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Date: 28 February 2020
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**To: ALL LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTORS
IN THE TOWN OF DISS**

ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

I write to inform you that the Annual Parish Meeting will be held on **Thursday 5th March 2020** at 6:00pm at the **Diss Youth & Community Centre**, Shelfanger Road, Diss.

Please note that this is a meeting of the electors of the town of Diss and as such all residents of Diss are cordially invited to attend and raise local issues.

Councillors are encouraged to attend in support of the Town Mayor.

Yours sincerely

Councillor Sonia Browne
Town Mayor

AGENDA

1. Welcome by the Town Mayor of Diss
2. To approve as a true record the minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on Thursday 9th May 2019 (copy herewith)
3. Annual Report on the activities of Diss Town Council
4. Report from the Diss Youth Council
5. Report from the Norfolk County Council Member for Diss (herewith)
6. Report from South Norfolk District Council Member(s) for Diss
7. Issues Raised by Electors (Q&A)

To be followed by the presentation of awards to the Honoured & Junior Good Citizens.

ANNUAL DISS TOWN MEETING
DRAFT MINUTES

Minutes of the proceedings of the **Annual Meeting of Duly Registered Local Government Electors** held in the Diss Youth & Community Centre, Shelfanger Road, Diss on **Thursday 9th May 2019 at 6.30pm.**

Present: Councillor Trevor Wenman (Town Mayor) in the Chair
Sarah Richards (Town Clerk)
Sonya French (Deputy Town Clerk)
Councillors Browne (Deputy Town Mayor), Crawford, Howard, Kitchen,
Mason, Olander (Council Leader), Robertson & Taylor
County/District Councillor Keith Kiddie
Former District Councillor Tony Palmer
3 representatives from the Police
3 Youth Councillors
1 Member of the Press
33 electors

1. WELCOME BY THE TOWN MAYOR OF DISS

Councillor Trevor Wenman welcomed those in attendance to the annual parish meeting of Diss.

2. MINUTES OF LAST MEETING

The minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on Tuesday 1st May 2018 were agreed as a correct record and duly signed by the Town Mayor.

3. ANNUAL REPORT FROM DISS TOWN COUNCIL

Councillor Trevor Wenman presented a report of the activities of the Town Council over the last 12 months, which included; investment in the roadways & roundabout at Diss Cemetery (in partnership with local organisations); netting of the Park Pavilion to reduce the bird droppings in this area; working with the Diss Youth Council to upgrade the Park play equipment & Skateboard Park on Shelfanger Road using developer contributions from the Longmeadow estate; improvements to the Diss Youth & Community Centre site including more flexible hire spaces for existing and new users and the completion of the £3.4million Heritage Triangle Project, which has seen the restoration & extension of the Corn Hall, the development of the streetscape around the 'Triangle' & the creation of a new garden & boardwalk across the Mere.

Assets from South Norfolk District Council are to be transferred to the Town Council. Suffolk County Council is managing around 230 streetlights & have started to convert the lamps from sodium to more environmentally friendly and more cost-effective LED lamps. Retaining public toilets at Mere's Mouth was a key issue for the town and works to refurbish the facility will be undertaken by South Norfolk Council's contractors in the next few months.

The success of this year's events was celebrated particularly the Carnival (9th June 2019) & Christmas Lights Switch-on event, overseen by the Town Council but primarily organised by small groups of volunteers. Other forthcoming events include; a Ukulele Busk (15th June); third Diss Cyclathon (23rd June); Fun in the Sun on 20th July (collaboration between Park Radio & Diss & District Rotary Club); the Heritage Transport Fayre (15th September) & regular car boot sales on the Park starting from 2nd June.

Improvements to infrastructure included the project spearheaded by Doreen Collins and in partnership with local businesses and the Town Council to install planters (Floral Diss) along Mere Street, working in partnership with Norfolk County Council to influence positive highway related changes (NCC has invested approximately £1million in Diss' road network this year).

Reference was also made to the Town Council's role as a consultee only on planning applications most notably this year the revised Marston's application for the site south of Park Road being refused for the second time and the community's support of the Parish Fields site.

Finally, the considerable staffing & councillor changes were highlighted to include; the change in Town Clerks; new Deputy Clerk; change in Council Leader; new Deputy Mayor role and change to councillors. Eligible candidates were encouraged to put themselves forward for co-option.

Chairman of Diss Youth Council, Kieran Murphy, advised members of the wide range of activities they have been involved in since their launch in September 2018 including dementia awareness plays, attendance at events, gardening, an intergenerational project serving up a festive social luncheon and market research with young people regarding how to spend developer contributions.

