

SNETTISHAM PARISH COUNCIL

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Minutes of the meeting of Snettisham Parish Council held on 6th July 2011 at 7.30 p.m. In the Memorial Hall

Present:

Cllr. E Langford – presiding

Cllr. J Bailey, Cllr. J Bateson, Cllr. P Bradshaw, Cllr. R Clark, Cllr. I Devereux, Cllr. E Fountain,
Cllr. M Fountain, Cllr. A Gascoigne, Cllr. F Parkes, Cllr. D Snelgrove, Cllr. B Wardlow

Also in attendance: Borough Cllr David Johnson and Mrs Gay Watt, Financial Advisor

Approximately 50 members of the public,

Minutes taken by Ms R Kitchen (Clerk Consultant)

11.07.01 Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Borough Cllr Zipha Christopher and County Cllr John Dobson.

11.07.02 Declaration of Interest

Cllr Devereux declared a personal interest in Item 13 Beach Footpath Working Group.

11.07.03 Chairman's Report

Conviction of Mrs Boughen Cllr Langford gave an update report on the Council's financial situation following Mrs Boughen's conviction the previous week. (**see Appendix A**)

Lime trees on Ladies Walk The Chairman thanked Cllr Bailey for his efforts in tidying these trees and greatly improving the appearance of this area. He added that three more volunteers had approached the Clerk to offer their services, and he would be in touch with them shortly.

West Norfolk Village Games Snettisham had attended these for the first time and achieved a creditable eighth place out of ten. He thanked Debbie Matthews and Elizabeth Tagg for their efforts in organising and helping this event, and all those other villagers who had taken part and helped to make the day a success. He hoped Snettisham would be there again in 2012, with an even better performance.

Public meeting with Police 30 June This had been a successful and positive meeting. The police were making progress, working with schools, the Borough Council, social services and other organisation to reduce vandalism.

Youth Initiative This group was due to meet soon, to discuss ideas for more activities to be undertaken.

11.07.04 Co-option of new councillor

Since the last meeting Mr David Dodds had withdrawn his application and no further proposals had been received. The position was still available and the Chairman encouraged any parishioner who had been resident in the village for at least one year to apply in writing to the Clerk, with brief details about themselves and why they were applying. Any applications would be considered at the next meeting on 3rd August.

11.07.05 Minutes of Meeting held 1 June 2011

The minutes were agreed as a correct record subject to the amendment of Cllr Bateson for Cllr Bailey in item 11.06.05 b). Proposed by Cllr Parkes, seconded by Cllr Gascoigne and approved unanimously.

11.07.06 Matters arising not on the Agenda

Audio recordings of council meetings In response to a query from Cllr Parkes about having a copy of audio, the Chairman explained that audio recordings of meetings were for use as a checking device only, and were kept for a minimum of nine weeks, but could be kept for up to six years. Cllr Snelgrove reminded the council that the data protection issues must be considered. **Resolved: to defer this item to the next meeting for fuller discussion. Action: Clerk**

Cllr Gascoigne explained that he had experienced ICT problems where recent recordings had been stored

and was still trying to recover them.

Resolved: a new recorder to be purchased for use at council meetings. Action: Cllr Bradshaw.

Watermill Trust The parish council had contacted the bank but was unable to continue to pursue this without the written permission of the current signatories of the bank account. These were believed to be Mrs Boughen and Mrs Melton. Cllr Wardlow had been a member of the WaterMill Trust but declined to contact Mrs Melton on the matter. The chairman appealed to former members of the WaterMill trust for help in establishing actual signatories.

Norfolk Green buses Norfolk Green had agreed to attend a council meeting to discuss the matter of a bus stop at Poppyfields.

Bench seats Two seats were available to be sited in the village. Cllr Bailey proposed one should be placed in Ladies Walk. This was seconded by Cllr Clarke and approved unanimously.

Resolved: that Cllrs Bailey and Parkes organise the fixing of one of the seats in Ladies Walk. Suggestions for the second seat should be sent to the Clerk or further consideration.

11.07.07 Police Report

Inspector Buckley did not attend and no crime report had been provided for the meeting.

