**Acle Parish Council**

**Clerks’ report for Parish Council meeting on 29th January 2024**

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| **1.** | **Matters Arising from the Meeting of 11th December (Agenda item 4)** |
| 1.1 | **KS - New Cemetery (4.1):**I am meeting Richard on site on 5th February to discuss water supply and other issues.  |
| 1.1.2 | **FR – Current Cemetery (4.1):**I have spoken to Jen Taylor to remind her to sort the levelling of the graves in the cemetery. |
| 1.1.3 | **PJ – software for the cemeteries (4.1):**We currently operate a system whereby burial invoices and grants of exclusive right are typed up manually, and the paperwork is kept in plastic wallets, in several lever arch files, with a formal entry for each burial written in the official ledger. I have investigated software produced by Rialtas, who do our current accountancy software, but it is expensive.Kristina has offered to set us up with Google Forms, which would mean that funeral directors could fill in a form to book a funeral and this would link straight into a spreadsheet, which will do some of the work we want. Obviously, we could still take details over the phone. We can scan in historic burial documents over time so that all details are available for staff to access online. We are planning for Fiona to take over the management of the cemetery in March, when she has finished her CiLCA work. |
| 1.2 | **KS - Fletcher Room and Pre-School (4.2):**Further to previous reports, the insurance claim for the leak from the split pipe is being processed, I have sent everything asked for so far to the insurers but have not yet had an outcome or request for further information.We have received the report from the structural engineer following the issue with a bowed ceiling & associated invoice. Details on the proposed replacement building will be discussed under a separate item, item 8. |
| 1.3 | **FR – Flooding at Beighton Road (4.3)**The temporary flood defence barrier on Beighton Road had been damaged by traffic which as a result left rainwater flowing down towards the new build housing. I made contact with both NCC Highways and Clarion. NCC reviewed the area and felt that it did not meet their intervention criteria. They will continue to monitor as part of normal scheduled inspections.Clarion came and removed the sand of the road, they also carried out a report for the project group with some repairs for the ditch that needs completing and to consider if they need to put some sandbags/signage back on the road.**PJ** - There is another meeting of the various agencies on Friday. It was confirmed that the houses did not flood during the heavy rainfall in October/November, although the fire brigade did have to work hard to pump away the water to feed into the new pipe. It was reported that there is a section of ditch where the water is not running – this will be investigated.They are looking at ideas to reduce the run-off from the fields. |
| 1.4.1 | **FR - Brian Grint Centre and Chocolate Box (4.4):**The lease for the Chocolate Box ends 30th July 2024. The tenant has the right to renew the lease at this point. The tenant will be issued with the new lease before 31st January 2024. Rent will be increased in line with the Consumer Price Index.  |
| 1.4.2 | **FR** - **Build Control** got in contact to chase up the final sign off for the BGC!! Obviously, we were under the impression from WTC that it was signed off. Build Control confirmed it was only ever partially signed off, this was for the shop area only. I met with the Build Control Officer the next day who was satisfied with the building. There are just 2 recommendations we need to complete, slow closures are to be installed on doors opening on to a corridor, I have engaged with EPS Fire to get these installed, and we need to make sure if anyone is in the building that the front door remains unlocked.Tudor Print have produced a **chalkboard sign** for the BGC (a) to show the ownership of the building so that residents know that APC owns it, (b) to give the contact number for booking the rooms, and (c) to be able advertise forthcoming events.I have changed the **electricity** to EDF, this tariff is substantially better and I am hoping the service will be better than British Gas Lite too. I have asked to Jen Taylor to **weed** the driveway at BGC. |
| 1.4.3 | **PJ** – Given that our budget for the next year is tight, I wanted to propose that, at least for now, we abandon the idea of asphalting the **area to the side** of the BGC, and just add a little more gravel and rake it so that it looks neater? |
| 1.5 | **FR - Folly Tree House (4.5):**We are now taking monthly **rent** for U2 and U3!I have met with Rob Monument to discuss **gritting** requirements for FTH. We have purchased a grit spreading device and shovel as without these the task would be quite laboursome and lengthy. Rob will be gritting when there is a weather warning for snow and ice in place.I have changed the **electricity** to EDF, this tariff is substantially better than what we had with SSE. I am in the process of trying to get the contract changed with EDF from a Economy7 contract to a single rate. As ever with utility companies, this is not a straightforward issue to resolve. I would like to be on a single rate as our sub meters have no functionality to read the night reads.I met with Cullum Line to get the errors in the car park corrected. There is a **line** in front of the bin store that still needs to be removed, unfortunately on the day