4. ANNUAL REPORT FROM THE COUNTY COUNCILLOR FOR DISS

County Councillor Keith Kiddie provided a report on his activities as the County Council representative for Diss. The different functions of the three tiers of local authorities was explained and electors were encouraged to use the relevant contacts in the literature provided. The broad range of responsibilities for Norfolk County Council as the fifth largest county in England, was explained and include highways, adult & social care, education and broadband services. It was also emphasised how the three authorities work in collaboration with each other, exemplified recently by the retention of the Children's Centre provision in Diss.

5. ANNUAL REPORT FROM MEMBERS OF SOUTH NORFOLK COUNCIL REPRESENTING DISS

Former District Councillor Palmer reported on his memorable achievements over the last 12 years as member of South Norfolk Council representing Diss most notably, the donation of the Mere fountain & Town Mayor's robes, the late Glyn Walden's contribution to the Corn Hall, Cittaslow movement, improved links with the Police, representative of the Town Council for Diss Museum and the Citizens Advice Bureau, contribution as member of South Norfolk Council's Planning committee, and his work on the rail station travel plan including the proposed Nelson Road link. He thanked former and existing Town Councillors, his supporters & concluded that he has been honoured to have served Diss & South Norfolk as a great place to live.

6. ISSUES RAISED BY ELECTORS

Several issues were raised by electors including:

- a) The difference between a pelican and zebra / tiger crossing. It was noted that a pelican crossing has traffic lights and cost considerably more to install & maintain than the new tiger crossing installed outside the leisure centre.
- b) Eligibility criteria for a Town Councillor. It was noted that applicants have to be at least 18 years of age, British or a citizen of the Commonwealth or European Union, registered to vote in the area or have lived, worked or owned property there for a least 12 months before an election.
- c) Contribution towards the current environmental concerns. Diss Youth Councillors advised that they would consider this in liaison with their Friends of the Earth representative and the Town Council welcomes any ideas and/or support of the community on the subject.
- d) Condition of dilapidated buildings. It was noted that South Norfolk District Council only has powers to act if the building is deemed to be unsafe. Otherwise, it is the building owner's responsibility.
- e) Street cleaning. It was noted this is the responsibility of South Norfolk Council and the business owners for the area outside their premises. More regular street cleaning was requested.
- f) The relocation of the Visitor Information service from Mere Street to the Corn Hall. It was noted that this was a decision by South Norfolk Council due to the considerable costs of running the service and the data which proved that a very small percentage of visits were visitor related.
- g) Mere Street pedestrianisation. It was noted that this is an option currently being explored by the Town Council in liaison with businesses, residents, the Police & higher tier authorities. There are potential locations for delivery vehicle drop off points on Market Place in addition to the Mere Street loading and unloading bays opposite Mere's Mouth.

h) Wetherspoons development. It was noted that the applicant is dealing with two legal matters with adjacent landowners prior to arranging a site meeting to agree construction requirements. The Town Council will be involved in this process & will advise accordingly.

The meeting was followed by the presentation of awards to past serving Town councillors (Kayt Button, Michael Crawford, Mary Gibson, Chris Liggett, Fiona & Trevor Wenman) the Honoured & Junior Good Citizens (Jim Bidwell & Zinhle Moyo) and the Mayor's charities (Mind & Tearfund).

The meeting was declared closed at 8.09pm.

Signed as a true record - _____
TOWN MAYOR

County Councillor Kiddie report

Roads:

- Not as much spent this year as last (£1M +) because we "front loaded" the work so there would be little disruption last year, especially over the summer.
- However points to note are, the radar operated traffic light on the railway bridge on Sandy lane, which are now operating very well.
- The Zebra crossing outside the swimming pool, again working well now that all the signage and extra lighting has been installed.
- Drains around Morrisons roundabout installed and seems to have solved the flooding problem at the Morrison's zebra crossing.
- At present, lots of preparatory work has been undertaken re the station car park/Nelson road exit scheme, and the Vince's Road/A1066 junction scheme. £1million funding is now in place, plans have been drawn, just a few legal hurdles to overcome
- At present we have many problems with potholes and the margins of some roads, especially Walcot Green and Sandy lane. The problem has been exacerbated because of the amount of rain, which has made some of this work impossible until we get a bit of a dry spell.

Diss Children's Centre:

- At one point it looked as though all the children's centres would be closed, however a concerted effort by local groups and myself, got the head of Children's services to visit the centre and convinced him that it was fit for purpose. To that end the centre was retained, and children's services continued to be supplied for the larger region from this hub.

Local Grants:

- As part of SNDC and NCC, we have received a number of grants to local groups. Most notable being a major grant to the Diss Bowls club, and a Community Action Fund grant to the Woodland School in Roydon.
- As part of my duties, I have spent a great deal of time and effort with regard to the County Boundary review, which is currently ongoing. Perhaps the easiest thing to say is that after all the efforts, it is expected that the Diss and Roydon Division is expected to be unchanged.