Resolved: the Chairman to establish contact with Inspector Buckley to ensure reports received in time for future meetings

11.07.08 Suspension of meeting for Public Participation

Resolved to suspend meeting to invite members of the public to speak for 10 minutes primarily on planning issues

Watermill Trust A villager suggested that Mrs Ann Houghton may have been one of the signatories to the Santander account. Cllr Wardlow agreed to contact her to check. **Action Cllr Wardlow**

Planning applications C/2/2010/2028 & 9 Snettisham Quarry In response to a query from a member of the public it was explained that these applications were in connection with the normal re-cycling activities of the quarry.

11.07.09 Email protocol – paper for consideration and acceptance

Cllr Langford presented a paper on email protocol (**see Appendix B**). Cllr Bateson proposed that this be accepted and included as part of the council's code of conduct. This proposal was seconded by Cllr Devereux and approved unanimously.

11.07.10 Lead Councillors' reports:

Amenities & Services

- **Lead councillor** Cllr Maria Fountain had originally been voted to be lead councillor for this area, but in view of her beach responsibilities it was agreed Cllr Langford lead this for the moment.
- **Computer/telephone set-up** Cllr Langford (Lead Cllr: Amenities) explained that the original Council PC had been returned by the police but with a "health warning" as to its safe use. The cordless telephones were old, with limited memory and ineffective speakers. The Borough Council had offered to provide the council with a suitable PC, and appropriate software, at a reduced rate (maximum £500) as part of a large PC order they were about to place. Cllr Gascoigne proposed that a new PC and telephone be purchased for office use. This proposal was seconded by Cllr Clark and approved unanimously.

Beach

- **Damage to locks at car park** Cllr Maria Fountain (Lead Cllr: Beach) explained that overnight on July 1 / 2, one of the barrier locks had been cut off. This had now been replaced by a cut-proof lock and the police informed.

Finance

- **Financial Regulations** Cllr Clark (Lead Cllr: Finance) recommended that the Snettisham Financial Regulations which were approved on 6 October 2010 be re-approved. Copies of these Financial Regulations were distributed to all councillors. After discussion Cllr Clark proposed and Cllr M Fountain seconded they be adopted by Council and approved unanimously.

NB Copies of the Financial Regulations are available from the Clerk on request

- **Summary of receipts and payments at 1/7/11** (Moved from item 11 on the agenda) The following were presented to the council. Approval for the cheques for payment was proposed by Cllr M Fountain, seconded by Cllr Clark and approved unanimously.

PAYMENTS	1 June 2011	Net	VAT	Gross	Cheque
		£	£	£	
13 Jun 2011	E-on – street lights – power	298.30	59.66	357.96	D debit
15 Jun 2011	MHB Services	131.42	26.28	157.70	SO
31 May 2011	Utility	55.06	11.00	66.06	D debit
	Warehouse – phone and broadband				
6 July 2011	AON – insurance premium	2372.59		2,372.59	104537
6 July 2011	Allianz – insurance excess	105.00		105.00	104542
6 July 2011	Apogee - photocopier	10.00	2.00	12.00	104543
6 July 2011	ESPO – stationery and sacks	47.61	9.52	57.13	104544
6 July 2011	Heronwood – grasscutting	104.50		104.50	104545
6 July 2011	MHB Services–VAT increase	16.75		16.75	104546
6 July 2011	HMRC only- 07/8-09/10	11441.96		11,441.96	104547
6 July 2011	G Watt – accountancy	177.50		177.50	104548
6 July 2011	R Kitchen – consultant /clerk	562.50		562.50	104549
6 July 2011	Payroll	1456.76		1,456.76	104550-2
6 July 2011	BCKLWN-dog waste service	337.87	67.57	405.44	104553
6 July 2011	E Langford– mileage/parking	41.20		41.20	104554

Cllr Parkes stated he wanted individual employees salaries be show in the public papers. It was agreed to check the legality of revealing individual staff salaries to councillors and to the public.

