

Minutes of the Dersingham Annual Parish Meeting held virtually on Wednesday 28th April 2021 at 7.00pm.

Present: 8 Councillors, Guest Speaker Louise Bates, Dementia Friendly Development Officer from Alzheimer's Society and 1 Member of the Public.

Apologies: None received.

Chairman C Shepherd chaired the meeting.

Welcome and to receive apologies for absence.

Cllr G Billard, Cllr V Brundle, Cllr J Houston and Cllr D Wright gave their apologies in advance.

To approve the minutes of the meeting held 17th April 2019 – No meeting took place 2020 due to Covid -19.

It was resolved for the minutes to be signed by the Chairman as a true and accurate record without amendment.

To receive a report from Coral Shepherd, Parish Council Chairman, on the Council's year.

The Chairman read the attached report.

**Dersingham Parish Council
Chairman's Annual Report 2019-21**

I had the honour of being elected as the Chairman of Dersingham Parish Council in May 2019. I began with the hope and aspirations of many a Chairman before me and spent a few months learning what being a Parish Council chairman was all about. However, by the beginning of 2020 we had learnt about a new disease, covid 19, and by March a global pandemic was announced, shortly followed by a national lockdown.

I won't dwell on the reactions but simply say that the village coped magnificently. The Parish Council found itself unable to meet for a few weeks. We were then introduced to the virtual world and after a few start up glitches we began meeting via Zoom. What started as somewhat of a novelty has become a way of life and I am really proud that we have carried on with business as usual.

There have been no significant interruptions to the services we provide for the community – the grass was cut, streetlights maintained, dog and litter bins emptied. Last summer we carried out some renovations to the War Memorial Gardens and I am pleased to say that they are now returned to a garden of which we can all be proud. We did have a few hiccoughs with the publication and delivery of Village Voice, but we still managed to deliver them to everyone in the village, more or less on time. A big thank you to our editor and all of those who give up their time to deliver the magazine.

One of the saddest moments for me of the last year was when we had to close the

children's playground at a time when there was the greatest need. Since it reopened it has been so well used and come rain or shine there are always children playing. This takes me onto the skatepark, ever since the old wooden ramp was demolished, we had promised a new facility. After a couple of false starts we have been working for the last year on obtaining grants and now have funding in place for work to start within the next few weeks. I would like to thank FCC for their grant of £66,000 which has enabled us to move the project forward so that there will soon be somewhere for those who have grown out of the playground to exercise. There has been a renewed interest in team sports at the Sports Ground and the Parish Council is working with the Sports Ground Management Committee to facilitate refurbishment of the pavilion.

The Village Centre, which is run on behalf of the Parish Council by the Dersingham Village Centre Association, and the Social Club that is run by a management committee its membership have both had a difficult year with lockdowns. However, both have risen to the challenge, the Centre is now reopen and the Social Club is hoping to reopen next month when further lifting of restrictions will take place. Both are looking forward to a summer of "business as normal".

Going back to 2019, we completed a major review of the spending on the construction of the Village Centre. The report is available to read on our website. As a result of the review we have made some procedural changes to the way we work to ensure greater transparency and scrutiny. For the past 3 years we have been able to reduce the precept, and I am pleased to say that despite the reduction in our income we have not had to reduce our services.

Looking forward we have a few ongoing projects – I have already mentioned the skatepark which should be open in time for the school summer holidays. The existing Christmas lights at the Recreation Ground in Hunstanton Road have been in place for several years and we are looking to carry out some improvements this year. We will be having additional log seats at The Warren and in the autumn will be carrying out some tree planting.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all of my fellow councillors for their help and support, both practical and moral, during what has been a challenging period. I would also like to say a particular big thank you to our staff who have carried on calmly throughout. Without them we would not be able to function.

Most of us have experienced sadness or health problems in our own families or among friends. Many things have changed and some of the changes will last. I feel that as a community and parish council we are stronger. With the roll out of the vaccine there will soon be opportunities to meet again and return to a new normal way of life.

Thank you
Coral Shepherd, Chairman, May 2021

Speaker: Louise Bates, Dementia Friendly Development Officer from the Alzheimer's Society – How to improve dementia awareness and inclusivity for those affected in our community.

Councillor C Shepherd introduced Louise and thanked her for attending the meeting.

Louise gave a report highlighting the impact of dementia on both those suffering from the illness and the family and friends involved and the help and resources available to help cope with the day-to-day changes and needs. She encouraged people to create working groups to collect data, record cases locally, generate groups to include those that are living with dementia to make them feel involved and included in the local community, such as dementia friendly coffee mornings etc and advised there is funding available to help establish groups. Louise said she would circulate relevant links and documents to any Councillors wishing to know more about dementia and how they can get involved with making the village a dementia friendly one and thanked the Parish Council for inviting her to speak

To receive and update from Dersingham United Charities on their past year.

