner and Zoe Harmer, who all received the required number of votes.

This Council has built on the improvement of communications, referred to at the last assembly. A survey showed that the community magazine remained a popular source of information, and we now also have a much stronger on line presence with the addition of 'The Parish Hub' website designed for local news and updates (with the 'official' UPC website still in place for Parish Council matters).

As part of the continued improvement of communication, Council surgeries were held last year in all three villages but sadly these were poorly attended and on many occasions, Councillors outnumbered parishioners. So the decision has been made to not set dates for further surgeries. Instead, on The Parish Hub, there is a dedicated email address that can be used to contact the Council with concerns and ideas. Should there prove to be an appetite to re-commence actual surgeries then the Parish Council will do so.

We have noted more contact from parishioners by email on local matters and our aim is to engage the appropriate authorities on these issues if not at Parish level.

In 2021/2022, the refurbishment of the village hall was a topic of much debate. With rising building costs, the Parish Council decided last Spring to scale back these plans but to continue a more gradual refurbishment programme. This started with a complete and necessary overhaul of the electrics in the main hall and bar area; and a complete refurbishment of the bar which now looks much better and more customer friendly. The bar refurbishment was completely funded by the Hall and the work undertaken in the main by volunteers. This is a credit to the Hall and it continues to build on the increase in hirings.

Currently the Hall committee are researching the best methods of replacing the current heating system and insulation of the building to stop loss of heat. Important with rising utility costs, which the recent freezing temperatures have highlighted.

There has been a lot of work carried out in the management of the public rights of way and in conjunction with the County Council, some of the problem areas have been resolved. In addition, we now have a map with references and photos of the footpaths and it is hoped that this, along with a new map board, will be going 'live' shortly so that parishioners and visitors can enjoy our countryside.

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Upwell Parish Council has been in negotiations with the Borough Council regarding formally taking over the management of the Upwell Cemetery and these are progressing, albeit slowly. Many will agree that since we took over, initially on a trial basis, the maintenance has improved.

Last year we held our first public consultation meeting in Upwell Hall regarding initial proposals for Lowside land's potential development. This gave parishioners an opportunity to see the Council's initial thoughts and they had the opportunity to indicate their preferences to types of dwelling, numbers and landscaping. This is an ongoing project and our advisers have been working in the background. At this moment in time, there is little to report but rest assured that we will hold another public event as soon as progress allows.

As always the council has been very busy over the past year and not everything we do gets noticed but that is ok, as that hopefully means that we are working without disruption to the parish. Finally, I would like to take the opportunity to thank County Councillor Chris Dawson, Borough Councillors Vivienne Spikings and Colin Rose for their support and work they have done and continue to do for us; and to thank my fellow Parish Councillors for their support and commitment.

### **5. To receive a report from our Borough Councillors: From Borough Councillor Rose**

Council tax for a band D property has increased by £4.50 leading to a charge of £139.37, of which £57.20 goes to the Internal Drainage Boards. Considering that in the overall area 300,000 properties are at risk this is money well spent. However the Leader, Stuart Dark is looking at other ways to fund such work so that it is less of a burden to Council Tax payers. However, the Council's services are provided for just £82.17p per year.

23p per day covers a wide range of services including: Bin Collections, Tourism, helping people in a housing crisis, etc., in the largest local authority area in Norfolk and one of the largest in England.

There has been an increase in CT relief and £78 million in grants to support local businesses. Which means that for every 4p of the council tax total in every £1 a host of services are provided with the increase generally below the current rate of inflation. We collect Council Tax for The NCC, The office of the Police and crime commissioner and parish Councils.

There is a funding position for the next three years. There have been investments in litter picking and fly-tipping, commitment to the Town Deal projects across King's Lynn and we are putting £250k per annum for the next 4 years to tackle climate change and to support communities. More than a 1/4 of tariffs have not been increased. We have been identified as one of the areas to benefit from the government's levelling up scheme and are keen to engage but awaiting details of what this could mean.

Other preceptors charge for their own services. When all are combined the average band D property charge is £2,014.

Hopefully we can look forward to a return to some kind of normal now that SAGE has disbanded, but with staff shortages and a huge backlog please anticipate some delays.

The next Police Safer Neighbourhood Action Panel will take place as a hybrid meeting on 13<sup>th</sup> April at 19.00, venue to be confirmed but probably Barroway Drove VH. However, Paula Gilluley is on leave until the 15<sup>th</sup>. I have left an email requesting confirmation to SBPC. Any other PC that can offer a venue with broadband on a gratis basis is welcome to make contact as there are three more meetings anticipated this year. As Police moral is very low more attendance in support would be much appreciated. The last meeting was only about 25 mins, this is your chance to help set local Police priorities.