District Annual Report 2020

Currently at South Norfolk Council I represent the Diss and Roydon ward along with Keith and Graham, I am on the Scrutiny committee, the Peoples & Communities Committee and the Licensing committee.

I enjoy working with Diss Town council and Roydon Parish council. We live in a very vibrant area with lots going on and there is always something for residents to get involved with if they want.

Over the last year I have awarded my members grant money of £1,000 between The Friends of Parish Fields for fencing work and Roydon a grant towards planting of shrubs and plants. I was also pleased to see the Community Action Grants for Diss athletics club and Roydon outdoor school. Next year I will have my £1,000 members grant available for local projects and I'm pleased to say that South Norfolk Council has allocated an extra £50,000 to the CAF fund for next year at it's recent budget meeting.

We have very successful leisure centres across South Norfolk including Diss and during the last year I was pleased to see the installation of the outdoor table tennis table on Fair Green and the PING table tennis table at the Rugby Club. We are rolling out more PING tables next year for communities to enjoy so look out for information about this project in our next LINK magazine which is delivered to every household in South Norfolk in the next few weeks.

We continue to work with Broadland District Council and we now have one officer team working across the the two councils. One of the main reasons for our collaboration with Broadland was to make savings to close the funding gaps in the Council's Medium Term financial Plans, for South Norfolk we anticipate that £1m of savings will be delivered next financial year (20/21) with estimated gross savings in the region of £5m over the next five years.

I would like to mention our waste operators (bin men) who are out and about in all weathers doing a great job collecting our bins, I hear many good coments about them. We have also launched our annual Big Litter Pick which many groups and communties get involved with to help keep South Norfolk clean and tidy and they all get a chance to win £200 for their group.

I look forward to working with everyone in Diss and Roydon over the next year.

Thanks,
Jenny Wilby

South Norfolk District Councillor Report to Annual Town Meeting

We have transformed the Council to be agile and responsive to residents needs with some of the highest performing services to residents of any Council in England.

We live within our means and have gone beyond a reliance on Council Tax adding a variety of sources from trading and housebuilding so that this income is now greater than Council tax.

We have constantly reinvented the Council to break the mould. We've gone further than most districts in forming an completely integrated single service with Broadland with the scale of 250,000 residents with the power of a dedicated team on terms and conditions fit for the 21st Century that can redefine, reimagine and rewire what a Council can do.

We've done all that whilst freezing Council Tax for 8 years when it made sense to do so and have increased it in accordance with a long-term plain-pricing plan when it didn't. The result is healthy balances, stable income, top-ranked performance and efficient running.

The work we do one family at a time, one street at a time and one place at a time helps everyone make the best of their lives so they can play the fullest role in Our Local Society.

Our FIRST team has a 100pc success rate in helping people with complex needs stay in their new accommodation for at least the first 12 months. 1,830 people were assisted by our help hub in the first nine months of this year. Over 2,046 residents received support to keep independent at home in the same period. 370 new homes with an affordable tenure have been completed so far this year, of which 188 have been taken on by RSLs. And our Community Connectors work in all 120 South Norfolk parishes to solve problems rather than manage caseloads. They visit people in their home to ensure they get what they're entitled. 4,500 families have been helped so far this year too.

Over two thirds of service enquiries now come online. And if somebody does need a hand, new housing and benefit applications are sorted within 5 days. Something any Council could be proud of but so few achieve.

For the first time ever, we will see more than one million visits to Council-run leisure facilities this year whilst getting close to our long held dream of cost neutrality following investments in Ketts Park, Long Stratton and Framingham Earl despite an wholly unexpected VAT ruling which emerged earlier in the year. We are 21% ahead of last year's performance on this measure. More youngsters are learning to swim. We are launching a new pricing system that reflects the different ways customers consume leisure with walk-up rates, family swim bundles, 20% off for those who need 10 weeks to get into shape for that beach holiday and a unique Truly Unlimited membership offer for all activities, all classes and all locations – a market leading proposition that will see South Norfolk fit, healthy and actively moving to a new rhythm.

Work is ongoing to provide a new leisure centre for Diss.

Our proactive work on food standards has seen an impressive 99.2% of all premises rated satisfactory or above.

Over 1,000 small businesses have been offered advice to do more, take on more staff or otherwise expand so far this year and we have helped over 100 start-ups to make South Norfolk a great place to build a business.

We are the custodians of our natural environment. We protect green spaces & open commons, designate conservation areas and keep country lanes free of litter. Our network of electric car charging points is expanding, and I am pleased that we are doing more on energy efficiency in our buildings, reducing staff needs to travel using new technology including beefed-up video conferencing. And, of course, we're all recycling more than ever. That is an enviable record on environmental protection.

