

Minutes of a meeting of Bergh Apton Parish Council held on Wednesday 15th December 2004 at Bergh Apton Parish Hall commencing at 6.00pm

1 Members

Parish Members present:	Mrs Alison Freeman [Chair]; Mr John Ling; Mr Derek Blake; Mrs Jean Bobbin; Mr Chris Johnson; Mrs Sally Leigh; David Skedje 15 members of the public
Clerk	Mrs Philippa Fuller
Apologies	Cllr Adrian Gunson; Cllr John Fuller

2 Declaration of Interests

There were no declarations of interest.

3 Minutes of Previous Meeting

Minutes of the meeting held on 10th November 2004 were confirmed and signed by The Chairman.

3.1 Matters Arising

The manholes in Threadneedle Street are marked out ready to be repaired.

4 Public Consultation

In the absence of Cllr Adrian Gunson & Cllr John Fuller, there was no public consultation.

5 Planning

5.1 HWRC Site Inspection

A number of parishioners had contacted Derek Blake to express their concern that 3 mature Oak trees aged about 35 years had been felled at the T Farrow construction site. Cllr Blake had visited the site and had been informed that they had been felled on health and safety grounds as branches had damaged tiles on the roof of a building and roots were causing foundation problems.

Cllr Blake had reported the matter to the Planning Dept of the County Council [A Harris]. A site visit ensued. This revealed that containment bunds had been removed to provide additional space in contravention of planning conditions. Furthermore it was considered that the planting density of the hedgerow was insufficient to provide screening and sound amelioration, a further planning condition.

A further County Council site visit would be arranged. Meanwhile, Cllr Blake reported that Farrow had offered to replace the 3 felled trees with 5 trees but not mature ones with the exact locations still to be determined.

It was resolved to ask Cllr Gunson to monitor the situation and ensure that the enforcement officer's recommendations were complied with and report to the January meeting.

5.2 Planning Applications

There were no applications to be considered

5.3 Planning Decisions

There were no decisions to be reported

6 Finance

6.1 Clerk's Financial Report

6.1.1 Budget 2005/6

The Clerk presented a written financial report [attached]. The Clerk reported that the budget for next year predicted expenditure of £2,691. This year £4,404.83 has been spent as a result of exceptional items such as the bus shelter and village sign, noting that some of this was grant-aided. For 2005/6 the precept should raise at least £2,690 to cover predicted spending.

The Clerk noted the predicted bank balance of £236 at the end of 2004/5 was inadequate and that some attempt should be made to increase reserves. Last year the Parish Council was in the unsatisfactory position that there was no money in the bank to pay bills as they fell due.

A discussion on the minimum desirable financial reserves took place. Derek Blake noted that neighbouring parishes had much higher financial balances but as a principle, the minimum balance should be between 100% - 150% of the annual precept. John Ling agreed but suggested the balances be strengthened over two years. Alison Freeman noted that it had been hoped to reduce the precept this year as the Village Sign/Bus Shelter projects had been completed. In fact, the scope to achieve this was now limited by the need to increase balances. Nevertheless it might be more prudent to ask for around £3,500 giving an estimated March 2006 bank balance of £1,164.

6.2 VAT

The Clerk would apply for a VAT refund in the New Year representing the full calendar years 2002; 2003 & 2004.

6.3 Insurance Cover

The Clerk then referred to the Asset Register where parish assets to the value of £31,000 were listed. A quotation for *all-risks* cover for the *full value* of *all the assets* had been received at about £1150 pa, an increase of £700 on the existing premium. This was considered unaffordable.

Ways to reduce the premium had been considered and Councillors had asked the Clerk to get a quote from Zurich Municipal based on not insuring the playground equipment to the full value of £19,000 as this would be very costly on the insurance premium and that it was felt unlikely to be totally vandalized or destroyed in a fire. It was decided to insure only the bark as, if that were damaged in any way, it would be very costly to replace. The insurance risk on the other fixed items of playground equipment would be borne by the Parish Council. Furthermore, the three waymarkers would be omitted from the insurance schedule and the value of the village sign limited to the cost of casting, £1,000.

The Clerk reported that she had received a verbal indication of the extra insurance cover needed based upon the playground bark £3,300, the Village sign £1,000 and the bus shelter £3,900. The extra premium is in the region of £119.00 including tax. The cost of insuring a footpath warden/tree warden for public liability would be an additional £30 plus 3% Insurance Premium Tax. Next year's premium would then be approximately £600.