I have £490 left in my Cllr's grant if any community groups need some funding, unfortunately PCs are excluded, but if you missed the February CIL date there is another round in July for August. The last round was oversubscribed.

### **From Borough Councillor Spikings:**

I try to attend all Upwell Parish meetings throughout the year but if not, if not I liaise with Melanie if there any issues that need my attention. I report back promptly and give feedback.

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It was agreed that the Boroughs element of the Council tax bill would reluctantly have to be increased, due to significant pressures, by £4.50 (£5.00) with special expenses for the entire year on an average Band D property. This equates to a rise of just under 9p per week. Of this £143.87, a levy of £61.28 is paid to the Internal Drainage Board for the work they do. The work they do to reduce flood risk to people, property, infrastructure and to manage water levels for agriculture and the environment is much appreciated, as well as the public who serve on the Boards and give up their time.

The Council is ranked 179 out of 181 for having the lowest charging once the IDB levies are taken out. The Borough delivers services for over 500 sq. miles. Upwell and Delph Ward have 5025 electorate.

I have fully supported all Community Infrastructure requests and informed when the next rounds re bidding for funding are to be.

With my Councillor Community funding I have allocated funding for trees for Welney Rug, bench for Nordelph river bank in conjunction with the Welle Creek Trust, monies towards a defibrillator at Lakes End village hall, monies towards Insurance at Three Holes village hall, helped towards refurbishing the old village gates at Barroway Drove (unveiling at Kings Coronation weekend) and finally a massive Christmas tree for Wimbotsham where a Carol service was held beside.

As Chair of Planning I receive lots of requests for help and advice and all meetings can be watched via Zoom. Enforcement is a very busy department with 593 cases opened and 576 cases closed in one year. The Borough is one of the most proactive in tackling the issues that arise.

From Monday 27th February residents will receive a hanger on their waste bins, before collection so that recycling small electrical items i.e. iron, kettle, batteries, games console, phones, toaster, hairdryers, electric toothbrushes can all be recycled.

The Government's has offered a new Devolution Deal with an Elected Mayor for Norfolk, with £600 million funding offered over 30 years for infrastructure. There are ongoing discussions and I watch this space with interest.

I was so pleased to see how all villages held events for the late Queen's Jubilee and all the volunteers who helped make it such a success. Such a variety and a big thank you to all for their hard work, many events which I attended.

Now there is to be a Coronation in May with grants of £200 to be allocated upon request.

Finally voters will need photo ID to vote in the May elections if voting in person. Acceptable forms of ID are: -

UK driving License or passport.

Bus pass

Blue badge

Pass proof of age card

The easiest way is to apply online but if you do not have the internet drop in sessions are available.

Call 01553 616200 where you can apply for a paper form or a postal vote.

I would also like to thank the Clerk and Parish Councillors for giving their time and dedication in support of their villages.

### **6. To receive a report from County Councillor Dawson:**

Most of the parishioners had attended the meeting to talk to him regarding secondary school placement. Some of Upwell Primary school year 6's have been told that their secondary school will be Icen Academy -Methwold. CCLr Dawson is trying to get a meeting with the cabinet member either this Wednesday or next. CCLr Dawson is also liaising with Liz Truss, who is also seeking separate meetings. He has taken all the comments on board.

### **7. To receive the Chair's and treasurer's report for Upwell Village Hall:**

The Chairman had sent his apologies so no report from him. The treasurer reported that the income for the hall had been £73,921, the expenditure was £77,910 with £33,256 in the bank on 28<sup>th</sup> February 2023

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### **8. Receive other reports from community representatives and organisations.**

- **Upwell Playing Field: *Cllr Shorting***

Cllr Shorting reported that the car boots had been well attended and would start again 6<sup>th</sup> April 2023. Upwell football teams were also doing well. An extension to the pavilion is required for storage, so far £26K has been promised in funding. There will be a full report from the Playing Field in the next edition of the Upwell Community Magazine.

### **9. Open Forum – public opportunity for questions to Councillors or issues about matters in the Parish:**

Two parishioners wished to speak regarding an incident on Facebook involving one of the Council. They were upset that a planning application they have had been discussed on Facebook, and they felt the Councillor had broken the Code of Conduct and should have been impartial. The Councillor apologised for any upset he may have caused.

The meeting closed at 7.35pm.

**Signed by the Chairman .....** **Date .....**