- **Budgetary control** Cllr Clark presented a simplified breakdown of the council's income and expenditure. He explained that the bank reconciliations and statement were to be checked regularly by councillors

Personnel

- **Clerk/RFO agreement to appoint** Cllr Bradshaw (Lead Cllr: Personnel) proposed that the Clerk and RFO be separate council appointments and that job descriptions for the positions of Clerk (21 hours) and RFO (2 hrs) be drawn up and the positions advertised. This was seconded by Cllr Bailey and approved unanimously. The matter would be discussed further at the next meeting.
- **Standing Orders** All councillors had been circulated with a copy of the amended standing orders. Cllr Bradshaw proposed and Cllr Devereux seconded that these be accepted by the council. This approved unanimously.
NB Copies of the Standing Orders are available from the Clerk on request.

- **Local Authorities Code of Conduct Order (2007)** A copy had been circulated to all councillors for information and it was agreed to defer discussion of this item until the next meeting. NB Copies of this Code of Conduct Order are available from the Clerk on request.
- **Unfair dismissal claim** Cllr Langford explained that a claim for unfair dismissal had been raised by a former employee with a court hearing date set for October 18th, and requested that the council approve the engagement of legal advice to contest this claim as necessary. This request was proposed by Cllr Bradshaw, seconded by Cllr M Fountain and approved unanimously.

Planning

- **Terms of reference for Lead Councillors** Cllr Langford presented these (**see Appendix C**) After discussion it was agreed in bullet point 2, that it reads “should include a named member of the public” Acceptance of these terms of reference was proposed by Cllr Bradshaw and seconded by Cllr Parkes. It was approved by a majority of 11, with 1 abstention.
- **Terms of reference for Working Groups.** These were presented by Cllr Langford (**see Appendix D**). After discussion on the advisability of the working group system, it was agreed that this had already been approved at a previous meeting. Acceptance of these terms of reference was proposed by Cllr Maria Fountain and seconded by Cllr Gascoigne. It was approved by a majority of 11 approving with 1 against.
- **Planning Report** Councillor Devereux (Lead Cllr: Planning), presented his report (**see Appendix E**) and added that he had been working well with his support councillors by telephone and email. He also presented a spread sheet of the planning decisions discussed (see below for outcomes). Cllr Wardlow wished to see more detail of the applications, but these were now only available on line. A computer and assistance was available at the Parish Council Offices for anyone who wished to view the planning applications online.

11.07.11 Planning Matters

11/00912/F Erection of shed at Cobb Cottage, Snettisham House, St Thomas Lane, Snettisham
Recommendation for objection for the following reasons: Dimensional errors in the plans, too large for the location, not a simple garden shed. Proposed Cllr Devereux, seconded Cllr Clark, approved unanimously.

11/01006//F First floor extension to provide additional bedroom at 113 Station Road, Snettisham
Recommendation for approval. Proposed Cllr Devereux, seconded Cllr Snelgrove, approved unanimously.

11/01017/F Construction of single storey extension to the rear at 18 Station Road, Snettisham
Recommendation for approval. Proposed Cllr Devereux, seconded Cllr Snelgrove, approved unanimously.

11/01024/F Construction of new visitor centre at Snettisham Park Farm, Snettisham

Resolved that this application be further considered and brought to the next meeting

11/00885/EXO Extension of time for implementation of planning permission 08/02076/O Erection of two storey dwelling 119 Station Road, Snettisham
Recommendation for approval. Proposed Cllr Devereux, seconded Cllr Parkes, approved unanimously.

2/TPO/00488 (replaces earlier application 2/TPO/00487) Tree preservation order on land at Mill House Gardens, Station Road, Snettisham

Resolved: that this application be further considered and brought to the next meeting

b) Decision notices received – for information

11/00451/EXF Extension of time for implementation of planning permission 08/01214/F Demolition of existing bungalow and construction of 2 new semi-detached cottages at 22 Lynn Road, Snettisham
GRANTED

11/00646/EXF Extension of time for implementation of planning permission 08/00964/S Extension to dwelling and construction of pitched roof to existing garage at 50 Park Lane Snettisham
GRANTED

