

Methwold Times

Serving the villages of
**Brookville, Methwold
& Methwold Hythe**

Issue 472
February 2024

Diary of Events

January

23rd	Coffee Morning	St Georges Church	10am-12pm
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February

13th	Coffee Morning	St Georges Church	10am-12pm
14th	Ladies Group	Peggy's Room, St George's Hall	7.30pm
27th	Coffee Morning	St Georges Church	10am-12pm

March

12th	Coffee Morning	St Georges Church	10am-12pm
13th	Ladies Group	Peggy's Room, St George's Hall	7.30pm
26th	Coffee Morning	St Georges Church	10am-12pm

Methwold Investment Club

Have you ever wanted to have a go at wheeling and dealing on the stock market? This club could be for you. If you want more information please contact the club secretary, Julie Clement on 728926

THE POST OFFICE

Methwold Branch

St. George's Hall, High Street, Methwold IP26 4NT



Opening times

Mon:	09.00 - 13.00	14.15-16.30
Tue & Thru	09.00 - 13.00	
Wed:	09.00 - 13.00	

We also have the following products & services:

Instant cash - Free (no charge)

All mobile phone Top-ups

Euro & all currencies

Electric Key Top-ups

Written contributions to the Methwold Times,
by the **13th of every month** may be sent to the editor:

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Thetford, Norfolk, IP26 4PQ

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or E-mail: mo@mtruss.co.uk or

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**Please note: The views expressed by our
contributers are not necessarily
those of the Methwold Times**

from the Editor....

Best wishes for the new year to all our readers and thanks for continuing to support us. We look forward to hearing from you and look forward to advertising your events. The Methwold Times team are a great group of people who turn out every month to get the Methwold Times to your home. Please treat them with respect as they are all voluntary and do this without pay or, in the case of the editorial team, no re- embracement for the likes of paper, printer ink or petrol etc. (for which we are most grateful). If you wish to join our team in any particular role please contact me at the address on p2.

Thanks

..... *The Editor*

THANKS

I would like to thank Penny Black for all her hard work in preparing and distributing the Veg Boxes to the elderly of the Parish. It was most welcome and gratefully appreciated.

Thank you, again, Penny, on behalf of all who received veg. and keep up the good work.

A Methwold Resident



Thank you to everyone who has donated to the foodbank, your donations are of particular help to mothers and children, some of whom have felt the worst effects of the shutdowns due to the pandemic. Your help makes more difference than you will ever know. Thank you.

Our Local Foodbank: Our local drop off box for Foodbank donations is in St George's Church, Methwold, from there all the donations are picked up and delivered to a local Foodbank hub in Downham Market (the address and opening hours are listed below).

If you need the foodbank please don't hesitate to contact someone who can give you a foodbank voucher; such as a doctor, health visitor, social worker, clergy, citizens advice bureau or police.

The foodbank at Downham Market is open Tuesdays 12.30pm – 2.30pm and Fridays 10.30am – 12.30pm, it is located inside Eternity Downham Market, The Sovereign Centre, Trafalgar Industrial Estate, Sovereign Way, Downham Market, PE38 9SW.

Thank you for all your donations, kindness and generosity,
Ness and Paul foodbankdonations@nym.hush.com

If you would like to know more: <http://www.trusselltrust.org>



St. George's Church, Methwold

Ministers:	Revd Ray Burman	01842-828891	rayburman@me.com
	Diane Mantle		diane.mantle@btinternet.com
Churchwardens:	Alan Burbridge		01366-727002
	Paul Smith		07787 503545
			paulsmith50@msn.com
PCC Secretary	Revd Ray Burman		01842-828891

Our Church is open every weekend but during the week will be kept locked for security reasons. If you would like access then please contact Alan Burbridge (01366 727002).

Planned Services:

Sunday 4th Feb.	No Service at Methwold	
Sunday 11th Feb.	9.30am SOW	LLM Diane Mantle
Wed. 14th Feb.	19.00pm Ash Wednesday	Revd. Ray Burman
Sunday 18th Feb.	9.30am SOW	TBC
Sunday 25th Feb.	9.30am HC	Revd. Ray Burman

There will be no Service at Methwold on the 4th Feb. as Pippa, one of our Ministry Team, is being Ordained at Boughton Church at 11am that day so there is opportunity for all to go along and support her.

Online Zoom services are also available every Sunday, please message Janet Tanton for the link via the Wissey Valley Benefice Facebook page.

Welcome everyone to 2024, a new year and a new beginning. From all at St. George's Church, we wish you a Happy and Healthy New Year.

We are especially grateful to all those who decorated our Church in readiness for Christmas and the many organisations and groups that decorated a Christmas Tree. The wonderful pictures drawn by our local Primary School students and displayed on the Notice Board gave the Church a very festive atmosphere. It was also lovely to see so many new faces at all the Services.