there was a car parked in the space. Next time Cullum Line are in the area they will remove it.I have chased the **rates** department at BDC as we have not heard back from them yet and are still having to pay the rates on FTH.I met with **U1 tenants** to discuss plans for the unit. They hope to open mid-February, they will be operating as a Premier franchise. Jen Taylor will be refixing the fallen **fence** in the car park which adjoins the neighbour. She might not be able to do it straightaway but will let the neighbour know and safely store the panels until she is able to do the work. Jen will also sort fixing the container screening.A resident made contact querying whether the front doors to FTH had been approved by **Build Control**. I spoke with Build Control and they had received the door specs from WTC and they had been approved. Admittedly the doors are heavy so we decided that a simple **door bell** for assistance being installed on each front facing units would mitigate the problem. Barry and I have installed door bells and spoken to the tenants; I will get Tudor Print to make some small signs to go above them saying “ring for assistance”. All tenants have been sent an **out of hours** suppliers list and what to do in an emergency when the Clerks are off. This applies to the residential tenants, Fletcher Rooms and Chocolate Box as well. |
| 1.5.2 | **FR - Flats**The boilers in both flats have had their annual service.The fire alarm sounders have now been installed in both flats. The slow closures still need to be looked at, but I am currently sorting a date for this with EPS Fire. |
| 1.6 | **FR - Public Toilets (4.5):**The builders are taking quite some time to quote for the toilets, I think this is due to the nature of the work required; there are a lot of small jobs to quote for.  |
| **1.7** | **FR - Resilience Plan (4.7):**I’ve reviewed the limited paperwork that Pauline has on file. Perhaps the committee (Angela, Jamie, Sarah and Sally) could update the Council on Monday? |
| 1.8 | **Donation for the Acle Winter Beer Festival (4.8):**Adam Fisher has asked if APC might be prepared to pay for some of the costs, Profits will again be shared between local charities, including the Archive Group. Last year we paid invoices totalling £365. |
| 1.9 | **PJ** - I have worked out electricity usage for the **Christmas lights** and the payment list will include cheques to reimburse the shop owners.  |
| 1.10 | **FR –** BDC has re-confirmed the Public Toilets and the Library as **Assets of Community Value**. |
| 2 | **Correspondence Received and Meetings Attended:** |
| 2.1 | **FR - Standing Orders & Policies**I have reviewed and updated the Standing Orders. I have also gone through a few more of the policies and updated them where necessary. Pauline will be adding a couple of these to each upcoming meeting for approval. |
| 2.2 | **FR** – **Staff hours**My training day has moved to a Monday, from a Thursday, so my core hours will now be Wednesdays, Thursdays and Fridays, 10.00 - 3.00.Pauline’s Italian class has moved to a Monday so she will not be available on Monday mornings. Her core hours will be Tuesdays and Thursdays, with Monday afternoons.Kristina works Mondays and Thursdays, 10.00 - 3.00. |
| 2.3 | **PJ** – **Training**I have done two online training sessions on using **Canva**, which is an alternative to Publisher, and which we already use for the Community Newsletters etc. It can be used for posters, newsletters, pre-sized facebook posts etc, but also for basic websites, which could be suitable for when we publish documents for the revised Neighbourhood Plan or for the consultation on a possible loan for the new community building.One thing which was mentioned was that many councils have a **logo** for their correspondence and their websites etc. We have a very old drawing of the village sign, which is too low-definition to use online. Kristina has done a free online training course on **Mailchimp**, which could be useful for out consultation on the possible loan for the Fletcher Room and for our Neighbourhood Plan review. This software is free for up to 500 email addresses and can be used to send out newsletters and questionnaires. We will need to gather people’s email addresses. We can put up posters around the village with a QR code for people to scan, send out details via the school and pre-school newsletters, but also wondered about putting a flyer in Acle newspapers which are delivered from the Chocolate Box. |
| 2.4 | **PJ –** Details have been received about the ongoing court case about the **A47 dualling**.  |
| 2.5 | **PJ –** There is also some information on the proposed **Devolution Deal** for Norfolk. |
| 2.6 | **PJ - BDC and SNC Parish Forum – 10th January**This forum was online. They talked about the Pride in Place funding, Norfolk Environmental Credits to compensate for Nutrient Neutrality, and Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) where a development site has to be assessed for its biodiversity and a scheme has to be agreed to compensate for the loss when the land is used for housing.A summary report was received from the Society of Local Clerks on the new National Planning Policy Framework which was published by the Government in December. Note:* the requirement for a 5-year land supply has been removed
* emphasis on Neighbourhood Plans
* Older people’s housing need now has to be considered as a specific group
* Availability and quality of agricultural land should be considered
