

Minutes of the meeting of the Annual Parish Meeting held on Tuesday 19<sup>th</sup> March 2024 at 19:00hrs at Braceborough & Wilsthorpe Village Hall.

Present- Dave Kentish, Rosemary Trollope-Bellew (Clerk), James Shorrock, Susan Burgoin, Paul Morriss, Steve Collins, Cllr Barry Dobson (SKDC), Peg Torrance (Deepings & Ginton Patient Participation Group) David Fallows, Heather McGill, James McGill, Nigel Woolley, Mike Dawson, Barry Morris, Fr. Aran Beasley, Paul Spence, Malcolm Ravilious, Sue Cook, Sue Holloway, Di Holden,

Meeting Commenced 19:00hrs

1. CHAIRMAN'S REMARKS- Dave Kentish welcomed everyone to the meeting.
2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE –
3. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING-It was proposed by Dave Kentish & seconded by Paul Morriss that the minutes of the last meeting held March 2023 be received. It was **resolved** that the minutes of the last meeting be confirmed as a true record & signed by Dave Kentish. All agreed.
4. CHAIRMAN'S ANNUAL REPORT- report at attached
5. FINANCIAL REPORT FOR THE YEAR ENDING 31<sup>ST</sup> MARCH 2024 – Draft Report attached.
6. REPORTS FROM COUNTY COUNCILLOR/DISTRICT COUNCILLOR- Report attached.
7. REPORTS FROM REPRESENTATIVES FROM OTHER BODIES:-,
  - a) Braceborough Village Hall Committee – See report attached.
  - b) St Margaret's Parochial Church Council – See report attached.
  - c) St Faith's Parochial Church Council – See report attached.
  - d) Neighbourhood Watch Scheme (NWS) Wilsthorpe & Braceborough: – Susan Burgoin reported:- NHW has completely changed from when I first joined as co-ordinator. We had meetings in Bourne with an AGM etc. Now through varying name changes it is called Lincs Alert and totally online. I do not know our local Police person or even a PSCO if there is one.

Most of the emails received are either surveys to complete, newsletters or there is also a lot of advice on online spam, online abuse, domestic violence etc., etc. There are no longer updates on local issues and crime but all necessary emails continue to be sent onto villagers in Wilsthorpe.

LincsAlert have sent fraud packs which are available in St Faith's Church, Wilsthorpe.

Cllr Kentish reported that he had attended a Police & Crime Commissioner engagement event with Parish Councils, if residents wished to know further information to contact him direct.

- e) Mallard Pass Action Group – Sue Holloway reported that Alicia Kerns MP would be presenting the paper partition today at Parliament, which contained 3400 signatures on 20<sup>th</sup> March. The decision would be made on the planning application on 19<sup>th</sup> May 2024.
8. TO RECEIVE CONCERNS & CONSIDER RESOLUTIONS OF ELECTORS CONCERNS – That the Parish Council engages with the Environment Agency and other Parish Councils in regards to the issue of flooding. **Action Parish Council.**

The Parish Council organises a meeting with Lincolnshire County Council as they are the leading flood authority and also the highways department. **Action Parish Council.**
9. ANNUAL PARISH MEETING CLOSED 20.00Hrs.

**Item 4 Chairman's report:-**

**Mallard Pass Solar Farm**

The Planning Inspectorate have concluded their examination and have passed their recommendation on Mallard Pass to the Secretary of State, Claire Coutinho. As this is a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project it will be decided by Government. The Secretary of State and her team will review these recommendations and will give their decision on May 16<sup>th</sup> whether to allow or refuse the solar farm.

It was in November 2021 when we first heard about these plans for the solar farm and the local Parish Councils have all fought hard in putting forward objections on multiple areas of concern during this time. Your Parish Council, Braceborough and Wilsthorpe have been present at all of the Planning Inspectorate hearings and have made representations to the Inspectorate at every stage of the examination.

That said, none of the Parish Councils would have been able to have been as effective if it were not for The Mallard Pass Action Group which was set up straight after the planning application was made public. The driving forces behind this were Keith Busfield and Sue Holloway, recruiting a small team to assist and support them. Sadly, Keith died the following March and Sue took the lead, keeping up a steady stream of detailed information and lobbying pressure on MPs and councils, raising a fighting fund, and getting experts to look into the application and with The Mallard Pass Action Group, fight our corner at the hearings.

