

Parish Councillors present: Lloyd Groves (Chair), Yvonne Howard, Julian McCourt, Roland Fry, Michael Pearson, Brenda Kok, Mike Wiles, James Tingley, Mark Purchase, Steve Curtis, Jon Burgess-Lee and Dan Finnis. Also present: Kate Bennett (Parish Clerk), Chris Dawson (County Council), Chris Crofts (Borough Council) and four members of the public

Apologies: Bob Waterfield (St. Edmund's Church) and Alex Lane (Playing Field Committee)

1 Welcome

The Chairman opened the meeting and welcomed everyone.

2 Apologies for absence

Apologies were received as listed above.

3 To receive a report from the Chairman of the Parish Council

The Chairman gave a report on Parish Council activities over the last year, some of which included:

- There was an uncontested Parish Council election in May 2023 for the Parish of Emneth.
- **Finance:** The annual precept was increased by £2,000.00 for 2024/25 from £41,000.00 in the last financial year to £43,000.00 for the next. This is to cover the increase in costs in providing the services and facilities for the Parish including the increase in staff costs for all three employees. Savings are also being made where possible with a new energy contract this financial year with SSE, a new grass cutting contractor for the Parish, a new street light maintenance contractor and a new payroll provider; all procured at more competitive prices than the previous year.
- Donations given in the last financial year were: two donations to the Over 60's Club, one for the Coronation Celebrations and another for their Christmas Lunch, one to the Central Hall Committee for village Coronation celebrations and the annual £3,000.00 grant to the Playing Field Committee to cover their running costs as well as an extra £1,886.76 to cover their insurance premium for one year only (ends July 2024).
- Community Infrastructure Levy receipts from the Borough Council for the year totalled £2,651.42 which were attributed to the provision of a further 88 cremation plots at the cemetery.

The Parish Council is in a good financial position moving forward into the next financial year with major projects ahead of them including looking for further burial land in the Parish to provide future burial space for residents.

- **Allotment Land**

Maxey Grounds have carried out a Red Book Valuation on all Parish Council-owned allotment land, we are awaiting a report. Complaints had been received about a noise scarer on some Parish Council-owned land. Scrap cars on some Parish Council-owned land are being investigated.

- **Planning**

Many planning applications were considered throughout the year, as usual.

- **Playing Field issues**

Resurfacing of the car park is required and quotes are being sought. Drainage at the pavilion / the toilets need work carrying out. New goal posts were purchased via grant funding in April 2023.

The Lease first drawn up in 1989 between the Parish Council and the Playing Field Committee needs reviewing as it is now very old in parts and not fit for purpose.

- **Highways issues**

A Traffic Survey has been carried out along Hollycroft Road. The street light design submitted from Norfolk County Council for the 29 LEDs at The Elms, 11-37 Elm High Road was approved in April 2023. A new bus shelter on the A1101 Elm High Road (outside Morrisons) was completed with solar lighting and a new dog waste bin installed at Scarfield Lane.

- **Church**

There are roughly only 10 full grave burial spaces left, further burial land is being investigated. Tree work has been completed following a tree survey. Eighty eight new ashes plots have been installed this year. A new bench has been purchased by the village sign. Piping a section of dyke to provide further burial space is a non-starter due to exorbitant costs. A new grass cutting contractor has been appointed for the churchyards for 2024. Repairs to the church wall are still outstanding but in hand.

- **General**

A Biodiversity Policy for the Parish has been published this year. A small gathering was arranged at the war memorial on Remembrance Sunday. The Parish Council had a meeting with Liz Truss to discuss local matters of interest. An Upwell to Wisbech tram memento was installed at Birds Corner, Emneth. The Parish Council is considering creating a Parish Council Facebook page.

4 To receive a report from the Borough Council

- Several senior members of staff are retiring this year.
- There has been a change in Leader of the Council.
- A double council tax charge is to be introduced on second homes.
- A double council tax charge will also be introduced on certain empty homes.
- Council tax has increased by 4.99%.

5 To receive a report from the County Council

- Councillor Dawson has been involved in many local issues this year including the proposed Energy from Waste Facility for Wisbech, flooding issues at Welney Wash, secondary education places at Downham Market Academy, the traffic survey for Hollycroft Road, the installation of the Upwell to Wisbech tram memento at Birds Corner, helping to mitigate planning matters surrounding the change of use planning application at Sweet Things Savoury and also the bridge closure at Stowbridge.

6 Open Forum for local groups and residents of the Parish

- The Chair of the Emneth Over 60's Club provided a report on the group's activities over the last year.
- A report was read out on behalf of the Emneth Central Hall Committee.
- A report was read out on behalf of St. Edmund's Church.
- A report was read out on behalf of the Emneth Playing Field Committee.
- A resident requested information on any planned events in the village for the commemoration of D-Day. It should be noted that the original plan for the Parish Council to host a village event is now no longer happening but Councillor McCourt is arranging to light a brazier at The Gaultree Inn on the evening of 6th June 2024 at 9pm and all are welcome to attend.

Meeting closed at 7.00pm

Chairman's signature