

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF HAPPISBURGH PARISH COUNCIL
HELD AT THE WENN EVANS CENTRE ON 17th SEPTEMBER 2012 AT 7.30PM**

Present:

**Cllr Glenn Berry (Chairman), Cllr David Mole, Cllr George Siely, Cllr Kirsty Ritchie, Cllr
Cubitt Siely, Cllr Kim Holt, Cllr Thomas Love,
County Cllr Paul Morse, District Cllr Lee Walker
Jo Beardshaw (Clerk)
18 members of the public**

- 1. Apologies for Absence.** The Chairman reported that Cllr Greeno had resigned from the Parish Council. Apologies had been received from Cllr Stockton
- 2. To receive Declarations of Interest on agenda items.** There were no declarations of interest
- 3. To agree the minutes of the meeting of Happisburgh Parish Council held on 16th July 2012 and matters arising** (for information only). The Parish Council agreed the minutes of the last meeting. Brian Farrow, Coast Protection Engineer, had attended the meeting and the Chairman asked him to make a report under Matters Arising regarding the metal steps:

Matters Arising - Metal Steps:

Mr Farrow noted that he wished to respond to a recent letter in the press entitled 'Taking The Wrong Steps'. Mr Farrow said that various questions were raised, which he wished to respond to:

Mr Farrow explained that the first question had been to ask why NNDC had ignored the consultants that they had employed to report on the steps. His response was that he had received two reports from the same firm, the first advising that a prop could be used to extend the life of the steps, and then an addendum to the first report revising their original opinion and advising the removal of the steps until we better understand the erosion processes at work.

Mr Farrow then responded to the question asking why the Council has gone against its own procedures regarding the petition. The council had not gone against its own procedures.. He explained to the Parish Council that the petition did not fulfil the policy criteria which requires the people signing the petition must live, work or study in North Norfolk. This petition had been mainly supported by people outside the district and that a full North Norfolk District Council debate would only take place after 1500 signatures from local people had been received. In addition, the Council could not do what the petition requested because it is not feasible to keep the steps in the current location.

Mr Farrow then responded to the question asking why residents and visitors to Happisburgh were not consulted on the removal of the steps. Mr Farrow reported that he had worked closely for the last three years with both the community and Parish Council of Happisburgh and in his opinion he did not believe there was any significant opposition to this common sense approach.

Mr Farrow then responded to the question asking why there was ever discussion of the use of the metal steps elsewhere in the County. He noted that these discussions had taken place whilst he was on holiday and when he returned he explained why this was not feasible; ie that the Parish Council wished to keep the steps until they could potentially be reinstated

Mr Farrow then responded to the question asking why more than £10,000 had been spent on the removal of the steps. Mr Farrow believed that even if the steps were to be retained now, they would have to be dismantled and removed to a location closer to the cliff edge and that money would have been spent anyway. Mr Farrow also noted that if the steps can be replaced at some point in the future, they will try to do so

Mr Farrow then responded to the question asking why NNDC had removed the sea defences. Mr Farrow noted that they did not remove the sea defences; they had failed when the beach eroded and were lying on the beach.

Lastly, Mr Farrow responded to the question asking why so much money had been spent on the new ramp. The new ramp was not an expensive item. It was designed as part of a major project to remove old defences, provide a new car park and toilet block and to open up the new embayment for the community and visitors alike. This whole scheme had been part of a major consultation process with the village and was seen by all as a positive attribute. The ramp had to be cut to remove the old defences so it was common sense to link it to the car park and amenity area and keep it for the future. It was always designed thus. It was always known and understood that it would gradually erode and there is a large amenity area into which it will move. Finally he noted that since the start of the process the Council had always made a promise to the people of Happisburgh that the ramp would stay open so that access could always be maintained.

A member of the public asked if a sign could be given back to the owners following some work on the beach. Mr Farrow agreed that this would be done. The member of the public commented that they found it ironic that the petition had been ignored when the Pathfinder was set up for the purpose of giving more choice to people who are affected by erosion. She also commented that she was confused over why so much money had been spent on one part of the village, ignoring the rest of the village. She also asked if the consultants saw the erosion every day, as she herself did. Mr Farrow stated that Pathfinder had been set up to help people respond to the coastal change and had succeeded in its remit. Mr Farrow also said that it was logical that a fund which purported to help people respond to coastal change should be specifically spent for that purpose. With regard to 'visible' erosion, it was more important to record and then understand the long term impacts.