Our Church is open every weekend to receive donations for the Foodbank, all items can be left in our collection box in the Porch. Although the organisers, Trussell Trust, still collect 6 to 8 bags of products every month we know that the demands on them have risen hugely. In particular short supply at the moment are Meat Pies, Puddings, Dry Pet Food, Tinned Fruit, Coffee and Hot Chocolate, UHT Milk, Tinned Fish, Biscuits and Snacks or Treats. During these difficult times with rising prices, the foodbank is in even greater demand which will grow during school holidays when free school meals are not available. Any donations will be greatly appreciated.

Our Community Coffee Morning will be open on Tues. 13th and Tues. 27th February from 10am till noon. If you haven't been before then come along to sample the delicious cakes and savouries. Spend the morning catching up with old friends or meeting new people in our beautiful Church.

Our Church has a variety of books for sale, please feel free to come inside and have a look. If you would like to bring along one of your own books and swap it with one on display, that's absolutely fine. If anyone has any fiction books in good condition that they would like to donate then feel free to leave in the church by our bookstall. All books are £1 each or 3 books for £2, all proceeds go to the upkeep of our beautiful church. New stock has just been added.

These are worrying times with ever increasing fuel and food costs so should you find yourself in any financial difficulties, free advice can be found at the following sources: Christians Against Poverty <https://capuk.org/> or freephone on 0800 328 0006.

Norfolk Community Law Service <https://www.ncls.co.uk/> or telephone 01603 496623

Alan Burbridge

Church Warden

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As you read this, I suspect that like me you will be checking out the 'card' shops looking for a Valentine's Day card to give to your loved-one. But have you ever wondered just who Saint Valentine was and why we celebrate him on the 14th February each year on Saint Valentine's Day, sometimes known as The Feast of Saint Valentine.

The day originated as a Christian feast honouring an early saint in the church called Valentinus and over the years has gradually changed to become a day to celebrate romantic love.

Valentine's Day is the day to tell others we love them. We usually think of that love as an emotional response, we speak of the chemistry of love and love at first sight. Have you ever considered how powerful love is, particularly in a world where sometimes it seems that people are more driven by anger or hate than love. Love of country, love of family, even love of self can rally people to powerful, positive, selfless action.

Love is as common and as ancient as the very air we breathe. If you are of a certain age, which I am, you remember as a teenager when the Beatle's released "All You Need Is Love" during the Summer of Love and when harmony and peace reigned and everything felt possible.

The word love is mentioned 538 times in the Bible and the Bible tells us that we are made in the image of God. Saint Augustine tells us "because God has made us for Himself, our hearts are restless until they rest in Him".

The Bible is full of people driven by love, responding to love, and obeying God in love. Saint Paul tells us that love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonour others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily

angered, it keeps no record of wrongs.

God is God because He is love, He is eternal, omnipresent, omnipotent, omniscient. Everything we think and know about love, including the concept itself, comes from God, who is love. We were created in God's love; we are sustained in God's love; we are saved in God's love; and we are destined to be preserved in God's love for eternity. I pray that you will come to know God's perfect love for you and that his love will be reflected to others, and that you will come to realise the fullness of God's love, not only on this Valentine's Day, but every day.

**Rev'd Ray Burman**

St. George's, Methwold

"We pray to be a generous and visible people of Jesus Christ"

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BRECKLAND HANDBELL RINGERS

We would like to thank everyone who attended our Christmas Concert in Methwold St George's on Saturday December 9th. With all the Christmas trees, lights and decorations it made it feel very festive and a lovely setting to perform in.

Our thanks to 11 year old Lucy who overcame her nerves and played her flute beautifully. It's a joy to see youngsters take up a musical instrument.

Many thanks to the lovely ladies who gave up their Saturday afternoon to come and serve the tea and refreshments for us after the concert, your help was much appreciated.

With your very generous donations we are delighted to say that we have sent a cheque for £241.00 to the East Anglian Air Ambulance.

We enjoyed the afternoon, hope you did too.

Gill Giles

BHR Captain

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## ***NEW LADIES GROUP***

Our February meeting will be held in Peggy's Room,  
St George's Hall Complex, Methwold  
on Tuesday, 13th February 2024 at 7.30 pm.  
Our speaker has yet to be confirmed.

# ***WHAT DOES THE DOCTOR THINK THIS MONTH?***

**February 2024**

Well, here we are – another New Year – my opportunity to wish you all a very happy and healthy time.

I always find January a depressing time of the year. The days are very short, the garden is miserable and battered, it is cold and very wet, especially in the Midlands, and the combined electricity and gas meter is flying around, even with little heat “on” making me sad for those who cannot afford to maintain warmth in their home. I read an article yesterday which recommended that running my house cool (15 degrees) would cause my body to burn white (bad) fat and increase brown (good) fat. As a result, I have kept my house at 15 degrees today and it is bl\*\*\*\* freezing! The article also included reference to taking cold showers but, as there was a caveat about not doing it if you are elderly, I have reluctantly avoided taking one.

I am off to Rotary tonight where the room will be warm and the food hot. Currently, we are collecting boxes full of medical items, dressings, blankets, crutches and sticks, etc. for Ukraine. We then buy end of life ambulances from the NHS (they are still serviceable and reliable) fill them with the stuff we have collected and then they are driven by Rotarians to Ukraine where they are emptied and the ambulances are left behind to be camouflaged and used at the front line. The local Worcestershire population has really warmed to the idea and we are receiving lots of good stuff for the cause.