* Significant weight should be given to the need to support energy efficiency
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| 2.7 | **PJ –** We were sent some information on the **Serious Violence Duty**. We could invite someone to speak about this at the Annual Meeting? |
| 2.8 | **FR - Cycle to Work Scheme**Mick Ward has requested that we review the Cycle to Work Scheme as he would like an electric bike, I have started to review the scheme but I need to have a further conversation with Mick to discuss his needs before we go any further, the scheme is not straightforward. |
| 2.9 | **PJ** – taking on the **streetlights on the Norwich Road development:**This continues. |
| 2.10 | **PJ** - **Acle Methodist** have asked all hirers not to throw the paper towels down the toilets. |
| 2.11 | **PJ** - Jayne Smith was pleased to let us all know that the recent **Royal British Legion** poppy campaign raised over £11,000 in this area, which is a record. |
| 2.12 | **PJ –** Fiona’s CiLCA training has suggested that we should have three members of the **personnel committee**, so that there can be a majority decision, were that to be necessary. Personally, I feel that our current reviews with just Angela and Tony feel comfortable and appropriate, and that three councillors would feel a bit intimidating for the staff member, so I propose that you appoint a third person to be called upon when/if the personnel committee is meeting about something more formal? |
| **3** | **PJ - Planning: (Agenda item 5)**  |
| 3.1 | **For the meeting:Acle Academy** – multi-use sports courts (amended plans) (2023/1758)The fencing around the court is now 3m high, with 6m high ball nets along the boundaries with the neighbours. Environmental Health is proposing:*The use of the development shall not take place other than between the hours of 08:00; and 18:00; Monday to Friday. The use shall not be take place on Saturday, Sunday, bank holidays or public holidays.**No external lighting shall be erected unless full details of its design, location and level of illuminance (in Lux) provided have first been submitted to and agreed in writing with the local planning authority. Such lighting shall be kept to the minimum necessary for the purposes of security and site safety and shall prevent upward and outward light radiance.*  |
| 3.2 | **Police Station -** Hybrid application for conversion of an existing police station into 3 dwellings with Outline Consent and for construction of 2no. 4 bed dwellings (2024/0077). You can look online at BDC’s website, using the above planning number. |
| 3.3 | **For information:****Land North of Damgate Lane** – change of tenure from self-build to market housing (20212094). This came in between meetings. The original application for the 4 houses was permitted despite being outside the approved sites, because they were to be self-build. By changing this to market housing they have achieved the building of market housing on land outside the planning envelope. The majority of the planning committee who replied, objected to the proposed change in tenure. |
| 3.4 | **BDC’s Decisions:**i) **Enchanted Florist** (2023/3182) – Prior Approval for the change of use of a retail unit to a dwelling. BDC decided that no prior approval is required so that the unit may be changed into part of the house.ii) **Acle Garden Machinery** (2023/3382) – increase in size of storage building – approved.iii) **3 - 4 Calthorpe** **Cottages** (2023/3191) - Installation of a biomass heating system and PV panels – refused – unacceptable damage to a listed building. |
| 4.1 | **PJ - Finance Report: (Agenda item 6)** A finance report will be presented.  |
| **5** | **Recreation Centre: (Agenda item 7)** |
| 5.1 | The Outdoor Bowls have asked if APC could pay for half of the cost of new fencing? BDC said it was not appropriate use of S106 money as fencing is not really “sports equipment”. The total cost is £3,121 + VAT, so half would be £1,560.  |
| 6 | **Replacement of the Fletcher Room Community Building: (Agenda item 8)**  |
| 6.1 | **PJ** - The **report from the surveyor** who attended when the ceiling needed attention is in the folder. He basically says that the building should be ok for another year or so, which gives us time to get the design sorted and apply for grants and possibly a loan. |
| 6.2 | **KS** - Building replacement options have been discussed with various contractors however upon full due diligence the actions that need to take place before the build are significant.I have prepared a timeline showing the process we need to go through.**Lease with NPS** - this needs to be renewed before we are able to take further steps for funding and planning. I have been speaking to Kevin Brown at NPS, acting on behalf of Norfolk County Council. He has suggested a reversionary lease, and provided Heads of Terms for this. **Planning** - I am in discussion with Anthony at Broadland District Council about whether or not we need to apply for planning permission. From my research, I believe we will do, and will therefore need to apply for Outline Planning before we can take further steps for funding.**Funding** - Fiona has completed a separate document with details of the **loan** system, but this includes a consultation period of at least 1 month, and potentially a 3 month application period. There are also multiple **grants** we are eligible for that could help reduce the cost. Before we can apply for both loan & grants, we must have the lease and planning in place.