The member of the public went on to suggest that a new concrete pad be placed nearer the cliff, on to which the steps could then be moved in as necessary. Mr Farrow replied that if the erosion rates prove to stabilise that could be one of the solutions considered. However, we must remember that Natural England would definitely not allow us to interfere with the cliffs nor build on the face of them because the cliff is a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). Because of this, the cliff could not be altered or affected in any way under any circumstances

District Councillor Lee Walker then wished to report that only 124 signatories on the petition were from the village and that she was disappointed that the organisers of the petition were not at the meeting because she wished to reply to their comments regarding her personally. She noted that she did not feel that they were in possession of the full facts and that her absence at the previous meeting was due to the fact that she suffers from MS, had suffered a major relapse and had to call an ambulance. Cllr Walker reported that she hoped that her statement and openness would ensure that she received no more personal attacks

Cllr Love asked what the organisers of the petition had specifically wanted. The petition asked to:- "re-open the metal steps to allow residents and visitors to access the west beach at Happisburgh" and "to look again at the options for reinstating the bridge to the steps, including making the bridge a design feature". Mr Farrow replied that the methodology of a petition requests a clear and concise statement. The statement had asked that the steps be retained. This is not feasible. The signatories of a petition should be those who live, work or study in North Norfolk.

Cllr G Siely stated that he is constantly in and around the village, and is very often asked for help/ advice and is often given opinions on decisions (in his role as a Parish Councillor). He had never once received any comments, questions or complaints regarding the steps.

The Chairman noted that his experience was very similar, he is known by many people throughout the village and is often asked about village affairs, but has only received a written complaint about the steps from one person.

Mr Farrow detailed the recent erosion: that 3 metres of cliff had been lost from January 2003 to March 2012, making 3 metres of erosion in 9 years thus an annual erosion rate of approximately 330 mm per annum. But from March 2012 to July 2012 there had been about 3 metres of erosion in 4 months, making the annual erosion rate some 9 metres per annum. It is that there had been more erosion in 4 months of 2012 than there had been in the previous 8 years and that it was sensible to take a cautious view of a future erosion scenario.

A member of the public stated that he had been involved with the sea defences and coast at Happisburgh for many years, and that there had always been huge attempts to save the beach. He noted that Natural England would not allow anyone to touch the cliffs and that a geologist report had detailed that under the cliff the ground was very unstable. He explained that every effort that had been made over the years to save that part of the beach had been thwarted by Natural England. He felt that the metal steps should never have been put there because they were never safe enough or reliable enough and they were never supposed to last very long and were put in as a temporary measure. He explained that he felt the steps only serve the caravan park and Hill House. He requested reassurance from Mr Farrow that there would continue to be funds to look after the existing ramps. Mr Farrow responded that they are totally committed to maintaining the ramps.

Various members of the Council and public asked Mr Farrow if there were any possibility of putting a ramp at the Coast Guard station. Mr Farrow replied that he doubted it but would look again at the possibility. Mr Farrow added that he had no agenda, he was simply keen to work with the community of Happisburgh to maintain a beach access.

A member of the public noted that the sand bags at the bottom of the ramp are very unsightly. Mr Farrow agreed but commented that they were an experiment but that they had done a good job throughout the summer in maintaining a free access to & from the ramp. He would favour extending the rock armour to protect the toe of the ramp.

Various suggestions were made for permanent structures near the ramp. Mr Farrow repeated that it is critical that the ramp remain completely flexible and moveable and that no permanent structures should be added to it. He also noted that there has never been a claim that the ramp should give disabled access to the beach.

Cllr Love explained that on November 9th 2007 15 metres were lost to the sea in one night and that the spray was three times higher than the cliffs.

A member of the public noted that when the metal steps were put in in 2003, there were a huge amount of complaints about the steps. Every person who wrote in wished for the steps to be removed. He added that he felt that the facts expressed in the letter in the press were incorrect. In particular, he emphasised that the metal steps were always meant as a temporary measure because of the constantly evolving nature of the coast.