11/00617/LB Listed building consent for insertion of a ground floor window into an extended part of the current building at Snettisham House, St Thomas Lane, Snettisham

GRANTED

11/00619/LB Listed building consent for repair/rebuilding of boundary wall at Ridgeons Ltd. School Road, Snettisham

GRANTED

C/2/2010/2028 Snettisham Quarry, Snettisham. Variation of Condition 1 planning permission C/2/1993/2007 to allow for the continued extraction of carstone and associated restoration until 31 December 2012

GRANTED

C/2/2010/2029 Snettisham Quarry, Snettisham. Variation of Condition 1 planning permission C/2/2002/2002 to allow recycling and storage operations and associated restoration until 31 December 2012

GRANTED

11.07.12 – Finance matters

a) Summary of receipts and payments at 1/7/11 This item was discussed under 11.07.10 above

11.07.13 – Beach Footpath Working Group

NB Cllr Devereux left the meeting at this point.

Cllr Langford explained the council needed to confirm its intention to continue with an objection with the Land registry. This was proposed by Cllr Gascoigne, seconded by Cllr Bradshaw and approved unanimously.

Cllr Devereux re-joined the meeting at this point.

11.07.14 Beach Toilets.

Cllr Langford confirmed that the beach caravan park owner had terminated the lease for the toilets. He explained that in order to maintain a good income stream from the car park, the council needed to ensure a toilet facility for visitors to the Beach. He explained that the Borough Council had offered to help financially, as had a local business. The hire cost of toilets would be around £260 per month for the remainder of the summer. He requested that the council delegate himself and Cllr Gascoigne to organise the provision of toilets for the remainder of the summer season. This was proposed by Cllr Gascoigne, seconded by Cllr Parkes and approved unanimously.

11.07.15 – Correspondence

For consideration:

- a) Letter from Mrs A Bright re. gritting

Resolved: to include grit bin sites on the September agenda. Action: Clerk

- b) Letter from Mrs V Thorpe re. Whats the council going to do about the upkeep of the village (footpaths, open spaces etc.)

Resolved: to refer this matter to the lead councillor of the Amenities & Services group for further consideration. Action: Clerk

Any suggestions for other areas to be considered, or volunteers to help in maintaining/improving such areas should contact the Clerk.

- c) Letter from King's Lynn & West Norfolk Borough Council re: incinerator

Borough Cllr Johnson requested that the council write supporting the objections to the incinerator. **Resolved: that the council send a suitable letter of support. Action: Clerk**

- d) Letter from Norfolk County Council re. incinerator planning application

Resolved: that the council post its objections on the County Council Planning website. Action: Clerk

11.07.16 – Suspension of Meeting for Public Participation

Resolved to suspend meeting to invite members of the public to speak for 10 minutes

- Missing cheque numbers In response to a query on the cheque numbers, it was explained that the missing cheques had been cheque issues, out of sequence, at the previous meeting
- Planning applications It was agreed the planning applications spread sheet was confusing and Cllr

Devereux agreed to amend it to fit with the agenda for future meetings.

- Councillor's public comments In response to two complaints regarding comments Cllr Parkes had made on the radio/tv following Mrs Boughen's recent conviction, Cllr Parkes stated that he had been speaking as a private individual at the time, and not as a council representative. The views he had given were his own, and he had definitely not spoken as a representative of the council. It was noted that Standing Orders state that only the Chairman or Clerk should speak to the press on behalf of the council.
- Abuse of council knowledge There was one discussion on preventing former councillors/employees abusing council knowledge, but this was an area that the council had no powers over.
- West Norfolk Games A villager stated there had been no shade for the children at the Games and that provision for shade be considered for future events.
- HMRC pay-out This amount on the payments list was confirmed as the final payment to HMRC for outstanding tax amounts due.
- Parking problems at the Grapes bus stop Cllr Johnson confirmed that the road markings would be dealt with by Highways in the near future.

11.07.17 – Matters for inclusion at a future meeting

There were no items suggested.

11.07.18 – Date of next meeting – Wednesday 3rd August at 7.30 p.m. at Memorial Hall

The meeting finished at 10.25pm

Appendix A

Financial update following conviction of Mrs Boughen

The three other parish councils have had some £50K fully paid back to them by the Bank as forged cheques involved.