It was resolved that Clerk confirm the premium in writing for January's meeting so a decision can be made as to the correct level of cover required.

[Clerk's note: Many of the Parish's assets are uninsured/underinsured until the level of required cover is communicated to insurers in January.]

6.4 Public Consultation on the Budget

At this point, David Skedge proposed, seconded by John Ling, that the meeting be closed to allow members of the public to speak on the precept.

Mrs Harvey said the Parish Council had promised last year that they would lower the precept by £1,000. Instead, it looked like the reduction was only £350. The Chairman asked whether there were any particular items that Mrs Harvey disagreed with. The Parish Plan was raised and parishioners recalled that, at the time the representative from South Norfolk Council had addressed the Parish, it was said that the Parish Plan would not cost the people of Bergh Apton a penny. Derek Blake attempted to correct this impression recalling that the Parish's contribution would be 5%. A heated argument between Councillors and Parishioners ensued during which a number of unsavoury remarks were made from the floor including some by Mr Hubbard insinuating that Parish Councillors had behaved improperly in respect to the management of parish finances.

On the proposal of John Ling, seconded by David Skedge the meeting was then re-opened

6.5 2005/6 Precept

On the proposal of John Ling, seconded by Jean Bobbin it was resolved unanimously to set the precept for 2005/6 at £3525. The Clerk to return the proforma to South Norfolk by 10th January 2005.

At this point, as a result of the allegations made by Mr Hubbard, Sally Leigh, John Ling and Chris Johnson decided to resign and left the meeting.

[Clerk's note: Remaining councilors were Cllrs Freeman; Blake; Bobbin & Skedge. The meeting was still quorate.]

Derek Blake asked the Clerk to contact Chris Walton, Head of Democratic Services at District Council to help with procedural advice following the rather unusual events.

7 Correspondence

	Correspondent	Summary
1	Standards Board For England	New Regulations in force wef 4th November 2004 plus leaflet
2	SNDC	New Table of Members' Allowances for Parish Councils
3	Norfolk County Council	Leaflet on Winter Gritting Routes. None in Bergh Apton
4	Customs & Excise	Advice & Application form for VAT Refund
5	Village Hall Management Committee	Survey to be returned to Hilary Ling
6	Norfolk Recorders Project	Letter requesting every parish in Norfolk to send details of village allotments
7	SNDC	Health & Safety Seminar – 20th January Names Required
8	Norfolk CC	Northern Distributor Road Questionnaire
9	SNDC	Letter requesting expressions of interest in Community Composting
10	The Audit Commission	Letter confirming completion of audit for 2003/4. no action required.
11	Norfolk County Council	Approx 100 leaflets for distribution at Public Meeting on Affordable Housing
12	Norfolk Police Authority	Timetable for mobile police station. Note: no visits to Bergh Apton.
13	Norfolk Assoc of Town & Parish Councils	Newsletter and Request for South Norfolk Member of Executive Board
14	Norfolk Police Authority	Reminder about Christmas Drink Drive Campaign
15	Norfolk County Council	Consultation on Treatment of Temporary Encampments by Travellers
16	Rev Peter Knight	Request for Grant Funding for BYRUS Youth Group

8 Police Report

A faxed report had been received from PC Norton indicating that no crimes had taken place since the last meeting.

The meeting was closed at 7.15 pm.

9 Clerk's Notes

9.1 Outstanding Items

Names urgently required for Bergh Apton Tip liaison committee on 18th Jan 2005; Health & Safety Seminar on 20th January 2005.

Owing to the unexpected termination of the meeting, the following payments will be carried forward to the January meeting.

Annual Christmas Lunch Contribution:	£50
Alison Freeman:	5 Year Diary

9.2 Resignations from Parish Council

Having taken advice from South Norfolk Council on the correct procedures to be followed in the case of resignations from Parish Councils, it was made clear that resignations are only effective when submitted to the Clerk *in writing*. The Clerk wrote to Cllrs Ling; Johnson & Leigh following the meeting asking

whether they wished to reconsider their verbal resignation or to confirm it in writing. All three Councillors decided to reconsider their resignations stating that they would now continue in office so they remain Parish Councillors until the next election in 2007.

10 Forthcoming Meetings

19/01/2005; 23/02/2005; 30/03/2005; 04/05/2005 [AGM]; 08/06/2005; 13/07/2005; 21/09/2005

Philippa Fuller, Clerk, Friday, 31 December 2004