My new choir gave a free concert just before Christmas with an audience of over 100. Lots of “fun” music with great audience participation. My intention was to lift everyone’s mood and it really worked. We have received lots of strongly positive comments since the concert and I was delighted that five of our kids and nine of our grandchildren were present, much to the interest and delight of the locals. Deannie would have loved it but she might have been a bit sniffy about my compering of the show. One member of the audience, a professional singer, really enjoyed my conducting and choir control which she found both amusing and interesting. As I suffer quite a lot from impostor syndrome, I am not sure what to make of what she has said!

We need jokes! *An American man walked into an English restaurant with a fully grown ostrich trailing along behind him. The waitress took the man’s order - A hamburger, fries and a Coca Cola. The ostrich indicated that he would have the same. The bill came to £21.49. The man reached into his pocket and his hand came out clutching the exact money. The next night, he had fish and chips with a coffee and the ostrich wanted the same. The bill came to £19.49 and, once again, he put his hand in his pocket and out it came, with the exact money. The next night was Friday so the man treated himself to steak, fries, rice pudding and champagne. The ostrich said he would have the same. The bill was a whopping £45.80 and, sure enough, the man’s pocket*

*contained the exact amount. The waitress was intrigued and asked the man "How do you always have exactly the right amount of money in your pocket?" "Well" replied the man "several years ago, I was cleaning out the attic when I found an old lamp. I gave it a rub and out popped a genie who offered me two wishes. I asked him to make sure that, any time I had to pay for anything, I would put my hand in my pocket and the money would be there. Ever since then, anything I buy, be it a pint of milk or a smart car, the money is always in my pocket"*

*"That's great" said the waitress. "What was your second wish?" "Ah" said the man, "I asked him to give me a good-looking, tall chick with long legs who would agree with everything I say"*

A primary school teacher asked her pupils what their parents did for a living. Some kids knew and gave a good description, while others didn't really understand their parents' jobs and gave vague descriptions or none at all. When they got to little Johnny, he stood up and said: "My dad cuts people in half." "Oh, really?" asked the teacher with a smile, "You mean he's a magician?" "I don't know." said Johnny. "A surgeon, maybe?" asked the teacher. "I don't know." repeated Johnny. "Then why do you think he cuts people in half?" asked the confused teacher. "Because I have two half brothers and three half sisters."

Have a happy, healthy New Year and treasure each other. That reminds me, we need Deannie's Zen saying for the month : *Some days you are the bug; some days you are the windscreen!*

*Jan Nisbet*

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METHWOLD SPIRITUALIST CHURCH SERVICES

Friday Meetings Doors open 7pm for 7.30 start

16th February SHEILA JAMES & OLIVER BYRNE

8th March - MELINDA BASSETT.

With LYNDIA ROSE

22nd March JOHN ENNIS

**The 21 Room, St George's Hall Complex
16 High Street, Methwold Norfolk IP26 4NT**

Entrance donation £3. Evening of Clairvoyance £5 (towards costs)

Ample parking at rear. For further information ring 01366 727160

METHWOLD HISTORY GROUP

MHG was first formed early in 2009 so this year we will be 15 years old! During that time we have built up a really good local archive thanks to the generosity of local residents who keep us in mind when they are turning out their bottom draws! The archive can be opened at any time anyone wants to use it but we try to open it up and put on exhibitions several times each year. We like to think that it is better for our local history to be stored in Methwold rather than sitting in a bottom drawer in Norwich. We would like to say a big thank you to everyone who continues to support our efforts..... That said there are literally thousands of old documents relating to Methwold stored in the Norfolk Record Office in Norwich. The centre is situated next to County Hall and if you want to see what is there they will give you a pass as a local resident and allow you to take out three documents for viewing whenever you attend. Just put "Norfolk Record Office" into a search engine and it will give you all the details of opening times etc.

So what are we going to do this year? The first thing will be to buy a new computer having just received a £500 grant from the Councillor's Fund of King's Lynn & West Norfolk Borough Council. Our thanks to them and our local Councillor Tom Ryves who supported the application. This will ensure that we can continue to show images of our local history at meetings as well as researching through the internet.

So in the first few months of the year our programme will be:

February 16th – Following up Keith Alderton's excellent talk in November on the construction of the Cut Off Channel, our first meeting will be on the 1915 flood in Methwold Fen and the even more disastrous floods of 1947 when Methwold Airfield was used to house the homeless. The 'talk' will actually have little to do with talking and a lot to do with watching film footage of the 1947 disaster which prompted the construction of the Cut-Off Channel.

March 21st – Jim McNeill from Stoke Ferry will give a talk on the plight of farm labourers in this area in the late 19th & early 20th Centuries. This is an unmissable story of how people in poverty started to stand up for themselves and the hardship that resulted from their actions.

