

Minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 10th May 2022 at 19.00 at Felmingham Village Hall

Present

Chairman Tim Papworth, Cllr. John Gouldsmith, Cllr. John Newstead, Cllr. Mike Pepperell, Cllr. Des Fern

Welcome

- Chairman opened the meeting and welcomed all that were there, including Revd. David Chamberlin, the new priest for the King's Beck Benefice.

Apologies

- Vice Chairman Neil Thrush, Cllr. Syd Arksey, Cllr. Saul Penfold

• Minutes

• Matters Arising

- None

• Signing

- The minutes of the Ordinary Parish meeting held on 18th January 2022 were signed as an accurate record of the meeting by the Chairman.

• Heaths

• Bryants Heath

- To be forwarded to next meeting
- Report from Cllr. Neil Thrush, delivered by the Chairman. See Bryants Heath Appendix at the end of these minutes.

• Stow Heath

- The Felbeck Trust (www.felbecktrust.org.uk) have presented a proposal to the Parish Council to manage Stow Heath. During the discussion the following points were raised: -
 - There is a general preference for the heath to be managed rather than being left to deteriorate further.
 - If a third party was to take this on it should be at no cost to the Parish Council.
 - Any access rights across/behind the Heath should remain in place.
 - Ownership of the heath should be established. It has been assumed that it the Parish Council owns it, but no documentation has been found to prove this.
 - The Chairman was asked to progress this proposal.
- Cllr Neil Thrush provided a report, delivered by the Chairman. See Stow

Heath Appendix at the end of these minutes.

- **Allotments**
 - It was agreed that all dog walkers should keep their dogs on a lead.
 - Cllr. Neil Thrush provided a report, delivered by the Chairman. See Allotments Appendix at the end of these minutes.
- **Highways**
 - Concerns have been expressed about cars parking on grass verges and the village green. A letter is to be sent to Mr Toll re his parking numerous cars on the green with several cars for sale. A copy of the letter is also to be sent to Flagship.
 - Placement of wooden posts along the Aylsham Road verge was discussed but no action is to be taken yet.
 - The County Councillor was meant to be getting back to the Parish Council on what he could do to help with the preservation of Farthing Green, but nothing has been received. Clerk is to email him to remind him.
- **Planning**
 - Concerns about the redevelopment of Felmingham Old Rectory are still ongoing. Water bills are still being issued for the property, but Anglian Water are aware and will be rectifying.
- **Village Hall Update**
 - Roy Hindle updated the meeting on events, but there is still a small attendance to events may be due to Covid wariness
 - Village Hall and bar will be open every other Friday for general social.
- **RFO and Clerk's Report**
 - The bank balance stood at £3825 at the end of April 2022.
 - Annual audit has been completed and forwarded to our internal auditor, Maria Garafalo and the exemption certificate signed for submission to PKF Littlejohn LLP, the external auditors.
 - The Chairman proposed that the insurance continued with Zurich, seconded by Cllr Des Fern.
 - Standing orders to be added to the website.
 - Financial and management risk assessment to be added to the website.
- **Any other business**
 - The Chairman recognised all the work that Cllr. Neil Thrush had done on Bryants Heath and the allotments.
 - Dates for the following years meetings: -
 - 16th August 2022
 - 11th October 2022 – budget and precept
 - 17th January 2023

- 9th May 2023 - AGM

The meeting closed at 20.10

The next meeting will be held on Tuesday 16th August 2022 at 7:00 in Felmingham Village Hall

Signed by Chairman

Date

Bryants Heath Appendix

I would like to report that Bryant's Heath is slowly reverting from a jungle to a managed heath status. I have a scheduled meeting with Natural England on the heath on Friday the 27th May to look at the progress we have made as it is 18 months since they last did a formal visit. The person currently with responsibility for liaising with us Ezra is being moved to a different role, so I am meeting the new person Ellie on a handover that day. We are still following the 5 year management plan and have moved areas this last winter to focus on cutting back both tall dense European gorse as well as trimming back gorse in a managed way that we have cut back to ground level within the last 3 years. We have opened up some large areas creating open heathland again and have in our opinion created some interesting pathways across the heath through the gorse.