A member of the public noted that she had holiday homes along the coast and all her guests without exception preferred the ramp to the steps as they had found the steps dangerous.

Mr Farrow thanked Leoni Hughes and Rosemary Munday for their work on trying to clear the 'historic' debris from the beach.

Cllr Ritchie asked that a poster be put in the car park with a telephone number to ring if there is a problem with the ramp. Mr Farrow agreed.

Matters Arising – miscellaneous:

The Chairman noted that the problems with the toilet seats in the car park toilet block had been fixed. Cllr Love requested that if any further vandalism occurs the Council should research anti-vandalism items

The Chairman also reported that the Parish Council had had to pay business rates for the car park

The Chairman thanked Cllr Love for his recent grass cutting within the village

4. Reports

4.1 The Chairman's report: the Chairman reported that NNDC would be putting a life belt at the top of the ramp. He also reported recent fly tipping on Lantern Lane. He informed the Council that the Jubilee Dog Show had raised £4,275, which would be put towards two defibrillators for the village. He would be arranging for a letter in the parish news asking for possible locations for these defibrillators. The Parish Council congratulated the Chairman on raising this sum of money. He noted that more bins were required at the car park as these were sometimes overflowing.

4.2 District and County Councillor reports: District Councillor Lee Walker reported that the problem with vandalism at Cart Gap had been resolved. She also said that there are issues surrounding Council Tax at the moment, with a required saving of £1.7 million. She noted that with the current plans the poorest in the community would lose £30 to £40 per month and that around four thousand people would be hit. A full Council meeting would be at the end of September and various alternative proposals would be discussed, possibly reducing 2nd home discounts. She also noted that the East of England Ambulance service had changed their view thanks to Mr and Mrs Burke from Happisburgh and various other parties. Cllr Walker voiced her concern over the amount of 'Freedom of Information' requests being currently made to the District Council. She said that approximately ten were being made per week with the cheapest costing around £450. This totalled around £50K per year when (she felt) that a simple telephone call may suffice. She noted that whilst the

legislation for these requests is excellent, in the current economic climate they were very expensive

County Councillor Paul Morse reported that discussions continued to take place regarding the school and car park. He also reported that some work had been done to attempt to reduce flooding in Grubb Street, but that it hadn't rained since. He also noted that a sign was programmed to try to prevent turning after the car park on Beach Road

A member of the public thanked Cllr Morse for organising signs recently

4.3 Police report.

There had been seven crimes reported between the 20th July and the 12th of August.

4.4 Car Park / toilet block report.

The car park was running smoothly. There were some issues with 'surfer parties' where people were over-using the toilet block due to overnight parking elsewhere. A member of the public agreed to look into this, as these people were parking on her land and using the toilet block. She agreed to let these people know that they would not be allowed to park there in future if they continued to cause a problem

The member of the public noted that NNDC had agreed that she should have a gate and fence. The Chairman asked the Council's opinion on allowing a gate to be built in to the fence. Cllr Love noted that he understood that an agreement had been made but that NNDC must not allow an alternative car park to be used to the Parish Council car park. The Chairman agreed to write to Rob Goodliffe with the Council's concerns. The member of the public clarified that the only people allowed to park on her land are disabled people and people who need to park whilst the community car park is closed. She explained that she does not make a charge.

The member of the public explained that she required a gate to alleviate issues with public liability insurance and that she could not have a gate until the Lessee (Happisburgh Parish Council) agrees

4.5 Pavilion and Playingfield report.

It was reported that the playingfield gang mowers were worn and would not last another season. The Council agreed to pay for the repair of the mowers (as per quotation) as soon as required. The Playingfield accounts currently stood at £619.91. On September 30th there would be a sports afternoon with competitions and on October 19th there would be a quiz night in the Wenn Evans Centre. In addition, on November 3rd there would be a jumble sale. All these events were to raise money for the playingfield. A request was made for the Cricket Club to use the bar on Saturday October 11th, with a member of the cricket club running the bar. The Council agreed to this, on the condition that all requirements had been met. A request was made for a seven day license rather than the current license for Wednesdays, Saturdays and Sundays. Cllr Ritchie questioned whether perhaps this would affect the pub because she believed that they received a rebate because they are the only bar open in the village apart from on the odd occasion. The Council agreed to add this item to the next agenda. A member of the public reported that there was often dog mess on the playingfield. The Chairman said that he would look into the possibility of acquiring a dog exclusion order.