**Tender** - we will have to put the contract out to tender and then consider the contractors/designs etc that come back from that.**Planning pt 2** - We will then need to complete full planning permission.There will need to be discussions with the **Primary Academy**, as we rely on them for access to be able to complete the build, as the land is encompassed with their land.In the meantime, between now and the build, I have requested a list from Hannah, the manager of the pre-school, about what realistically could be done to **improve** the building in the short term. Though we would not want to spend lots of money on it whilst looking to renew, there may be some minor things that would improve significantly the user experience, for example a more appealing ceiling board replacement rather than batons holding it up, a coat of paint, a fresh cupboard around the sink in the wet area. I have found a few grants in my grant research that we could apply for, that are for upkeep/improvement/repair of community facilities, which may even cover some or all of the costs.Further work to do with the Fletcher Rooms is a new **licence** with the pre-school, to ensure more robust terms that are in place with the current hirers agreement.I will report on **prices for replacement buildings at** the meeting. |
| 6.3 | **FR** - I have drafted a report for a Public Works Loan Board (PWLB) **Loan** for the Fletcher Rooms for when we are ready to consider this option. Loan applications are currently taking a couple of months to be approved. |
| 6.4 | **PJ** – at this stage I would like to ask you **to approve**:1. Moving forward with the extension of the lease with NCC
2. Starting the process for outline planning permission
3. Starting the grant application process
4. Agreeing to minor repairs to keep the building safe and attractive for users
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| 7 | **FR - Biodiversity Plan: (Agenda item 9)** |
| 7.1 | Richard, Jess and I met to discuss the draft **Biodiversity Action Plan**. There are a number of actions which need putting in place as soon as possible.I have asked the Men’s Shed to produce some **bird boxes, bug hotels & bat boxes** to go in our open spaces to enhance biodiversity and habitat. The Men’s Shed are happy to do this, we can provide them with a small donation. |
| 7.2 | DEFRA runs a **Bees’ Needs Week**. Sarah has suggested that we apply for a Bees’ Needs Champion Award. |
| 8 | **Highways (Agenda item 10)** |
| 8.1 | **PJ** - There have been a couple of complaints about the poor visibility when exiting Middlesex Terrace onto **Reedham Road**. NCC added the double yellow lines along Reedham Road, but left a white H-bar by the old Inspector’s House so as to allow some parking for a resident in Reedham Road who has no off-road parking and who said she needed parking as she had a disabled daughter. Lana Hempsall has said this can only be re-visited at the request of APC, since we commissioned the parking restrictions. |
| 8.2 | **FR** - I met with Paul Sellick from NCC Highways to discuss a number of items. We discussed the surface water which is coming off the A1064 and flooding **Boat Dyke Lane**, he will get his team out in a downpour to see were the water is breaching. We also discussed extending the lagoon area on Boat Dyke Lane, he is going to see what services are underground and have a discussion with the Highways Team and come back to me.We also looked at the corner from the A1064 and Old Road, after our discussion you will see that the H-bars are now in on both sides of the road in front of the **path through to Springfield**. He will also chase up the 30mph roundel. He discussed putting in another “slow” sign to the lefthand side of the road.I noted about the problems we have been having with the flooding at the end of **Pyebush Lane** and the top of the playing field. He will look into whether an additional water tank can be installed under the grassed area to the right as you approach the cemetery. He will also chase up for the existing tank to be emptied.We discussed the distance the **bollards on New Road** and how far they need to be from the highway, he has sent me through some further information on this.All in all, it was a very positive and proactive meeting.  |
| 8.3 | **PJ –** NCC are consulting on two changes to the **parking restrictions**; one is to correct the name of Old Foundry Court, which they have as Old Forge Court on their maps, and to amend the measurement of the double yellow lines on the east side of The Street, opposite Crossways Terrace – both are just technical adjustments to errors made by NCC, but will not affect the situation on the roads. |
| 8.4 | **FR** - There have been a number of **street lights** go out, these have been reported and are all due for a LED replacement.  |
| 8.5 | **PJ** - The **bollards** have arrived for New Road and will be fitted as soon as our contractors are free. |
| 9 | **PJ - Finance Policies: (Agenda item 11)** |
|  | The following are for review and approval:**Finance Regulations** – with some amendments on pages 14-17 to reflect current practice and the requirements for getting quotes for work over £25,000.**Review of Internal Controls** – with some amendments to reflect current practice**Review of Audit** – no amendments**Role of Responsible Financial Officer** – no amendmentsWe need to review and adopt these policies ready for the internal audit and the Annual Return in May. |
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|  | Pauline, Fiona and Kristina – 24th January 2024 |