

WALPOLE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held in the
Community Centre on Thursday 1st of May 2025 from 7.00pm.

Present :

Councillors (members of the public) – Richard Green, Claire James, Heather Smith, Jan Luck, William Brooks, Adrian Eveleigh, Richard Blunt, Andy Bliss, Charlene Campion, and Adrian Eveleigh.

Chairman – Charles Boston

7 members of the Public

1. Welcome from Chairman
2. Apologies – none
3. To approve the minutes of the last Annual Parish Meeting held on the 2nd of May 2024
Agreed as a true record of the meeting by those present at that meeting.

4. **Chairman's Report:**

Challenges:

1: The neighbourhood development plan has continued to have a disappointing response to surveys and meetings, despite so much interest at the start of the project.

2: With increase of cost's over income, juggling needs and desires to remain fiscally responsible has resulted in a positive bank balance at the end of the year. Although it has been very tight. A special thanks goes to Cllr Campion and Cllr James in supporting our Clerk in achieving this and keeping the rest of us in check.

3: There has been much criticism of what we do as a parish council from some individuals, I have spent much of my time educating about what we do as a parish council, showing that we are in fact doing all we can. In this day and age, there are many keyboard warriors that are misinformed, and it can get us down, but I know that everyone in our council has also opened others eyes and sign posted parishioners to the correct place to get a positive outcome. We are all volunteers at the end of the day.

Achievements:

1: Firstly, we have a new member of the team in Cllr Hunter, as a local resident of many years, she has much and has offered a great deal of insight into the parish council.

2: Interest from the younger end of the community in parish activity and willing to put themselves forward as a parish councillor.

3: successful installation of new playground equipment.

4: successful installation of gym equipment that all can use. Special thanks to Cllr Luck and the Clerk into making this happen.

5: The end is in sight for our neighbourhood development plan.

6: improved clarity of our roles and responsibilities as parish councillors.

7: finally, we have managed to meet with those working at the substation and now have a better insight of what the future holds

What we can do better:

1: although planning training has been continuous, changes in the future does mean we will have to continue to improve our stance. The NDP will help our voice but with so many changes ahead, we will continue to do our best.

2. I'd like to say we control hedge and grass cutting in the parish, but this is costly, and we have employed new contractors to tidy our parish. In some cases, these individuals are doing this at a reduced rate as they feel it's their duty to keep our parish crisp, but we must not be complacent in their kindness.

Future challenges

1: Substation, we know and expect to get further disruption and challenges with the ongoing development at the site and around the Walpole. We will continue to fight and represent parishioners for the best possible outcome of any development. Please be aware this is a national infrastructure project and so means every challenge is ultimately in direct conflict of government aims (that's any government in power)

2: The cost of running the parish is going to be exceptionally challenging due to increase of necessary services, in some cases 4 times more than we paid in the last financial year.

3: With Norfolk and Suffolk going through the devolution process, we are still very much in the dark of what the future truly holds for us a parish council. We may have more or less money, responsibilities or power to influence decisions. Watch this space.

4: With the increase in budget challenges, much needed signage for rights of ways in the Parish, are in need of replacement. Thanks to Cllr bliss and Cllr Eveleigh in taking up a new hobby by making and replacing (through time) some rather nice new directional signs and post marking.

5:Litter. It has continued to be bad, and despite many attempts to set up litter clearing teams, support has been very poor and is often left too individuals to look after their immediate areas.

Public Help.

1: Report highways concerns, flooding, potholes and road markings

2: Back to litter picking, I am aware there are a number of individuals that pick every week. The point being, these individuals are faced with a never ending cycle as they clear one week, then the next week it's just as bad. The more volunteers that do this, the less litter is about, and the parish then will start to stay clear as people driving through are less likely to see our parish as a dumping ground and show more respect for where we live.

3: Finally, a big thank you to all our councillors for giving up their free time and effort to make our parish one of the most diverse and beautiful places to live.

It's truly a village that houses some of the most amazing architecture in the fens as well as some really quite suspect buildings, but it all works in the end.

Parish Chairman: Chas Boston

5. Cllr Richard Blunt (Conservative Borough Councillor for the Walpoles) Annual report

It has been a difficult year at Kings Lynn and West Norfolk borough Council with several difficult subjects needed to be resolved in a short time frame.

Firstly the 2024 -25 Budget.

Several issues in late 2024 which major changes relating to fees and charges including car parking charges and emptying litter bins and dog litter bins

In addition, the extra charges made to holiday homes making them double council tax payer

The new local plan for 2021 to 2040

The extensive changes that were introduced to the local plan towards the end of last year and the following consultation that took place in early 2025 has caused very serious amendments to the local plan. This together with the revised site requirements for Gypsies and traveller sites has also delayed the completion of the report.