Another staunch supporter fighting on our behalf is Alicia Kearns, MP for Rutland and Melton. She has been lobbying Government continually and has delivered thousands of signed petitions and letters to the Secretary of State. We await the outcome!

**Other business**

Whilst the Mallard Pass Solar Farm has taken up much of the Parish Council's time, there have been many other day to day issues which are just as important that need to be attended to:

**Flooding**

This past year has been dreadful, with houses flooded and roadways impassable. For those who have suffered property damage it is heart-breaking. The Parish Council actively pursues all options with Highways, District Council, and the drainage board, to continue to find ways to further mitigate the impact of flooding and the damage caused.

**Potholes - Kerbside breakup – Verges**

Potholes, kerbside break up and damage to verges are problems that I'm afraid, are not going to go away, the best that can be managed is to have repairs made as soon as they are reported. To this end, what will help, is if you see a problem and report it onto the Highways website

<https://fixmystreet.lincolnshire.gov.uk/> with the location and the problem and continue to keep doing

so, Highways will come and install a repair. The more people that report any of these issues the quicker a repair will get done.

With regards to verges, do also report damage where you see it, Highways do not see this as a priority and may get to repair some of the worst damage at some point.

With the increase of on-line deliveries, delivery vehicles of all sizes have multiplied and so has the damage to verges.

As well as raising issues with Highways as they are reported, the Parish Council do a yearly Parish walkabout with Highways outlining problems and getting as much buy in from them for as many repairs as they can feasibly manage.

It is worth noting that to add to all of these issues, should the Mallard Pass Solar Farm get full approval it will mean that the construction period of up to two years plus will bring a major increase of heavy traffic, further exacerbating all of these problems.

### **Speeding**

This has always been an issue with cars and heavier vehicles driving too quickly through the villages. The Parish Council over the past few years have looked at many different ways of drawing drivers' attention to speed limits, all so far have been too costly or not practical. We purchased sets of verge side gates to have a strong visual impact to calm traffic coming into the villages and these have been installed at each entrance. Highways agreed to raise the height of the existing village signs to sit above the new gates for more impact, they have however not raised them high enough and we will be having a conversation with Highways about rectifying this.

### **The big clean**

I have reported on this previously and it has proved to be a success. The teams visit our Parish two or three times a year, clearing out weeds, cutting back overgrown hedges and clearing pathways. This is a great initiative from SKDC and one that I hope continues into the future.

### **Greatford Mineral Extraction**

The plan for quarrying was approved two years ago. Nothing as yet appears to have started. The approved plan is to convert 55 hectares of agricultural land off King Street for the extraction and processing of gravel and sand. A road widening amendment to the plans and traffic routing has been agreed by the planning office. Once it gets underway this project will create heavier HGV traffic on King Street and surrounding roads, and we hope that the restrictions put in place will be regularly monitored.

### **Planning applications**

The Parish Council have sight of all planning applications in the Parish and examine each one. There is a structure laid down by the local Planning Authority that we have to take account of when giving our

observations and comments, and these are considered by the planning officers when making their decisions.

**Please get involved**

The Parish Council welcomes and invites all members of the Parish to attend the Parish Council meetings. If you feel that there is something important that I have not covered here, or when something crops up in the future, then please raise your concerns at our Parish Council Meetings and find out how we as your Parish Council are able to help or advise you.

Finally, a big thank you to my fellow colleagues on the Parish Council, our clerk and the representatives from the outside bodies who keep us up to date with the wider matters that affect our Parish and who we work closely with.

I look forward to the coming year and hope for your continued support.

Dave Kentish, Chair Braceborough and Wilsthorpe Parish Council

**Item 5 Draft Parish Council Accounts:-**

Clerk reported that they had received £1428 grants from the district council to pay towards the community cleaner and Kings coronation event in 2023 with £415 from the County Council towards verge cutting. The parish precept was set at £2943. Councillor decided to close the building society account due to its poor interest rate of 0.25% and place the money into an existing account with Lloyds Bank which was giving interest rate at 1.30%.