Cllr C Shepherd report Alex Coombs had not been able to attend and had submitted a report which was read to those in attendance.

Dersingham Commons and Fen – Update

As per the article in the recent Village Voice we are now over a year into our ten-year Countryside Stewardship agreement and work is progressing steadily.

The Agreement is written by DEFRA under the guidance of Natural England and is supplemented by the Forestry Commission's Woodland Management Plan with accompanying Felling Licence (all of 10 years duration). As you will appreciate this is a hugely ambitious and varied programme. Especially as very little work has been undertaken on the Commons in the past few decades and any changes are likely to seem dramatic and controversial to some members of the public.

Of the four specific jobs that must be completed by 31.12.21 in order to receive funding two have been completed and have been refunded under the scheme, namely:

- The removal of 500 sqm of molinia tussock (purple moor-grass) from the Fen in April.
- The felling and removal of 25 specified trees from the Fen's central ditch in December.

This year we will continue with the two remaining jobs, namely:

- The eradication of 5,000 sqm of rhododendron from the woodland – we will be drilling and treating this to kill it through the summer months prior to cutting it down and burning it in the winter. Personally, I would aim to remove all rhododendron from the site in the long term.
- Of the nine areas of scrub removal (totalling 25,000 sqm). We have completed three (notably clearing the Red Dyke path on the Fen). Quotes are being sought for the two worst areas (the Square along Lynn Road below the benches, and the large area in the NE corner of the Common by the paddocks), We hope to use volunteers on the remaining areas but will probably be out of time to claim funding for these smaller areas.

We can only remove the rhododendron and scrub during the period September to February due to the birds' breeding season so it will now be very difficult to complete

both of these by the current deadline of 31.12.21. We will re-request a time extension later this year but can't rely on it being granted.

Last year we also completed:

- the veteran tree survey (kindly carried out by Coral and Brian in February) - no veterans, diseased or ash trees requiring attention were identified.
- the Ride (the old wayleave) was cut back and opened up, and a new mowing regime for the three Grassland sites and the Ride has been organised and will begin in the late summer.
- the Wildfire Risk Assessment was carried out by Sandringham Fire Brigade in June which requires the installation of suitable signage. The Charity's request that the Parish council help fund the cost of permanent signs to replace the temporary wordings has just been received (thank you) so hopefully these can be in place before the dry summer months when the Commons and Fen are most at risk of fire.

Subsequently, the most significant projects will be:

- to open up the immature birch woodland with clearings, and although not in the Agreement I would like to plant some different species of native trees – this may help allay people's concerns with the felling and achieve the biodiversity the Forestry Commission want to see.
- 'halo thinning' around specimen/potential veteran trees will be carried out shortly, 12 specific trees have now been selected (5 will be tagged/recorded/monitored as per the Agreement).
- We will also free the two streamlines from plant growth – this is not specified in the Agreement but will help remove water from the waterlogged upper path to the Fen where it needs to be.
- the Agreement does require 95% of the reed-bed removing from the Fen by 2025 to comply with its SSSI status as a 'mire' habitat (it is not registered as 'fenland'). This is proving a difficult task to organise and may prove unachievable.

Aside from the necessary contractual works we have also tried to improve on the car park in Heath Road and some of the Common's bridges which were badly silted-up underneath making them wet and slippery.

Please bear in mind that the Charity has no specialist skills or knowledge (it is not a conservation charity), has very little funding, no tools/equipment (nor indeed anywhere to keep them should it purchase anything!) and is reliant on a volunteer workforce. At the moment we are simply interpreting the Agreement as best we can and doing one aspect at a time. Given these circumstances any help that the Council can offer would have a big impact from financial funding to practical advice – especially anybody that knows about reedbed eradication (The Broads Authority, Norfolk Reed Cutters, & Peter Frizzell contracting have yet to prove helpful on this point).

I hope this helps explain some of what is going on on our shared public spaces, please accept my apologies for not attending in person and for any errors or

omissions. Please feel free to ask any questions you may have – I will do my best to answer them.

Compiled by Alex Coombs, clerk to Dersingham United Charities.
April 2021

To receive an update from Judith Collingham and Tony Bubb, Dersingham Borough Councillors.

Councillor Collingham reported she is continuing to work on the regeneration project in King's Lynn.

The Queen Elizabeth Hospital has received an increasing amount of media coverage relating to the twenty million pounds worth of repairs currently needed on the building and suggested a group be established to apply pressure for a new hospital.

Councillor Bubb advised the planning application to build flats on Hunstanton's former railway station have been refused for the second time.

A new waste and recycling collection contract is due to start in April for residents of the King's Lynn and West Norfolk.

To hear any matters raised by electors that they would like the Council to take forward.

None present currently.

To confirm the date, time, and place of the next Annual Parish Meeting.