April 19th - We are hoping to have Dr Sarah-Louise Miller to talk about her new book, available in February, on the crews of Lancaster bombers and the people who kept them in the air. Sarah recently wrote a book call "The Women Behind The Few" which highlighted the work being done behind the scenes in World War Two. Sarah has visited Methwold archive to source material about her new book so we are looking forward to hearing about the results of her labour.

Methwold History Group meetings are always on the third Thursday of the month in Peggy's Room of Methwold Village Hall complex, from 7.30pm-9pm. Everyone is welcome and no previous knowledge is necessary. Our annual membership subscription costs £10 or £15 for a family.... First meeting free!

Enquiries to Chris Stone – 5 Globe St., Methwold. 01366 728478
chris.stone27@btinternet.com

Methwold Community Group

Minutes of the Extraordinary General Meeting held in Peggy's Room of the village hall complex on Monday 8th January 2024

1. Welcome –

Keith Alderton (MCG Chair) welcomed those present and explained that the meeting had been called primarily to discuss a proposal to reverse the previous decision for MCG to cease centrally organising village events and to review the Group's Safeguarding Policy.

2. Those present –

Keith Alderton (Chair), Chris Stone (Deputy Chair and History Group), Carole Alderton (Ladies Group), Rosina Stone (Ladies Group), Jose O'Ware (Theatre Club) and Celia Derby (Methwold in Bloom).

Also in attendance were invited guests Cornel Beukes and Jade Rodwell.

3. Proposal by Cornel Beukes and Jade Rodwell to organise village events on behalf of MCG –

A written proposal to organise Community Events had previously been circulated to MCG Steering Group members.

Cornel explained that she had organised a number of successful community events in recent years but considered that holding such events in future under the auspices of MCG would enable her to be free of the necessary restraints imposed by the Parish Council/Village Hall Complex Trust. She wanted to open up events to all comers and enhance a sense of 'together' in the village community.

Cornel explained that there would be no funds available to transfer to MCG.

The chairman pointed out that MCG had limited funds and no regular income.

However, MCG was always open to consider requests from potential special interest groups for start-up support.

Cornel explained that she intended to form a team of volunteers to raise funds and organise events. The proposed Community Events Group would wish to take advantage of MCG's safeguarding support, banking and insurance facilities. MCG representatives present unanimously voted to accept the tabled proposal and offered their full support.

4. Amendments to MCG Constitution and Insurance Policy –

It would not be necessary to amend the latest constitution. However, there may well be a need to enhance our insurance cover. This could result in a small increase in the premium paid.

5. Review of Safeguarding Policy –

The Chair stated that we had a duty to carry out an annual review of the application of our safeguarding policy. This applied to both children and vulnerable adults. This exercise was proving to be most difficult due to problems encountered communicating with the designated Safeguarding Co-ordinator. Further work was required to ensure that group leaders were aware how to act and who to contact if a safeguarding problem comes to their notice. Another meeting would therefore be required to review progress once satisfactory communication had been restored.

It was noted that the Baby & Toddler Group's Safeguarding Policy had been approved by the Norfolk Safer Programme and had subsequently received a substantial grant.

6. Sign of Village Post Office –

It was reported that the sign outside the village post office was illegible and required replacing. Chris Stone explained that MCG had developed from an action group formed to establish the post office some 15 years ago and requested that we provide on-going support.

It was agreed that MCG should provide a grant of up to £100 towards the provision of a replacement sign.

7. Any Other Business –

There was no other business and the meeting closed at 8.15 pm.

Keith Alderton.

Chair – Methwold Community group.

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**Councillor Tom Ryves. KLWNBC**

**...December Rant**

**1. The proposed enormous factory farm on Methwold airfield,** which will come before the Borough Planning Committee early this year. I want to thank all those who have written in with their views and for sharing specialist knowledge. Most timely is the rejection of a ( much smaller) application near Attleborough, where the high level of community participation undoubtedly was taken into account by the planners. The application awaits a full submission of data by the developer and there is time to submit your views to the planning portal ( Google KLWNBC planning and search by the two application references 22/00860/FM and 22/00866/FM.) It is best to set out your individual objections and there are many objections that you might consider in seeing what the issues are.

**2. New homes.** The Government requires Councils to significantly boost the supply of new homes ( here in the Borough the target is around 550 homes pa). This involves both looking forward for at least 5 years (supply) and back, for the previous 3 years (delivery); known respectively as the 5-year housing land supply and Housing Delivery Test (HDT). ( failure of these tests leads to an assumption of sustainability for all applications, which is how the Storey's Field estate obtained its permission). In my opinion the price of new houses is too high for youngsters and so they can only afford rented which is a failure of the market dependent system. Construction costs are truly absurd in the UK, and for too long we have accepted this. Private sector companies build speculatively, and keep back land to keep selling prices high and so it falls on the public sector to

build, and here in the Borough there are a number of examples of this in King's Lynn (and there are private sector schemes too), but the Borough (in partnership with a construction company) is the biggest housebuilder. The marginal nature of developments here means that there is a real risk of taxpayers having to fund project losses. The Borough, as many Councils has tried to set up 100% owned subsidiaries to sell new houses to for rental but this game is very interest rate dependent. Welcome to the big bad world. The solution is a national solution, that a government recognises the value that councils can bring to residential developments and unleashes funding for them.