CPS only put forward **£8K** as stolen from Snettisham.

In reality, as a consequence of Beverley's actions Snettisham appears to have suffered heavily in a financial manner. After Beverley was dismissed in July last year it soon became apparent the council had insufficient money to see the year out and **£30,000** loan had to be taken out to avoid being bankrupt. This needed to be repaid in April of this year so the Precept was almost doubled for villagers in order to pay off this loan.

The council were advised to employ a trouble shooter clerk for three month (which cost the council **£7225** in salary and expenses) to help sort out the financial mess the council found itself in. Office records were in a mess, lots of files were missing, including financial records and payroll statements. There were lots of outstanding bills, red letter chase ups, and regular bank charges for bounced cheques and for overdue accounts. There had been some **£450** bank charges recorded.

A scrutiny of the 2009 /10 financial year reported a £16000 difference in what has been reported to councillors and what actually transpired. The 2009/10 ledger had been written up with fabricated figures. The previous accounts were missing; the end of year accounts were forged and the internal auditors did not exist. None of these facts were picked up by the external auditors

On checking the computer and the stationery / photocopying orders it was considered that Beverley had been doing the work of the other three councils using Snettisham resources. The Stationary and photocopying involved in doing this work for 3 other councils and voluntary car scheme was calculated at some **£5500**, two to three times more than expected for the parish work alone.

The computer main disc had evidence of professional software being used to wipe clean a lot of data information and prevented any audit trail. The Council will require a new computer to be purchased at a cost of some **£500**.

A frightening discovery was that no PAYE had been paid to HMRC since 2006. Deductions had been made from employees' salaries but never paid over to HMRC. Seven Penalty charges, totally **£2800**, had been ignored and no payroll records were readily accessible to know the extent of the tax debt. A tax specialist has been employed at a sum of **£2500** to negotiate with HMRC the figure of **£19848** as the sum owed by Snettisham for the period up to 2009/10.

The council has had to find **£2100** for the non-payment of Borough business rates and support organisation membership fees.

A review of past car park ticket stubs and office cash receipts for the years 2009 and 2010 suggest some **£24401** for car park tickets sold had never been banked.

The council now has a claim from a former employee for some **£4596** underpayment of salary since 2004. The Council has also been informed of a Employment Tribunal case for unfair dismissal by a former employee fixed for a Norwich court hearing in October

It is a shock to realise that the Council has had to pay out some **£53000** of debts this year and has an anomaly of some **£24401** in expected cash income that appears to be missing.

It is good to report that the council has recovered £8000 in reclaimed VAT and had the £2800 penalty charges rescinded by HMRC.

A lot of people seem keen to blame councillors for this problem, including former councillors and the NALC chair, Tony Nash. It should be remembered that:

Our clerk was professionally qualified and often quoted as the NALC's top trainer in financial matters and had been involved in the training of many councils across Norfolk;

The Clerks mother was chair of council and strongly defended her against any criticism regarding her daughter's financial expertise and professional integrity.

Annual accounts appeared fully audited, albeit fictitious and were approved by the external audit specialists.

With so many positive agents not offering any challenge to the financial state of the council, it is little wonder that the councillors were so easily hoodwinked on finance matters by the Clerk.

While many lessons can be learnt from the council's experience, the main one must be to question the validity of allowing close family relationships to exist between the Clerk and Chair positions.