The final version of the local plan 2021 to 2040 has now been passed through the council as an adopted local plan.

There are some significant changes in this new local plan and the parish clerk and others members of the parish council have been offered training on the change. It is my intention to highlight some of these changes in the next few weeks and brief the parish council members of their significance

Devolution

The labour government introduced the beginning of the year a plan to devolve the majority of county councils into mayoral authorities. It is their intention to merge Norfolk and Suffolk into a single mayoral authority. This will be the introduced introduction of a new mayor for the combined authority from May next year.

The full details of the responsibilities of this single mayoral authority have yet to be fully divined watch this space.

Local Government Reforms

Along with devolution the government has introduced a change to the local government structure. Again the full details of this are not unknown and will not be available until later this year this could mean there is a single Unity authority for Norfolk based at Norwich or it could be a twin a Unity authority set up one based in east Norfolk and one based in West Norfolk or finally a three Unity authority model with one based in Norwich one based in east Norfolk and one based in West Norfolk. The details of this is still to be defined and unlikely that we'll really know the outcome of all this until the final quarter of 2025.

New Local Plan.

Like painting the 4th bridge the process of defining local plans never stops so the government has asked us to start looking at the next local plan details of that will be defined in the next few months

Community Infrastructure Levy rethink.

The CIL, processes, governance and funding together with allocations of funds is currently being reviewed. I will update you as and when more information becomes available'

To name just a few

Cllr R Blunt

County Councillor Annual Report – due to size see Appendix 1

St. Peters Church Report:

Congregation remains a constant 25 - 30 people.

First and Third Sundays it's Morning Prayer.

Second and Forth Sundays it's Holy Communion

We only paid approximately half of our quota to Ely.
We have got problems with water leaks from roof. We have also got some electrical issues to work on.

We got VE Day display start on Saturday 3 May until week on Sunday.
Refreshments are available on Monday free.

Craft fair on Saturday May.

W. Brooks

6. **Community Centre Report – NONE**

7. **Parish Hall Report:**

The new hall is now almost complete after many years of planning and raising funds and the 'Walpole St Peter Parish Hall' stone is in pride of place on the front of the building. I am sure you will all agree that the hall looks amazing.

All outdoor areas are now more or less complete, including CCTV, lighting and paving.

Internally, the new plaster has now had its first spray coat of emulsion ready for full decoration in about 10 days. The toilet block is now being fitted out and the kitchen units should start to be assembled next week.

Last week saw the second fixes of electric, security, fire, heating etc. being completed, and hopefully by the time this report is issued, the broadband will be connected, and internal speakers will be fitted.

The weather has again played its part in slightly delaying the drying of the internal floors sufficiently to lay the floor covering. This is obviously delaying the agreement for a full finishing date! Hopefully this week's warm weather and the use of dehumidifiers will enable an opening date to be fixed.

Planning for our opening events which will consist of an official opening and an open day, are being organised in the background by our fantastic TROPHY team.

Funds are now running out so we may need to fundraise for some of our hoped for 'extras' after opening, but all main structural wishes have been achieved apart from internal storage cupboards.

Thanks, have to go to everyone who played a part in making this project a reality! It is a massive achievement for our community and will hopefully serve us well into the future. Lots of interest for new bookings already coming in, plus most of our past hirers wishing to return.

Gill Henderson

Walpole St Andrew Church Report

The Friends of Walpole St Andrew held a successful summer fete based around the 80th anniversary of the D-day landings. A disco played 1940's music backed up with the attendance of two military vehicles. Teas, Coffee, Cakes and Burgers were all available along with some craft stands and a raffle and separate bottle raffle.

At Christmas the church was hired for the annual Christmas tree display. Anthony Curton School attended with each class supplying a decorated tree. Prizes are awarded as chosen by TFWA.

At Easter the Easter Egg Hunt was held around Walpole St Andrew Churchyard and The Swingfield with each child noting different letters onto a sheet of paper to spell an Easter phrase. A successful phrase gained them a Chocolate Easter Egg. Over 120 Eggs were handed out at this free event.

The Church floor which has been up for 19 years and has now finally had a detailed planning application submitted to correct all the wrongs and get the floor relaid. This should be completed in the next twelve months if the application gets the Borough Councils OK.

The Church Bells and clock mechanism have been inspected. The cost of the work to replace a missing Hammer and fully service all the mechanism has been costed at just over £15000. We are hoping to gain some grants for this costing.

A Bliss

Open Forum:

The Chairman thanked everyone for attending and participating. The meeting closed at

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Signed :

Date :