**3. West Winch. Plans to build “ a new Swaffham” at West Winch for 4,000 homes are in the system.** This is a great opportunity and will require a lot expenditure, see below! A project of this scale requires a large infrastructure investment, but its timing will be market driven...ie the developer will only build when it is believed to be profitable.

**4. The QEH. Mine are minority views it seems, as I believe that the decision to rebuild on the existing site is the worst of available options.** It is high cost, it is not future proof, it will be massively disruptive and it does nothing to improve traffic flow in West Norfolk. Its sole merit is the assertion that only by doing it this way can the arbitrary deadline of 2030 be achieved. I am disappointed that our political leaders are keeping their heads below the parapet when they should be providing objective leadership. So we risk having the wrong hospital in the wrong place. I am working hard to get the QEH to justify its” preferred option”.

**5. New road investment.** There are two schemes knocking about in the system. Firstly The plan to build a West Winch bypass, taking traffic to the east of the A10 and onto a new roundabout on the A47, and dualling the A47 from this roundabout to Hardwick. This 1.5 mile road and the dualling are costed at £84,000,000. Are they bonkers...why are costs so completely out of control? At the time of the HS2 cancellation it was pointed out new railway costs here in the UK are TEN times those in France. But that said, this opens up land for re-siting the QEH, see above. A secondary scheme is to redevelop the Southgates entrance into King's Lynn, (a snip at £24m) to prevent traffic crawling through the middle of an ancient monument and revamp of the area around it. Other people's money, isn't it wonderful.

**6. A new railway station south of King's Lynn.** Having long believed that this has merit, I am pleased to see that the new administration is now looking at this. It would serve the new 4,000 home West Winch ( “ a new Swaffham”) development (and a new hospital at Hardwick!).

**7. Plans have been unveiled for a £2bn tidal barrier scheme across The Wash** between Lincolnshire and Norfolk. Developers said the 11-mile barrage, between Gibraltar Point and Hunstanton, could generate tidal energy and protect homes and

businesses from flooding. Under the proposals, the company said it wanted to build a "hydro-electric dam" and about 15 tidal turbines under the water to produce enough energy to power 600,000 homes.

**8. Funding for the Homeless Shelter in King's Lynn.** Historically the Council has helped but the request for a £30,000 grant ( around 10% of annual running cost) has been turned down. This is an outcome I am not happy with, and will be pursuing to have reversed.

**And locally?** There are opportunities a plenty for community infrastructure projects say, a changing room, a public toilet as well as opportunities for greater community use of the St George's Complex. As the population of the village has grown ( and we see the benefits such as our new shop) so it is up to us to create village activities that will allow many more to become involved. So I ask all those with ideas to contact the parish council to see what is possible! I have been pleased to see increasing levels of engagement at the parish council and this in turn allows for the opportunities we have as a community to be explored in greater detail, so please support your parish council and make the effort to attend meetings.

As many will know a group of " disaffected" have been creating problems for the parish council and exploiting the right of all taxpayers to investigate the books. This right is necessary in any community but here ( and in Stoke Ferry) it has clearly been exploited by a thoroughly disreputable group intent one can only assume on self aggrandisement. As I have pointed out, their selfish actions achieve nothing and their " demands" are set out in an unpleasant,insulting and incoherent manner. The costs of responding to their actions is of course bourne by the community and the parish council has to respond with subsequent employment of accountants and solicitors. The cost could well exceed £10,000!

As part of this exercise in pointless negativity the group has issued standards complaints against me and against the chair of Methwold Parish Council, driven perhaps by the fear that they will be named for all to see ( and they will I'm sure). This incurs yet more additional costs for the Borough and in both cases the complaints ( and I think there were 15 specific issues) were found to be frivolous and driven by vindictiveness and spite, and the complainees ( ie myself and Martin French) fully vindicated. Having read the complaints whilst trying not to cry I cannot help feeling that the sheer pettiness and desperation would shame a 3 year old child.

Pip pip for now, and keep your letters of complaint about me rolling!

Councillor Tom Ryves  
Email [cllr.tom.ryves@west-norfolk.gov.uk](mailto:cllr.tom.ryves@west-norfolk.gov.uk)

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Methwold Parish Council
Meeting of the Parish Council
Thursday, 14th December 2023 at 7.30pm
21 Room, St George's Hall Complex, Methwold

Present

Councillors: Cllr M French (Chairman), Cllr C Beukes, Cllr A Grassick, Cllr B Horton, Cllr F Riches, Cllr K Rodriguez, Cllr D Scott and Cllr R Scott

Clerk and Public Sara Porter (Locum Clerk), Borough Cllr A Ryves and 9 members of the public

Welcome

The Chairman, Cllr French, welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Open Forum for Public Participation

The Chairman, Cllr French, opened the meeting at 7.32pm.

County Councillor's Report

Cllr Storey was not present at the meeting and no prior written report had been received.

