

**Minutes of the Meeting of the Fakenham Town and Parish
Area Forum
Held at Stibbard Village Hall
Tuesday 23 June 2009 at 7:00 pm**

Present:

Nigel Westmancott	-	Fakenham Town Council
M. P. Chesterman	-	Parish Clerk - Fulmodeston
Barbara A Wyvill	-	Kettlestone Parish Council
Gill Ashbyl	-	Kettlestone Parish Council
Ray Verrall	-	Little Snoring Parish Council
Antony Winter	-	Little Snoring Parish Council
Sarita Presland	-	Norfolk ALC
Tim Shaw	-	Norfolk County Council
Ann Green	-	North Norfolk District Council
Gloria Lisher	-	North Norfolk District Council
Julie Souter	-	North Norfolk District Council
Maureen Clarke	-	North Norfolk District Council
Robin Combe	-	North Norfolk District Council
Steve Blatch	-	North Norfolk District Council
Hayleigh Fisher	-	North Norfolk Youth Voice
Elizabeth Fisher	-	North Norfolk Youth Voice
Jacob Rix	-	North Norfolk Youth Voice
Samantha Coggins	-	North Norfolk Youth Voice
Sheila Ronson	-	Pudding Norton & Testerton Parish Council
A J Walters	-	Sculthorpe Parish Council
Alan Bland-Ward	-	Stibbard Parish Council
Tim Lidstone-Scott	-	Wood Norton Parish Council

Apologies:

Valerie Hart	-	Chairperson – Swanton Novers
Pauline Wigley	-	Parish Clerk – Swanton Novers

1 Welcome and Introductions

Steve Blatch, Strategic Director at North Norfolk District Council welcomed everyone present to Stibbard Village Hall and outlined the order in which items would be discussed. He added that this meeting was the first of seven consultative meetings that would be held across North Norfolk in summer 2009 – one meeting for each Local Area Partnership (LAP) in the North Norfolk District Council (NNDC) area.

2 North Norfolk Youth Voice

Samie Coggins, Elizabeth Fisher, Hayleigh Fisher and Jacob Rix, North Norfolk Youth Voice, gave a PowerPoint presentation about how the Youth Forum offered itself as a consultative body for Parish Councils and other bodies that were making decisions affecting youth matters.

The following key points were made during the presentation and ensuing discussion:

- Norfolk Youth Voice was a Youth Forum of young people, aged between 13 and 24 who were supported by North Norfolk District Council. They meet fortnightly on a Thursday evening at Merchants Place, in Cromer. Transport was available to attend their meetings.
- The Youth Forum was looking at ways to be involved with Parish and Town Councils.
- The Forum wanted Parish Councillors to approach young people to find out what they wanted. Young people could feel intimidated unless the Parish Council made the first move in attracting young people to participate in its activities.
- The Forum wanted to be a part of Parish and Town Councils' decision making groups.
- The Forum wanted to change people's views of young people being labelled "yobs", "hoodies", etc. It was considered important to engage young people who could feel alienated from the rest of the community because some older people viewed young people as intimidating when they "hung out" in groups.
- The Forum delivered projects and organised campaigns that were important to the young people of North Norfolk.
- When Parish and Town Councils were seeking the views of

young people, this could best be done as a separate consultative exercise aimed exclusively at young people.

- A member of the Holt Youth Club is also a member of the Norfolk Youth Forum.
- In order to attract young people to attend meetings, Parish Council agendas need to be made less formal and abbreviations used in reports more easily understood.
- Parish Council meetings should be held outside school and college times so as to attract the fullest possible range of young people to attend.
- Parish and Town Councils that wanted to invite young people to attend their meetings could do so through contacting Julie Souter, 01263 516234, (juliesouter@north-norfolk.gov.uk) or Mike Pepperell, 07795 126523.

3 Local Government Review (LGR) – Update

Steve Blatch referred to the following resolutions that had been passed today by the Norfolk Local Government Association (LGA):

- (a) That the Norfolk LGA writes to the Boundary Committee to make formal representation in favour of the two-tier system of local government for Norfolk;
 - (b) That the Norfolk LGA endorses the need for a Mori Poll to provide the people of Norfolk the chance to express their views and that such a Mori Poll be conducted prior to the Secretary of State's decision;
 - (c) That the Norfolk LGA publicly supports and promotes the two-tier structure of local government within the county;
 - (d) That the Norfolk LGA actively promotes joint working between existing authorities and that a Member Group is established to oversee this work.
- It was pointed out that Norwich City Council had not supported this recommendation and that their position remained unchanged.
 - The Boundary Committee was expected to announce its recommendation to the Secretary of State on LGR on 15 July 2009. There would then be a short period of time for Parish and Town Councils and other organisations to make further comments, and Parish and Town Councils were encouraged to do so, after having regard to the comments that they had already submitted.

- It was unclear when the new Secretary of State would reach a decision on local government reorganisation in Norfolk but this could not be less than 6 weeks after the announcement by the Boundary Committee.
- The earliest that LGR changes could take place, and Norfolk could be transferred into either one or more unitary Councils, was April 2011.

