

# Caston Parish Council

CHAIRMAN: Mrs Jaki Porter    VICE CHAIRMAN: Mrs Kay Farmbrough

**MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL MEETING OF THE PARISH OF CASTON  
MONDAY 5 MAY 2021  
BY ZOOM CONFERENCE CALL AT 7.30 PM**

Councillor's present:-        Jaki Porter, Chris Cook, Kay Farmbrough, Mary Howell

Also present:-                County Councillor Claire Bowes and District Councillor Phil Cowen  
6 Members of the Public

1.        **Apologies for absence**  
None.

2.        **To approve the Minutes of the Meeting held on Monday 13 May 2019**  
Cllr Porter read the Minutes. It was **RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the Meeting held on Monday 13 May 2019 be signed, by the Chairman, as a true and correct record. Proposed by Cllr Farmbrough and seconded by Cllr Porter, all voted in favour.

3.        **Chairman's Report from Mrs Jaki Porter**  
"The current Parish Council was formed in May 2019, and due to the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic it was not possible to hold an AGM in 2020.

In March 2020, due to the first lockdown, the Parish Council approved the delegation of powers to the Clerk. In July 2020 Council meetings resumed online only. During the Pandemic, many contractors and local government departments such as Planning and Highways have been either closed or working at diminished capacity, and this has slowed down or limited what we have been able to achieve in regard to some issues. As ever, planning and traffic have been most parishioners key concerns, although flooding has become a critical issue.

### **Building & Planning**

Between 2015 and 2019 planning permission was granted for 20 new dwellings in Caston while only 2 were refused. In most cases applicants cited Breckland's 5-year housing land supply requirement, a desktop assessment set by central government, as their key argument.

In November 2019 The Breckland Local Plan was adopted by Breckland District Council. Among other things, this document aims to address the real housing needs of our region, rather than simply the obligation to approve a target number of sites calculated by a computer somewhere in Westminster. Between the adoption of the plan and today's date, of 11 dwellings applied for, only 5 have been granted approval. Refusal of the other 6 included clauses from the new plan. I would like to hope that this indicates the start of a much more relevant approach to development in our region.

It is important to remember that with new homes have come new parishioners who actively contribute to village life, and a healthy community will inevitably grow. But the Parish Council must continue to be vigilant in highlighting and arguing against development that is unsustainable, inappropriate or damaging to the essential rural nature of Caston.

CHAIRMAN.....

DATED: .....

CLERK: Joanne Blackman, Daisy Barn, 42 Long Lane, Feltwell, Norfolk, IP26 4BJ

Tel: 01842 829821    Email: parish.clerk@castonparishcouncil.gov.uk    www.castonparishcouncil.gov.uk

### **Flooding**

Across the UK the combination of climate change and the loss of surface water drainage due to development point to an ever upward trend for more frequent and significant flood events. Caston is increasingly subject to flooding, with a particularly bad flood event in December 2020. We have received, as yet unfulfilled, assurances of visits and help from Norfolk's Flood and water Management team.

In February 2021 the Norfolk Strategic Flood Alliance was created, with objectives including a more co-ordinated approach to; flood planning and mitigation, warnings and emergency response to flood events. Additionally, Norfolk County Council is seeking funding to offer grants for property level flood protection to individual householders of up to £5000. While these actions are to be welcomed, they are at a very early stage and their outcomes by no means guaranteed and the Parish Council urges parishioners to ensure that they are correctly insured as well as being clear, and active on their Riparian responsibilities.

### **Traffic**

In 2019 the Council explored the possibility of requesting 40mph limits on Stow Bedon Road and Griston Road. For such a relatively tiny community, a speed limit change would be extremely unlikely, however a petition by parishioners to improve the safety of pedestrians, cyclists and riders might result in some safety signs or changed road markings. This issue was set aside during the pandemic, but I hope it may be revived once life returns to normal.

In 2019 The Council secured grant funds to contribute to the purchase of a second SAM2 sign. Observations suggest that many drivers do react to the flashing sign, and with option to have the signs at additional locations we hope to balance the increased traffic volumes. Again, this project was delayed, but I pleased to say that we are about to be a "Two—SAM-sign Village".

Parking around the school continues to create a hazardous situation at drop-off and pick-up times. In January 2021 our county councillor Clare Bowes advised the Parish Council that a new Highways Area Manager was to be in post shortly, and that she would be asking him to visit us to see if there are any solutions that might be considered.

Meanwhile, I am delighted to see Caston's Speedwatch team back in action, providing a significant deterrent to speeding drivers, and reporting serious offenders to the police.

### **Play Area**

The Play Area at Coronation Terrace finally opened in October 2019, only to be closed for the first lockdown a few short months later. However, when it is open and the weather is kind it does seem to be enjoyed by our younger residents. Initiated by former councillor Rob Lond-Caulk, the play area somehow became my pet project so I am delighted to say that the final portion of grant funds applied for was received, allowing us to complete the scheme with a 'Brontosaurus' springer.

The Parish Council would like to express our thanks to Caston W.I. who kindly funded training for two more members of the Play Area Inspection Volunteer Team.

### **Other Matters**

- Councillor Grimsditch instigated a survey of mobile-phone coverage as it is very poor in some parts of the village - although essential for smart meters and some medical applications - however the response level has been disappointing.
- Councillor Farmborough has organised teams of volunteers to maintain the planters at the village entry points.

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- Councillor Cook has devised and shared the Caston Map, which proved particularly useful with the huge increase in home deliveries during the lockdowns.
- Councillor Howell is looking into the Green ways to Green Places scheme which aims to open up more of the countryside safely to walkers and wheelchair users among others, through agreements with local landowners.
- The Parish Council has supported the Village hall with the purchase of a new exterior notice board.
- Due to problems with access during the pandemic, ownership of the Book of Remembrance was reassigned in line with the wishes of the families and representatives of those memorialised.
- We have reviewed parking problems at Coronation Terrace but were forced to conclude that, within our remit, we could effect no change that would balance the needs of all its residents.

Caston would not be half the village it is without its army of volunteers covering everything from our environment to traffic, but I would particularly like to thank my fellow councillors past; present and incoming, and our Parish Clerk Jo Blackman, for their hard work and support through what I sincerely hope is a unique period.

Although I am standing down from the Council today I have been pleased to be part of this vital team effort. I wish the incoming council every success, and would remind parishioners to support them - in all our interests. If you look after your Parish Council, it will look after you."

4. **County Councillor's report from County Councillor**

See attached report.

5. **District Councillor's report from District Councillor**

See attached report.

6. **Financial Reports**

Current figures had previously been supplied to the Council.

7. **Speedwatch report from co-ordinator Tony Ash**

"The Speedwatch volunteers came out of hibernation and resumed donning their high viz jackets again in April. A total of seven checks were carried out at various times and locations. A total of 524 vehicles were assessed and 32 offenders were reported to the Constabulary. The duration of the checks I have left to each group to decide on depending on traffic flow and weather conditions. A minimum check is 30 mins and the maximum is 60 mins. The Volunteers time amounted to 6 hours over 7 days".

8. **Caston Village Hall Charitable Trust**

The hall has been closed due to the pandemic but this has enabled the cladding to be finished and the Committee are beginning to look at future plans.

9. **Open Forum for public participation**

A member of the public thanked the Council members for their hard work. Sorry to see Jaki stand down and that there are so few members of the Council. Thanks also went to the County and District Councillor.

10. **The agree the date for the next Annual Meeting of the Parish**

Monday 9 May 2022

Meeting closed at 8.00pm

Jo Blackman  
Parish Clerk

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