Borough Councillor's Report

Cllr Ryves reported the following:

Labour Group – Cllr Charles Joyce, Leader of the Labour Group, had stepped down on Wednesday, 13th December 2023.

Standards Committee – the Standards Committee was holding a meeting on Monday, 18th December 2023 to consider a range of options to increase support for Parish Councils in relation to the Standards regime. The meeting would be live streamed and open to the public.

Methwold Parish Council Christmas Lights event – Cllr Ryves thanked the Parish Council for holding a successful Christmas lights switch on, with a wonderful brass band to see the event through.

Members of Public

Members of public raised enquiries on the following matters:

Street cleaning – The Chairman, Cllr French, reported that the BCKL&WN carried out street cleaning on a regular basis across the borough via manual and mechanical cleansing. Requests for street sweeping could be reported online by members of the public.

Water main leak in Old Feltwell Road – The Chairman, Cllr French, confirmed that the leak had been repaired by Anglian Water.

Sunken trenches from new property construction water connections – The Chairman, Cllr French, confirmed that the Highways Engineer, Mr A Wallace, was pursuing this matter with Norfolk Highway's Streetworks department, as indeed he was as well.

Chapel development – The Chairman, Cllr French, would check with Highways that the landowners had an extant Hoarding Licence .

Recreation Ground hedging – it was noted that a fence between the Recreation Ground post and rail fencing was due to be installed by the developer working in Church View, as it had been established since the last Council meeting that they were

the landowners. This would eradicate the Council's proposal to place hedging in between the gap, which would have been costly for the Parish Council to install and maintain long-term.

Borough Cllr Ryves left the Council Chamber at 7.43pm.

Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence had been received from Cllr S Liddle, Cllr J O'Ware, Cllr T Thomas, Cllr D Younge and County Cllr M Storey.

The apologies were accepted.

Cllr J Rodwell did not attend the meeting.

Declarations of Interest and requests for Dispensations by Councillors

There were no declarations of interest or any requests for dispensation.

Minutes of Parish Council Meeting held on 30 November 2023

The Chairman, Cllr French, duly signed and dated the minutes of the meeting.

To consider any matters arising from the minutes of 30 November 2023

There were no matters arising from the minutes.

Chairman's Statement

The Chairman, Cllr French, read out the following statement:

As will be discussed later in the meeting, last week we received notification from the external independent auditors that the Parish Council's accounts for the last fiscal year had been signed off, and they have now been published. This was following a number of challenges by a group of Parishioners, the extra cost to the Parish of £2,796.00 + VAT (the inspection of accounts was £420.00 + VAT).

I am assuming, having not heard to the contrary, that this group have not lodged an appeal with the court. We have now had three independent reports attesting to the probity of the Parish Council's actions.

I believe that it is now time for the matter to rest, and that we as a Parish Council and Parishioners concentrate on progressing issues that will be of benefit to our three villages. A number of ideas have been put forward and discussed this evening, but I would still like to hear from Parishioners about anything that they would like considered... you know how to get hold of me.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all those on the Parish Council, County, and Borough Councillors, and all the public who have supported me and the work of the Parish Council over this year. I really do appreciate it, and I believe that between us we can make a real difference.

Also, to all who live in the Parish I wish you a very Happy Christmas, and I hope that 2024 is everything that you wish for.

Finance

8.1 There were no payments for approval and no receipts for notification.

8.3. External Audit

The Chairman, Cllr French, reported that the accounts year ended 31 March 2023 had now been signed off by the External Auditors, PKF Littlejohn, and published on the website.

Planning Applications and Determinations since last meeting

Planning Determinations

23/01745/F – Keepers Cottage, Decoy Road, Southery – Proposed replacement dwelling with garage and pole barn

Application withdrawn.

9.2. Planning Applications

No planning applications had been received from the BCKL&WN.

9.3. Planning Applications (since agenda published)

No late planning applications had been received from the BCKL&WN.

Items for consideration

The following items were considered and debated:

10.1. Cock Corner – pavement for pedestrians

The Chairman, Cllr French, reported that he had contacted the Highways Engineer, Mr A Wallace, to establish the cost of a trod to be placed on Cock Corner/Brandon Road. Mr Wallace would be investigating the costs for consideration of the Parish Council placing a bid for 50% funding under the 2025/2026 Norfolk County Council Parish Partnership Scheme.

10.2. Recreation Ground – fence off the children's play area

Councillors unanimously agreed that the children's play area should be fenced off but agreed to place this item on hold until new equipment had been installed within the play area. The Clerk confirmed that once the area had been enclosed, the Parish Council could seek a Public Spaces Protection Order (Control of Dogs) from the BCKL&WN. This was noted.

10.3. Recreation Ground – public toilets

A short discussion took place and Councillors felt that a temporary mobile unit should be placed on the Recreation Ground for four months during the summer to establish usage, prior to any plans for a new build taking place. The Chairman, Cllr French, would investigate the hiring costs of a mobile toilet unit and report back at the next meeting for consideration of this.