4 Quality Councils

The meeting received a PowerPoint presentation about Quality Parish Councils from Sarita Presland of the Norfolk Association of Local Councils.

During the presentation and ensuing discussion, the following key points were made:

- The Norfolk ALC was an independent, Member-based organisation with membership open to all Town and Parish Councils and Parish meetings in Norfolk.
- The Norfolk ALC was the first point of contact for all Member Councils in need of free advice on legal, financial and procedural matters.
- There were 39 Quality Councils in Norfolk. Of the 39, six Quality Councils had an electorate of less than 500 people. The smallest Quality Council had 189 people on the electorate.
- The key messages were partnership working and clustering, standards and openness.
- The Quality Council received a “Charter Mark” proving to the electorate and other agencies that the Parish Council was well run and was working effectively on behalf of its community.
- The Quality Council “Charter Mark” would last for four years, even if a change of Parish Clerk during that period meant the new Clerk was no longer “suitably qualified”.
- There was the possibility for services to be devolved from principal authorities to Quality Councils.
- A Quality Council should be able to demonstrate that it worked proactively to support local democracy and citizenship in its local area. This could be achieved in a variety of ways – such as actively involving and listening to the views of young people, supporting a Youth Council, working on a democracy and

citizenship project with a local school or providing information to hard to reach groups.

- The Norfolk ALC would be prepared to consider a suggestion made in the meeting of inviting young people to attend and participate at the NLA AGM.
- Norfolk ALC could provide all the help and support Parish Councils needed to get started on the road to Quality status. For example, the Norfolk ALC could assist those Parish Councils seeking Quality Council status to meet the requirement for a website at no cost to the Parish Council concerned.
- Parish plans were not a requirement of a Quality Council.
- The real question was not why be a Quality Council but why a Parish Council was not one.

5 Community Engagement

A PowerPoint presentation about community engagement was received from Maureen Clarke, Supporting Community Manager at North Norfolk District Council.

During the presentation and the ensuing discussion, the following key points were made:

What do we mean by community?

- Many slightly different definitions exist for the term community, but generally, they include the suggestion that a community is a group of people who all hold something in common.
- Community has tended to be associated with two key aspects:
 - People who share locality or geographical place eg North Walsham, Fakenham or a village or housing estate.
 - It could also involve people who shared an identity for example centred on ethnicity, religion or sexuality.

What do we mean by community engagement?

- It is the process of getting the community involved in local efforts and activities.
- It was about encouraging and supporting local people to participate and be involved in decisions about local services and, in some cases, the delivery of such services.

What does it look like?

- “Community engagement” was everywhere and mean a lot of different things to different people.
- Community engagement was a process of involving people in decisions that affected them. This could mean involving communities in the planning, development and management of services or, it might be about tackling the problems of a neighbourhood, such as crime, drug misuse or lack of play facilities for children.

Guiding principles

- There are principles that must underpin any community engagement activity:
 - Equality and diversity
 - Inclusivity
 - Accessibility.

What is the District Council doing to promote community engage?

- Developing a community engagement and consultation strategy in partnership with North Norfolk Community Partnership.
- Working with Ashmanhaugh Parish Council and Holt Town Council as part of a District Council pilot project called “Branching out in your Community”.
- Funding and supporting North Norfolk Youth Voice.
- Supporting the Older People’s Forum.
- Targeting groups traditionally disengaged from consultation and engagement processes.
- ... and many more.

How can Town and Parish Councils be involved?

- Shaping the Engagement Strategy through:
 - (a) being part of the Steering Group
 - (a) contributing views through consultation.
- Presenting findings of the consultation to the Annual Town and Parish Council Conference in November 2009.

- Working with Local Area Partnerships to cement working arrangements for future engagement with communities.
- Those who would like to find out more were asked to contact Maureen Clarke, Supporting Communities Manager, North Norfolk District Council, Holt Road, Cromer, NR27 9EN, telephone 01263 516340 or email maureen.clarke@north-norfolk.gov.uk.

It was noted that in 2007 there had been contested elections for only one in five Parish and Town Councillors in North Norfolk. One of the aims of the pilot projects at Ashmanhaugh and Holt was to examine ways to encourage people to stand for Parish Council elections and get more involved in local issues. Those attending the meeting asked to be updated regularly on these pilot projects.

6 Any Other Business

(a) Re-use of Rural Buildings as Dwellings (Barns Policy)

NNDC was reviewing its Re-use of Rural Buildings Planning Policy which was required to assess planning applications for rural buildings. NNDC was seeking views before publishing a draft policy for further public consultation in autumn 2009. Further information was available on the NNDC Local Development Framework website.

(b) Site Specific Proposals Draft Plan

NNDC was entering into the final stages of this process and was once again consulting on the plans. Details were available on the NNDC Local Development Framework website.

(c) Feedback and Concluding Remarks

Steve Blatch ended the meeting by thanking everyone present for having taken the time to come along and participate in this evening's meeting and asked people to fill in an evaluation sheet that would be useful to officers at North Norfolk District Council in planning future Area Forum meetings.