

UPWELL PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the annual Parish Assembly, duly convened on Monday, 14th April 2008
at Upwell village hall. Commenced at 7.00 pm with
Councillor Neil Morgan in the chair.

Attending:

Cllr. David Barnard
Cllr. Chris Crofts
Cllr. Jill Gooch
Cllr. Andrew Harrison
Cllr. Keith Harrison
Cllr. Frank Humm
Cllr. Prue Lester
Cllr. Neil Morgan
Cllr. Roger Mungham
Cllr. David Pope
Cllr. Chris Robinson
Cllr. Sylvie Short

County Councillor – Harry Humphrey
Clerk – Kate Cobley
Assistant Clerk - Kate Bennett

1. Attendance

No members of the public were present.

2. Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Councillor Shorting.

3. Declarations of Interest

No declarations of Interest were made.

4. Proof of Notice

The Clerk reported that the notice of assembly had been posted on the Parish notice boards a week prior to the meeting in addition to being advertised in the Fenland Citizen on April 9th and in the Parish Newsletter.

5. Minutes of the meeting held on April 10th 2007

On a proposal by Cllr. Humm, seconded by Cllr. Lester, the Minutes were signed by the Chairman as a true record.

6. Matters arising from the Minutes (information only).

County Councillor Humphrey informed the meeting that Emneth Parish Council had invited a number of local organisations to its Parish Assembly in order to encourage public participation. This had apparently worked well and the meeting noted that this would be investigated as a possibility for Upwell Parish Council's next Parish Assembly.

7. Report of the Chairman.

Cllr. Morgan presented the Chairman's report for 2007, a copy of which had been circulated prior to the meeting.

8. Report from the Borough Council

Cllr. Pope, a Borough Councillor, gave a verbal report on the work of the BCKL&WN, in which he highlighted:

Council Tax. This had been kept below inflation at 2.5%.

Affordable Housing. In an effort to improve the availability of affordable housing, empty homes in the region had been identified and the owners written to. It was noted that there had been a notable increase in the number of affordable homes provided this year, especially in the Downham Market area.

Free Bus Service For The Over 60's. There had been a huge take-up of the free bus passes for the over 60's, the cost of which will be established over the next twelve months.

Local MP. The local MP, Christopher Fraser, had been very active this year and had been very supportive of local campaigns.

Borough Councillor. The meeting was pleased to hear that local Councillor Vivienne Spikings now held a cabinet post in the Borough Council.

Siltation and Flooding. Welney Wash had only been closed for 20 days during the year, as opposed to the 90 days last year. It was thought that this was due to weather conditions affecting both the water levels and the amount of silt in the rivers. A report is awaited from the Environment Agency into the on-going issue of siltation in the rivers and it is expected that there will be recommendations for reducing the problem 'at source'.

Health Centre Car Park. The car park is now complete following a huge effort on the part of local councillors at all levels.

Councillor Humm asked about the apparent cancellation of the local bus service connecting Lakes End to Three Holes, Upwell, Downham Market and Wisbech. He suggested that funding should still have been in place for this service. Cllr. Humphrey informed the meeting that the bus service had failed the affordability formula used when calculating funding for rural routes.

Cllr. Andrew Harrison asked Cllr. Pope about improved signage for the village when Welney Wash is flooded. The situation was discussed and Cllr. Humphrey resolved to pursue the matter.

9. Report of the County Council

County Councillor Humphrey gave a verbal report on the work of Norfolk County Council, in which he highlighted:

Satisfaction Survey. A survey had revealed that there had been a 10% increase in the public's satisfaction with the County Council's performance over the past twelve months and that this had earned it a £1.5 million reward grant from central government. The Council had been judged the top in the East of England and fourth overall in the Country.

Council Tax. This had been set at 3.5%. The Council was suffering from 'dampening', where central government worked out the cost of providing services (those provided by NCC) and then cut 25% off the amount it provided for those services.

Local Government Review. There is to be substantial community engagement with regard to the ongoing review of local governmental structure. The County Council has proposed a single unitary organisation for the county with a secondary tier of organisation centred around both Kings Lynn and Downham Market.

Police Authority. The Government has written to the Norfolk Police Authority to advise them that they may be capped for raising their precept to 8.3%. The rise is due to the need to make up funding for PCSO's, which was previously promised by government. There was also an increased cost in policing gas terminals in the region to respond to terrorist threats and in responding to the Government's 'Closing The Gap' policy to increase facilities for serious crime detection. Based on these reasons, Cllr. Humphrey was confident that the Government would not cap the Police Authority and that the necessary precept would be raised.

Cllr. Crofts asked Cllr. Humphrey about the provision of recycling facilities in Upwell, citing the new Health Centre car park as an ideal location. There was a general discussion about this subject and it was agreed that Cllr. Crofts would pursue the matter at Borough Council level.

10. Open Forum

Since no members of the Public were present, there were no matters arising.

Signed as a true record of the meeting: _____

Date: _____