Councillors gave £300 to each church for maintenance of their churchyards, with £589 spent towards the Kings event. Despite no elections taking place within the parish council May 2023 there was an expense of £74.00 for payment of advertising before the event. The draft total for the end of year = £4361.

**Item 6b – District Councillor Barry Dobson Report:-**

**Lincolnshire County Council** voted to proceed with devolution. Our vote at SKDC was evenly split – I personally voted against it as I believe it will be of absolutely no benefit to us here in the south of the District. Many councillors were impressed with the £720million offer but this is only to be paid over a 30 year period and the election of a new position, a mayor of Lincoln, would give that person the right to choose where the funds will be spent. These funds will not be available as a lump sum, they will be portioned at £24million per year for 30 years.

**The following developments were considered during the year:** A replacement waste transport depot to be located on land already purchased a few years ago. This will relieve the number of HGVs passing through the centre of Grantham as well as reducing noise to the current neighbourhood which envelopes the depot. The new site will be close to the A1 which will allow better access to the remainder of the District without passing through Grantham itself. The offices in the old part of SKDC structure has been vacated and negotiations have enabled staff to move into new offices above the picture house. Use of vacant retail area below is under discussion for change of use to Council facilities which the public can access.

The Deepings Leisure Centre is still closed but a privately organised CIC has set out their plans to refurbish and reopen the facility. A discussion at Full Council awarded them a lump sum towards the refurbishment providing an agreement between them, the County Council and the Anthem Trust (school) is realised.

**Our Demographic in our Dole Wood Ward:**

The overall statistics of the ward state that 36% female and 64% male

Age group: 25-34:33%; 35-44:17%; 45-54:17%; 65+:17%

Ethnicity: 13% BAME 88% White

Disabled or Long-term Illness: 33% DIS/LTS; 67% not

Council tax arrears: 1

Benefits Universal Credit issues: 16

Employment issues: 14

Council tax reduction: 3

Employment support allowance: 2

Other benefit issues: 1

**Solar Farms** The ongoing saga of the Mallard Pass Solar Farm by the Chinese company is still being considered.

Further plans to put solar farms in our area have and will be put forward in the coming year.

These are all contentious and will generally not benefit us directly.

By the time this meeting takes place, I will have been on a round table discussion on net zero and the benefits of alternative power sources.

**Change of Leadership** Last year the leading Conservative party was replaced by a collection of independent and other groups that formed a larger unit and, consequently, became the lead group. Cllr Cleaver from Stamford was subsequently voted in as Leader.

Due to an agreement by now ruling coalition, Cllr Cleaver stepped down and allowed Cllr Baxter, the LCC councillor for our two villages. Cllr Baxter was proposed and seconded as leader by the coalition. Subsequently, a vote was held at Full Council to elect a Leader of SKDC. Councillors Jeal and Baxter were the two candidates. Cllr Baxter received the most votes and was elected as Leader of SKDC.

So far this year, we have already had 4 full council meetings, generally the number of full councils held in a year.

Floods hit us again this season with October being the worst on record for 120 years. Storm Babet caused flooding to approximately 600 properties in Lincolnshire with 136mm (3.78 inches) registered a PODE Hole, being more than 2.5 times the monthly average. In total for 2023 at PODE Hole (the pumping station on the road from Bourne to Spalding that serves our area) 686.5mm (27 inches) was received and pumped.

D. Cllr Barry Dobson, Dole Wood Ward

**Item 7a Village Hall Report:-**

So what have we done in the last year? We've seen events back up and running as it was pre COVID. Numbers at events have dwindled and I think this in part to changes within the village

and also a hangover from covid. This means fund raising is getting more of a challenge as increasing costs and less numbers means less pennies in the coffers.

The events held have been successful. The introduction of coffee mornings during the summer months and a regular art afternoon are a welcome addition to all other events, including celebrating the Coronation of King Charles which was a fabulous event with lots of competition entries and one for the history books of Braceborough.

We have carried out essential maintenance this year including a new front door and work on the electrics to ensure we are safe and adhering to the regulations. Other routine maintenance has also been completed.