10.4. Recreation Ground – replacement picnic benches

Cllr Riches reported that she had investigated the costs of four recycled picnic benches, one of which would cater for disabled users. The total cost including delivery would be £2,190.00 + VAT. It was noted that an accessible picnic bench would require a concrete base to be installed at an additional cost. Councillors suggested that a wheelchair user in the village be contacted in the first instance to establish the need for an accessible picnic bench, and if this was endorsed, that a quotation for a concrete base be sought by Cllr Riches and brought back to the Council for approval.

Proposed – Cllr Horton Seconded – Cllr D Scott

That the Council approves, in principle, the purchase of four recycled picnic benches at a total cost of £2,190.00 + VAT, subject to endorsement being obtained for the need of an accessible bench and subsequent Council approval of the disbursement for a concrete base, and two other quotes being obtained. All in favour

10.5. Recreation Ground – adult exercise equipment

Cllr Grassick agreed to investigate the costs of various adult gym equipment and report

back at the next meeting for Council consideration.

10.6. Wildflower Meadow – gates

A short discussion took place and Councillors agreed that it was not necessary to replace the dilapidated gate to the Wildflower Meadow and that it should be removed. Cllr Grassick offered to undertake this work. Further investigation is required for action required on the gate from the Meadow into the church grounds.

Proposed – Cllr Riches Seconded – Cllr Horton

That the Council approves the removal of the gate into the Wildflower Meadow.

All in favour

Cllr Grassick agreed to deal with the removal of the gate. He was given a vote of thanks for this.

10.7. Wildflower Meadow – trees

Cllr R Scott reported that three trees were due to be planted in the Wildflower Meadow and agreed to investigate what species they were and report back to the Council at the next meeting.

10.8. War Memorial – Rededication event

The Chairman, Cllr French, reported that a quotation was being sought to have the RAF War Memorial repaired, following a vehicle damaging it. The Clerk reported that the RAF might be able to repair it and agreed to find out a contact in order that the Chairman, Cllr French, could pursue this route of enquiry.

A rededication event would be organised once the War Memorial had been repaired.

10.9. Bus Stops – seating for passengers

The Chairman, Cllr French, reported that he would be holding a meeting with the Highways Engineer, Mr A Wallace, in the new year and would investigate whether there was room to have benches at the bus stops.

10.10. Parish Council Finance – new finance package

Cllr Liddle was investigating finance packages but was not present at the meeting. This item would be deferred until the next meeting.

10.11. Laptop – for the Clerk. Cllr Liddle was also seeking quotations for laptops.

This item would be deferred until the next meeting.

Correspondence

No correspondence for action/information had been received.

The Clerk reported that the Council had a statutory obligation to resolve the Council's declaration of its first action for biodiversity by 1st January 2024 and agree policies and objectives urgently after this. The Clerk had circulated the Government's requirement for all public authorities to consider what they can do to conserve and enhance biodiversity under 'biodiversity duty' of the Environment Act 2021 to the Chairman, Cllr French, prior to the meeting.

The Clerk confirmed that the Council was required to consider how it could protect and develop sites in the parish to ensure the future survival of nature, animals, insects and plants. Councils were being encouraged to set goals and targets to ensure habitats and species were maintained, protected and in some cases, revived. The Clerk suggested that areas, preferably Council owned, could be identified for rewilding, owl boxes and other suchlike facilities could be placed around the village to encourage

wildlife (subject to approval from landowners) and support to local groups and organisations could be promoted to ensure biodiversity was on everyone's agenda. The Clerk felt that this would run in conjunction with climate change objectives. Councillors agreed to identify existing and potential biodiversity sites. The Clerk confirmed that she had prepared a Biodiversity Policy for her three Councils and would forward one of them to the Chairman, Cllr French, for modifying in accordance with Methwold Parish Council and in preparation for the next Council meeting, when the policy would need to be adopted urgently.

Items for the next agenda – meeting date 11 January 2024

The following items were requested to be placed on the next agenda:

A radiator in the St George's Hall Complex was not working and a drain within the grounds was blocked – this would be discussed at the next Trustees meeting.

A vote of thanks was given to the Theatre Group for decorating the Hall so beautifully.

Exclusion of the Press and Public (Public Bodies (Admission to meetings) Act 1960 S1)

Proposed – Chairman, Cllr French Seconded – Cllr Riches

That by the virtue of the provisions of Section 1 (2) of the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, the public be excluded during the discussion of the following business on the grounds that publicity would be prejudicial to the public interest by reason of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted.

All in favour

All members of the public left the Council Chamber at 8.35pm.

13.1. Staff Matters

The Chairman, Cllr French, updated the Council regarding the Clerk.

13.2. Legal Matters.

See confidential report.

The Chairman, Cllr French, closed confidentiality and resumed the meeting at 8.42pm.