We're getting a roof over peoples' heads. We are still well within the top-ten for New Homes Bonus of any district in the Country which is given for actual delivery, not talking about delivery and we have built 107 new homes so far, keeping some back for rent and have started on 350 at St Giles Park, Cringleford. Our total return on commercial investments within South Norfolk is 6% - ten times more than we'd get at the bank.

Finally, our business-positive approach has seen more than £12.4m of external funding sunk into our economy so far this year delivering jobs, homes and infrastructure.

This is the work we do. We do it together. All members, regardless of party, have a chance to shape and direct our budget and corporate plans.

People will naturally want to focus on our plans for Council Tax. For residents it's the most visible manifestation of how they help us achieve what we seek to deliver.

This year our budget will see a Band D property increase by £5 from £150 to £155 as part of our multi-year plan to have honest straightforward pricing on Council Tax rather than declaring percentages which obfuscate how much extra we're asking for. And we remain in the lowest charging quartile.

The raise will bring us an additional £250k to pay for inflationary costs and to put a little aside for future investment.

We need this money to keep our promises to the electorate. Next year will see us go into a new Local Government Finance System, the biggest shake-up for years. Rate Support Grant is already a distant memory.

So we're on our own.

And we don't forget the little guy. We have the best outturn on members ward grants with small payments that make a big difference. And the Community Action Fund that has confirmed 12 projects - one in Diss & one in Roydon.

I reviewed our year-end outturn and was pleased to see that the forecast position at the end of December has improved. So I am pleased to announce this evening that we will once again boost the CAF fund for next year with a further £50,000 to give the best possible chance for those good projects that just missed out to be funded next year so that we can help the volunteers and small organisations to help us in every community in our district.

One of the main reasons for our collaboration with Broadland was to make savings to close the funding gaps in the Council's Medium Term Financial Plans, and we are well on the way to delivering the combined savings identified in the Collaboration Feasibility Study of £8.6m, for South Norfolk we anticipate that £1m of savings will be delivered next financial year (20/21) with estimated gross savings in the region of £5m over the 5 year period.

It's a good job this administration is building on the Big Sky business, which has seen a total return to the Council of about £2m this year, rising to £3m in future years as St Giles Park and the new commercial developments at the Research Park and in Poringland come on stream.

It's been a team effort by everyone who comes to work here – evidenced still further by our shortlisting last week in the PPMA awards for exceptional working between management and unions.

I hope that I speak for all of us when I take a moment to thank staff for maintaining service and a focus on residents and business whilst doing a second job – which was to bring ourselves together as a single team with Broadland to serve a canvass of 250,000 people over a whole housing market area & commuting geography.

It's a platform that makes sense to residents and great for staff development and career advancement. We all have the chance to do something special here. And that means

moving beyond the 9-5 to reimagine how we work with the rest of the state to do more out of hours and at weekends if it makes sense. Redefining the local state around the individual, customising our offer to them and always striving to exceed expectations of what you should get from your Council.

The story here is how we are investing well over £70m in our economy building homes to live in, new places to work, destinations to enjoy whilst ensuring our staff have the right tools to do their job at the lowest landed cost.

You heard that right: That £5 Council Tax increase gives us the long term organisational stability to invest over £70m to improve the life of every citizen in our district. Now that is a statement of intent from a Council whose ambition remains undimmed as we start our fourth term of office lowest of the 3 council elements.

So, we are ringfencing working capital to build those homes at St Giles Park by the Council's own development company. Homes that we will be proud to be associated with more internal space and natural light, a higher specification and serviced plots for self-builders. That working capital has been augmented by a £7m grant from Government to get the job done quickly. And the local taxpayer will enjoy the financial fruits of this entrepreneurial approach.

Thanks to an announcement by the Government in October and with the help of the County Council to finalise the business case for the Long Stratton bypass, our £10m reserve there reinforces our statement of intent to get that road built.

We commit £110k to the refurbishment of the swimming pool at Long Stratton High School this year to expand public enjoyment in an area that will see housing growth.

And our contributions from CIL will see £35k spent at Frenze Beck in Diss.

New ways of working with Broadland including more integrated IT and plans for a reconfiguration of waste collection will allow us to be a lowest-cost producer.

And we'll designate a business rates stabilisation reserve to even out fiscal turbulence from the changes in future finance funding.

We have a budget and a capital program that's been certified as low risk and is affordable this year and next year and the year after that. It will build a better South Norfolk.

In summary. Whilst things are changing, we remain a proper Council. Getting practical things delivered at a scale people recognise and relate to.