I would like to think the focus over the coming year will be to continue to engage with the villages of Braceborough and Wilsthorpe and ensure we hold successful events and therefore raise enough funds.

I think it will be an exciting year going forward a great opportunity for change within the committee. We have three new members and Leanne Allen has stepped down. Heather Williams and Jimmy James joined as members and Gary Perry has joined with the plan to take over the role of treasurer. So we still need to find a new chair. A 'job advert' will be circulated with Towers and Spires for Braceborough and Wilsthorpe. A strong committee is needed to ensure the village hall keeps running and raising funds and finding a replacement chair is an area of strong focus at the moment.

Sue Cook, Chairperson of the Village Hall Committee

**Item 7 b - St.Margaret's Church Braceborough –**

Following the change from Parish Share to an annual covenant, our PCC has again paid its agreed payment, in full, for 2023.

Yet again the churchyard areas have benefitted from regular maintenance and tidying – a huge 'plus' given the ever-changing and more extreme weather patterns experienced throughout 2023. Huge thanks are extended to all those who have generously given their time. The generous grant awarded by the Parish Council for 2023 was again a significant contribution towards the costs of having the grass in the churchyard cut regularly and to help maintain its overall appearance. Considerable progress was made to improve the southern and eastern boundaries.

Attendances at St.Margaret's services continued to be encouraging. Numbers held well, 'bucking' the national trend, and Messy Church continued to benefit families in our church of 7 villages. The Holy Communion services at Braceborough Hall were held regularly each month with increased congregations.

Some areas of the building continue to show deterioration in the fabric – particularly the porch ceiling, plaster on the wall of the Apse and some broken stained glass. These continue to be monitored and will be addressed when funds allow. Our next Quinquennial Inspection is scheduled for this month.

Father Aran's presence, support and visibility continues to benefit the ministry within our parish and local community. He engages with a wide audience of parishioners and continues to regularly visit those who are ill and to lead all of our services at St.Margaret's. The outdoor service for Remembrance Day was again well supported by an increased congregation. More than 100 attended the Christmas Carol Service. Father Aran is a very popular parish priest and we have a continuing responsibility to help meet the costs of his ministry so as to ensure he is not lost to us.

Once again thanks go to the officers & committee of the Village Hall, with whom St.Margaret's works on a number of community-related issues and events. Special thanks go to Sue for her continued leadership & support.

As for many individuals in times of high inflation, church finances continue to be under pressure. Therefore, on behalf of our PCC, I extend sincere thanks to our Chairman and members of the Parish Council for their continued support and generosity towards the upkeep of the churchyard at St.Margaret's Church.

Malcolm Ravilious, Churchwarden. March 2024.

**Item 7c - St Faith's Church, Wilsthorpe –**

Our Parish Share for 2023, which is now called a Covenant Pledge and is increased by an agreed percentage each year, was paid in full and the agreed amount for 2024, will be paid in full. St Faith's is well supported in the village for both services and fund raising activities, for which we are very grateful. The church remains open 24/7 and many visitors come to the church both for services and as tourists. We were recently visited by Christopher Somerville who writes for the Times newspaper and an article appeared on Saturday 27<sup>th</sup> January 'A good walk Greatford, Wilsthorpe and Braceborough, Lincolnshire' I was fortunate to be at the church when he called in and he signed our visitors book. He was very impressed with our Knight and we had quite a discussion about it and purely by co-incidence, I had been contacted the week before by a representative of the Mortimer Historical Society regarding the Knight and they have emailed quite a lot of information which has been added to our archive files and they are hoping to visit sometime this year!

The fabric of the church appears in good condition. In May this year we are having the Quinquennial inspection and we obviously hope that no major repairs will be highlighted. At the last inspection it was strongly advised that the church electrics should be rewired. This was carried out with the aid of a grant and fund raising events in the village.

We are planning another Open Gardens event this year in July and also a coffee morning, date to be arranged.

St Faith's PCC would like to thank the Parish Council for their generous grants given in previous years and their continuing support. The grant is used solely towards the cost of maintaining the churchyard and from the comments and compliments received, is much appreciated by the village and visitors alike.

Susan Burgoin,                      Treasurer