

The Annual Meeting of the Parish of Acle on Monday, 22nd April 2024
Held in the Methodist Church at 7.00pm

Present:

Acle Parish Councillors: Jamie Pizey (Acting Chair), Sally Aldridge, Sarah Carter, Jackie Clover, Indra Goodson, Tony Hemmingway, Wendy Kenny and Jess Royal, parish clerk Pauline James, deputy clerk Fiona Richardson, assistant clerk Kristina Smyth and 29 residents.

Apologies:

Parish Councillors Barry Coveley, Richard Powell and David Stephenson.

Police Report:

The parish clerk gave a report from the local police officers; Acle remains a very safe place to live. Policing priorities remain anti-social behaviour and speeding.

Minutes of the 2023 Meeting:

The minutes of the meeting held on 17th April 2023 were approved, and were signed by Acle Parish Council Acting Chair Jamie Pizey, on behalf of the Meeting.

Matters Arising from these Minutes:

1. Norfolk County Council added signage to the bus shelters in The Street to indicate direction of travel.
2. Norfolk County Council plans to repair the road surface in The Street during Summer 2024.

Acle Parish Council Annual Report:

Jamie Pizey read a report which is appended to these minutes.

Broadland District Council and Norfolk County Council:

There was no report.

Acle Good Neighbours and Foodbank:

Sally Aldridge gave a report which is appended to these minutes.

Acle Lands Trust and Beeline:

The parish clerk read out a report from Richard Powell. The trustees and volunteers continue to work on the various sites in the village, along with the Bure Valley Conservation Group volunteers. Areas include Damgate Woods, Roman Wood, Constable Doles, Weavers Way, Churchyard, new Cemetery in Pyebush Lane, Fletcher Room. Residents are invited to help with the resurfacing of the path through Damgate Woods in June.

Areas on grass verges will be left uncut until September to enable the grass and flowers to grow. 78 species were identified last year. Some turf has been stripped away and wildflowers planted, to enable them to grow more easily.

Acle Recreation Centre:

Trustee Barry Brooks gave a report which is appended to these minutes.

Acle Pre-School:

Acle Pre-School Chairman Dave Savory gave a report; Acle Pre-School provides a much-needed service for local families. The recent Ofsted inspection gave a “Good” overall report, with elements which are “outstanding”. A recent grant was used to pay for an outdoor “classroom” area which has increased the facilities at the Fletcher Room. Fundraising continues, to add to the service offered to the children. There are now ten part-time employees, all trained or currently undertaking training. A burst pipe caused the building to be closed for a few days in 2023, but the building was soon up and running again, thanks to the staff and the Parish Council. Some funds were reimbursed by the insurance company. The Pre-School is currently full and has a waiting list. New Government funding has increased demand for places. Dave thanked the Parish Council for their support.

The Parish Council had recently delivered newsletters to Acle homes, including a consultation as to whether residents would support the Parish Council providing a replacement community building, to be mainly let to Acle Pre-School, and whether they would support this, if it resulted in the need to obtain a loan of up to £300,000. It appears that there are many suitable grants available, so the Council expects the amount of the loan needed to be significantly less than £300,000, but has to consult on the worst case scenario.

In response to questions from the public:

1. The new outdoor “classroom” would be able to be re-used if/when the replacement building is installed.
2. The current location is very successful due to its proximity to the primary school. It had been planned to move the Pre-School into part of the former Barclays building, now Folly Tree House but, once Norfolk County Council had confirmed that it was prepared to extend the lease for the land, it was felt that the proximity to the Primary School made the current site a better option.
3. All but two of the children attending the Pre-school are Acle children.

Parishioners’ Comments and Questions:

1. There was a question about delays in the refurbishment of the former Barclays building, and a loss of rent from Barclays. The parish clerk confirmed that Barclays Bank had given notice, in accordance with the terms of their lease, and had paid over £50,000, (*the actual figure was £64,525*), as compensation for the poor state of the building when they moved out. The councillors reminded the meeting that the Covid pandemic had caused delays with getting building works started.
2. There was a question about how often the new Community Building might be used by other groups. The parish clerk explained that the Recreation Centre rooms were mostly fully booked in evenings so the new room might be useful for those groups, even if perhaps on an irregular basis.
3. There was a question about the decision to purchase and refurbish Folly Tree House and the Chocolate Box. The parish clerk stated that the Council placed great importance of maintaining and/or increasing footfall in the village centre and had wanted to keep these buildings available for businesses so as to increase opportunities and services for local residents.
4. There were complaints about drivers driving in excess of the appropriate speed in Damgate Lane. The clerks will contact Norfolk County Council to ask about possible speed reduction measures.

5. There were complaints about poor visibility to the right when exiting Damgate Lane. The clerks will contact Norfolk County Council to ask if anything can be done to improve visibility.
6. It was noted that the new posts on the verges in New Road had not stopped the all-day parking. The parish clerk explained that Norfolk County Council had told the Parish Council where to install the posts, ie set in from the kerb, and that the posts would at lease protect most of the verge from damage from parking.
7. There was a complaint that the wildflower planting last year had grown so tall that it made visibility difficult when exiting New Close. The clerk confirmed that the planting was planned so as to leave a strip of verge cut as normal so as to keep the visibility clear. This will be monitored during the summer.
8. Acle Allotments Association reported that they would be holding a plant sale and an open day in the summer. They are also fundraising to provide a defibrillator on an outside wall at The Hermitage.
9. Issues with parking in Reedham Road were raised but have already been reported to Norfolk County Council.
10. There was a question about when the footway in Leffins Lane was going to be constructed. The clerk reported that she was aware of discussions between Norfolk County Council, Network Rail and the developer and that the footway was still going to be constructed.
11. The clerks were asked to report to Norfolk County Council that the tree to the south of the junction of Damgate Lane and Reedham Road has epicormic growth which impedes visibility to the left when exiting Damgate Lane.
12. There was a request to plant some trees at the rear of the grass verges along New Road. The clerks will contact Norfolk County Council to ask if this might be possible, without affecting visibility when exiting New Close.

There being no further business the meeting was closed at 8.38p.m.

Signed.....
 Chair of the Parish Council on behalf of the Meeting

Dated.....