The Chairman reported that he would arrange for the bench in the play area to be repaired, and thanked Cllr Mole for his work on the play area recently.

4.6 Allotments report

Cllr G Siely noted that monitoring and warning letters had gone to an allotment tenant. The Council agreed that he should have a lock with five keys cut.

4.7 Wenn Evans Centre report

Cllr Mole thanked Cllr Love for arranging to have some welding done on tables. The electrical certificate had been received. The Centre had been offered a fridge by the Church Rooms. Cllr Mole thanked them for the offer, and informed the Council that he would be taking the old fridge to the recycling centre

4.8 Playspace report

The Playspace committee had written to all Councillors requesting that the playspace project be taken under the auspices of the Parish Council. This was for legal reasons. She explained that, regarding costs, there would be some additional insurance implications. The committee would be applying to the Community Construction Fund and had been advised to expect not more than 90% funding. Cllr Love raised the possibility of having the Playspace behind the toilet block in the car park. He then offered to discuss the possibility of the Playspace going into his field (ie that he may be prepared to donate some of this land to the Playspace). The Playspace Committee agreed to discuss this kind offer with Cllr Love and to look into regulations concerning proximity of Playspace to residential property. The Parish Council agreed to take the playground under the umbrella of the Parish Council and that the Playingfield Sub-Committee would be responsible for monitoring activity

It was reported that NNDC, together with Leoni Hughes and Rosemary Munday and various others had undertaken beach cleaning over a period of four days. They had initially believed that the metal could have been a source of revenue but had discovered that this was not the case. Rob Goodliffe had agreed that NNDC would supply a bin and provide finance if necessary. The Parish Council agreed that the bin would be sited behind the toilet block at the car park and that it would be locked, with a hole for beach debris

Cllr Love suggested that the Council may wish to look favourably on any future requests for assistance with play equipment, bearing in mind that the Playspace committee had worked so hard on beach cleaning

5. Adjourn the meeting for public session / comments on planning applications and any other matters

A member of the public requested an update on the noticeboards. The Parish Council agreed that a carpenter should be asked to make the boards in order to speed up the process

A member of the public asked for information concerning their advertising posters, which had been removed. She explained that the posters (for Nero's dog biscuits) were in aid of a charity and all the posters had been recently removed. The Council were not able to shed light on the issue, but had no objection to the posters

6. Agenda items

Code of Conduct. The Clerk would be going on a training course concerning code of conduct, and would report back at the next meeting

7. Financial Matters

Bank balances were noted. The following cheques were authorised and signed:

- Chq no.513. Glenn Berry. Teknomek. 3 x toilet roll holders. £154.80 inc VAT
- Chq no.514. Playsafety Ltd. Annual inspection. £75.60 inc VAT
- Chq no.515. Mazars External Auditors. Audit fee. £144 inc VAT
- Chq no.516. Clerk salary and expenses. £450.04
- Chq no.517. Happisburgh Primary School. Donation towards Jubilee coins. £200
- Chq no.518. Transfer to new Co-op account to manage car park. £16,076.28

8. Planning applications

Two applications for Lawful Development Certificates had been received. They had been sent by NNDC as a matter of courtesy. The addresses concerned were The Bolt Hole, Grubb Street and 'Yenga', 1 Barton Road.

9. Planning decisions

None

10. Correspondence and Circulars for information and action

NALC. AGM paperwork. Request for nomination of officers. None were received

Mazars External Auditors. Audit approved and returned. Noted

NNDC. Refund of £150.07 waste disposal additional charge for 2012/13 paid in July.

Noted

NNDC. North Norfolk Coastal Issues Forum. 10th September. 2pm. The Chairman had attended this meeting

Cromer Town Council. Meeting regarding East of England Ambulance Service cuts. 17th October. Noted

11. Any other business

The Chairman informed the Council that Cllr Greeno had resigned from his position as Parish Councillor and also as Link Governor to the School. The Chairman thanked Cllr Greeno for his work on the Parish Council and explained that the Council would be following the normal course of action after the resignation of a Councillor.

12. Date of next meeting – Monday 12th November

The meeting closed at 9.50pm