The primary work has been done by Liz Wilson, Pamela Neale and myself (x3 stalwarts) and we worked through the Covid restrictions legally and achieved a lot of progress in the management of the heath. I am very thankful for the hard work these two ladies put in, we are a very efficient geriatric team! We have had the North East Norfolk Conservation Volunteers help us twice this year with a third visit due on the 18th May that Liz will direct and supervise in my absence. We have to break off doing any major work with the gorse until late September because of wildlife needing to be undisturbed bringing up their young. The focus will be on keeping pathways open and clear of bramble runners as well as over growing bracken that grows to nearly 6 feet tall. The common spotted orchid had surfaced before I left and hopefully, I will see the round leaf sundew plant when I return located behind the 2 post strung with orange rope to protect them. There is no more major felling of woodland to be done, the Carr woodland area and bottom of the open heath has become much wetter which was the intention when we set about culling surplus birch and limited other species to raise the water table level. Object achieved.

There is an abundance of wildlife living on the heath and having opened up areas we have seen adders in many areas as well as slow worms, frogs, deer, rabbits and more, I am not listing the birds as I haven't got a clue what is what, but enough people do and can tell you what is about. We have worked smarter on the heath this last winter, Liz and myself have used chainsaws to cut through thick stems of dense gorse and thinned birch saplings, I have used my brush cutter with huge success at cutting gorse to ground level and topping gorse and heather, reducing growth height because it gets leggy with age and not at its best visually. I have had issues with my brush cutter repairing and modifying it with what spares I could buy on several occasions this winter and we couldn't do without it, I did buy a 2nd machine as a backup but prefer the original machine that is some 5 years old now. We lost a couple of very mature oaks in the storms in March, but overall, we got away lightly with storm damage. This coming winter we will be thinning out the self-seeded birch saplings that are too close together and grow tall and spindly, we will space them out allowing around 2 m between trunks as a minimum as approved by Natural England. Because this activity is on the management plan, we don't need a separate felling licence like Stow Heath as Natural England's approval is our felling approval permit. This will allow a better roof canopy to form and more stable

trees in the future with thicker trunks and not necessarily as tall, where we have thinned out already, some grass is returning to the woodland floor.

The BMX bikers continue to use their allotted area and constantly modify their jumps. I think the litter in that area is very much under control and they respond to anything I ask them to do. Some parishioners said they wanted the path to remain going up through the middle of their jump areas because they found it easier walking, the bikers have responded by not digging over that section and they do a safety check before setting off on a ride over the jumps confirming it is safe to go. I have recently spoken with PC Paul Gwynn who has continued to do patrols around the heath and he interacts with the bikers positively when he sees them. We have not had any incidents of motorised vehicles on the Heath for a couple of years now. We know many people enjoy walking around the heath and the 3 stalwarts receive positive feedback on many occasions about the improvements we have made.

Stow Heath Appendix

This is a surveyor's allotment that was given to the village back in the early 1900's. it has not been registered on the land registry like Bryant's Heath, because we did not have the same level of documentary evidence required available when I registered Bryant's Heath. For many years we have had an income from Stow Heath through shooting rights, which I can understand was not popular with the riding stables next door to Stow Heath. The land needs to be looked after and managed, we know the tree lined access road needs working on and that Tim has arranged a felling licence for the work to be completed. The proposition for it to be managed in the future with a management plan is a good thing. My concern is who will carry out the work in the management plan once it is formulated, will the PC have any input into approving the management plan and will they continue to look after it in the future, will there be an ongoing cost to the Parish that we will have to cover in the precept. Who and what will be gained from this site in future as it's a long way out of the village and not somewhere visited by Parishioners? Are we going from an income stream in recent years to an expenditure stream in the future?

Allotments Appendix

The allotments are coming on well, John Witham officially gave up all tenancy agreements on the 30th April. On the 1st May I allocated 7 new tenants onto the last piece of land John rented. I marked out the plots using sapling tree stems recycled from work on the heath and put numbers on the plots to help identify what the plot numbers are. We have people come from as far away as Mundesley now, because there is a shortage across North Norfolk of available allotments. We have one plot that was handed back on 1st May to reallocate and I hope to have someone use it before I get home on 22nd May. There remains 1 long strip 100m x 10 m along the tree line on the left hand side that I can split into 2 plots if needs be. There are a lot of happy tenants now actively working their plots and we can expect requests for routine needs such as a shed and polytunnel. Providing the request is for no bigger than what we have already approved on the allotments, we should treat the request as a straightforward application with automatic approval expected.

This last winter with the help from Tim clearing tree root stumps mechanically, we recovered a huge strip of allotment land some 30m x 10m. It took x2 bonfires to reduce everything to ash and the action significantly opened up the allotment which had overgrown in the last 25 years. Last year we were worried about John giving up his tenancy and how would we fill the gap, amazingly we achieved that without loss of income and are in a happy place with occupancy. We do not have any names on the waiting list and if anyone knows of interested persons, please send them my way, give them my email address and I will make contact.