The Chairman thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting at 8.42pm

~~~~~

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## MAGPIE CENTRE UPDATE FOR THE NEW YEAR

And a Happy New Year to all our supporters from the Magpie Centre, home of West Norfolk Riding for the Disabled Association.

Thanks to a brilliant response to our call for 'hands-on' volunteers to help with pony care, stable management and escorting riders, we are now up to full complement, and our new volunteers began their training in January.

If you fancy an evening out, away from the cold and wet, tickets are still available for our Ceilidh Barn Dance, with a caller and live band, on Saturday February 17 at Stow Bridge Village Hall, Holme Road, Stow Bridge, PE34 3PW 7.30 pm – 11.00 pm.

Tickets, at £17.50 per adult and £8.50 per child (13 years and under), include a Hog Roast supper (with vegetarian option), salads and desserts. Bring your own drinks.

To book, just call 01760 337056 or email [suer2006@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:suer2006@hotmail.co.uk).

The Christmas rides proved popular, with 28 young riders participating over the two days, and they enjoyed posting their letters to Santa as they rode past the Magpie Centre 'post box'.

New developments for 2024 include lessons for home schooled children who have additional needs, e.g. asd, or adhd. More details to follow.

And as the tax year draws to a close on April 5, this is an ideal time for businesses to sponsor activities, ponies and/or renovations at the Magpie Centre. For more details, visit our website [www.rda-westnorfolk.org.uk](http://www.rda-westnorfolk.org.uk) or call the Centre on 01553 810202.

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## FELTWELL BOWLS CLUB

Well we are now into the new year and looking forward with anticipation to the outdoor season.

The green is looking great, but our Green keeper has pulled his right arm bowling indoors and off nursing it, fortunately 2 or 3 members have come forward and are managing to carry on some of the maintenance, we must thank them very much.

The Captain is busy arranging the match and league games. He has proposed 2 Cup games played at the weekend for Members wishing to play them.

1. Graves Cup played on a Saturday at Mundford on a KO basis.
2. County Cup played on a Sunday at various clubs on a KO basis.

He has entered the Rosie Smith, Dave Allen and Ashill leagues, he is also arranging to rejoin the Downham and District league which starts later in the season and now allows Ladies to play.

The Quiz night held on 6th January was very well attended by 50+, who enjoyed a very entertaining evening ably run by Laura our Quiz Master or should I say Madam. With yours truly coming a close second. The money raised going to the new mower.

### Coming Events

Saturday 10th February 2024 Coffee Morning commencing at 10am, to be held in the RBL large room all are welcome. Please see separate advert

Saturday 23rd March 2024 our next Quiz night 7 for 7-30pm start, to be held in the RBL large room. Come along to a very enjoyable evening



# RSPB Lakenheath

## Managing our Habitats at RSPB Lakenheath Fen

Winter gives us an ideal window to carry out much of the habitat management work at Lakenheath Fen, as it is outside of the breeding season for the wildlife here.

So far this winter, then, much progress has been made in transforming our new land north of the river from intensively farmed arable fields into a wetland home for wildlife. For those readers not familiar with this project, in February 2023 the purchase of an additional 54 hectares was completed, thanks to a grant from the Morgan Sindall Construction Group.

As I write this in mid-January, our excavator driver is working on the new land now and is making good progress with creating new ditches on a very large, square field that made up a good chunk of the land purchase. As he works, the water table is rising, and we hope that the un-grazed wet grassland this work is creating will attract breeding Redshank, Lapwing and Snipe. Work is ongoing but hopefully this Spring will see our first positive results.

Elsewhere on the reserve, the annual process of reedbed cutting is well underway. Each year, different areas are cut on rotation- allowing us to keep the habitat varied. The longer we leave an area uncut, the denser it becomes, and these dense patches are favoured by birds like Bearded tit, Bittern and mammals like the Harvest mouse for nesting in. However, birds also like more open areas to forage for food in, as the small pools created in the cleared areas support small fish, frogs and aquatic insects.

All this work would not be possible without the dedication and commitment of our volunteers on our weekly work parties. Whilst we have six members of staff, we have dozens of volunteers so hopefully you can imagine the impact they have on what we can achieve.

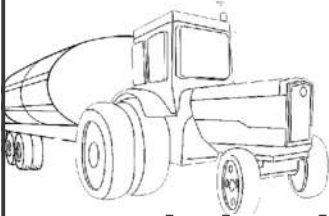
With best wishes from the team at Lakenheath Fen,

Heidi Jones (Visitor Experience Officer).

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Assistance needed? In order to make a difference, the Trustees need to know! If someone in your family, a friend, or a neighbors may be eligible for assistance, please encourage them to apply: all applications will be considered by the Trustees.

Allotments: The allotment area off the Brandon Road adjacent to Cock Corner is the private property of the Trust, for the use of Trustees and allotment tenants only. There are no public footpaths or public right of way, and the use of the area to exercise dogs is strictly forbidden. Also note that shooting rights have been approved over the whole area of the allotments. The Trustees disclaim responsibility for any accident or injury to unauthorized persons. Applications are invited from residents who would like to manage an allotment. Terms & Conditions are available on request.

St George's Church is the lead organization selected by Thomas Batchelor and Others to administer their legacies. Three Ex-Officio Trustees, three Parish Council Trustees and three Co-Optative Trustees meet regularly to administer the Trust's affairs.

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