Appendix B

Email protocol

- 1** E-mail is a means for all councillors to be kept informed and up to date on council business and must be used in accordance with the parish council's code of conduct and local authorities' code of conduct order, 2007.
- 2** The style and content of email messages must be consistent with the standards that the parish council expects from written communications
- 3** Although email encourages rapid communication, the contents of email messages should be written with care as messages sent without proper consideration can cause unnecessary misunderstandings.
- 4** E-mails must be used solely for the exchange of council, business-related information, circulated between councillors.
- 5** It is the responsibility of the E-mail sender to ensure "non-email user" councillors are provided with a hard copy of the email within 24 hours of it being sent
- 6** Any E-mail sent by a councillor must be circulated to all councillors, copied to the Clerk and, if the content relates to financial matters, copied to the RFO. The exception to this is addressed below at 7
- 7** Lead Councillors, who are engaged in sharing information with fellow support councillors in their particular subject area, and which is part of their discussions in developing recommendations to make to full council, may only circulate to their support group colleagues and the Clerk.
- 8** Emails must not be used to challenge or criticise any fellow councillors or any council decisions, or to promote individual councillors' personal views or opinions on council related business.
- 9** Individual councillors' queries on council related business must be circulated to all councillors and any fact giving responses must be copied for all councillors to read.
- 10** Any intimidating E-mails sent to councillors by anyone must be reported to the Clerk for consideration to follow up action to be taken by the council.
- 11** Email users must take all necessary precautions against the introduction of viruses into the system and be responsible for their own email security.

Appendix C

Snettisham Parish Council Lead Councillors - Agreement of Expectations

- Lead councillors must not act of their own accord in the development of any recommendations to full Council.

- Lead councillor and support councillor group for a subject area should / may include a named member of the public where appropriate but not when staff or financial confidentiality matters are discussed.
- Lead councillors are responsible for keeping their support councillor group fully informed and up to date regarding their subject area.
- Lead councillors are responsible as the main contact point, in liaison with the Clerk and Chairman, for any queries related to their subject area.
- Lead Councillors can not commission the services of the Clerk / RFO without Council agreement.
- Chair of Council has right to join any Lead Councillor and support councillor group discussion.
- Lead Councillors may, in the absence of the Chair / Clerk, and with the agreement of Council, make a public statement regarding their specific subject area of responsibility.

Appendix D

Generic terms of reference for a Snettisham Parish Council Working Group

- A Working Group (WG) must be given a clearly defined task by the Lead councillor and be disbanded once the task is complete.
- WGs are essentially investigative groups with a brief to make recommendations and / or complete a given task. Any decisions required can only be made by full Council.
- Named members of public can be included as members of a WG; however they must agree to abide by the SPC code of conduct.
- Members wishing to join the WG must be agreed by the full Council.
- Members of the public should be allowed admission to WG meetings if deemed practical.
- Agendas should be produced with notes taken at all meetings and these should be copied to the Clerk for reference information.
- No restrictions on venue or meeting times are set for WGs.
- All members of WGs must be informed of meetings prior to them taking place either via the Lead Councillor or Clerk.
- Only the WG Lead Councillor may call a meeting.
- No formal action may be taken by a WG without permission of the full Council.
- Council Chair copied in to agendas /able to attend meetings

Appendix E

Planning Report – Cllr Ian Devereux

1. Following appointment at the last Council Meeting, significant progress has been made to establish a structure and process that will enable Council to make effective decisions on Planning Matters.
2. The Planning Working Group has worked well together to start to address the Planning Task.
3. A spread-sheet has been constructed that summarises planning Matters requiring Councils consideration. This will be used to as a framework for informing and capturing Councils opinion later in the meeting
4. Terms of Reference for the Planning Support Group have been drafted and discussed with the Chair and Support Group Members. This will be sent to all Councillors for comment and ratification at the August Council.
5. In addition to considering on-going Planning Applications, I have proposed the Development of a Community Plan for Snettisham that embodies the long term vision and strategy for the Parish reflecting the views of the Community and the Council. This will provide a framework for:-
 - Planning future developments,
 - Reviewing and commenting on Planning applications
 - Influencing Borough and County Councils, Government and other Key Stakeholders (for example the Environment Agency)
 - Establishing Revenue and Capital requirements for on-going activities and future projects,
 - Maintaining and reviewing the Parish Assets
 - Reviewing risks and priorities
 - Informing and underpinning the annual budgeting process.
6. These proposals will enable Snettisham to respond proactively to the forthcoming Localism Bill and inform future participation in other Planning Forums such as the Wash PDZ Flood Group and the response to the Incinerator Proposals.
7. An important near-term task will be to develop a means of receiving and processing Community comments on Planning matters.