

**Minutes of the Annual Assembly of Pinchbeck Parish Meeting
Held in the Community Hub & Library
19:00hrs Monday, 18 March 2024.**

Present: Eleven local electors, ten of whom were parish councillors.
Mr Robert Smith, Clerk to Pinchbeck Parish Council

In accordance with the Local Government Act 1972 Sch.12, Part III, s.17(1), the chairman of the Parish Council Cllr James Avery, being present, presided.

1. Welcome

The chairman welcomed everyone present.

2. Apologies for absence

Cllr Andrew, Cllr Chamberlain, Cllr Gregory, Cllr Jeffery, Cllr Sear, Dist. & Cty Cllr Elizabeth Sneath.

3. Minutes

The minutes of the previous Annual Assembly of Pinchbeck Parish Meeting held 21 March 2023, having been read were approved by the meeting as a true record.

4. Report from the chairman of the Parish Council

The chairman read out a report summarising matters arising during the year (see appendix 1).

5. Report from the clerk to the Parish Council

The clerk read out a report summarising financial matters for the year to date (see appendix 2).

6. Matters raised by members of the public.

- i. Following the request from Clemwell Events for a Summer Party in the Glebe Field in support of the Spalding Flower Parade. This was apparently turned down by the Parish Council, as it was not considered to be directly supportive of the Parish. The event was now going to be held in Gosberton, for which specific money had been set aside for benefits in that Parish. Could this not have similarly been negotiated so the event could have been held in Pinchbeck?

Chairman's response

It was apparent that all monies raised would have been for the benefit of the flower parade and would not directly benefit Pinchbeck organisations. If different proposals had been made to the Parish Council, the decision may have been decided differently. As it was, the decision was unanimous. In 2022, the Parish Council had been criticised for holding Jubilee celebrations on the field which were felt would dilute a later Pinchbeck Carnival event.

- ii. It was suggested that the Parish Council might undertake a Saturday surgery, at which Parish Councillors made themselves available for members of the public to drop-in and discuss issues.

Chairman's response

Unlike MPs, District, or County Councillors, Parish Councillors were unpaid volunteers. Giving up time over a weekend for a surgery at which attendance by members of the public would be uncertain, was not a reasonable or fair use of their time. The chairman reminded everyone that an appointment could be made with the clerk to discuss any matters residents might like to raise.

- iii. It was requested that the Parish Council spray the path at St Mary's Church, as it was green, wet, and slippery.

Clerk to arrange.

There being no further business the chairman declared the meeting closed at 19:51hrs.

Appendix 1: Chairman's Report

2023/24 was a challenging and turbulent year for Pinchbeck Parish Council.

Just before the financial year started in March 2023, our clerk Barbara Camps submitted her resignation. It was only a few weeks later that Barbara alluded to some serious health issues. Although she never used words like terminally ill; rather than burden Barbara with Council problems, it was felt that she should be left alone as much as possible, and a search for a temporary clerk ensued.

In speaking to colleagues about a possible replacement, two names repeatedly came up, one of which was Robert Smith. I approached Robert, and given that he had available time to commit, he offered the Parish Council a three-month contract at 10 hours per week. Whilst 10 hours a week really didn't suffice, it helped keep the Parish Council afloat.

In the meantime, local elections were due to take place in May 2023. In the event, seats on the Parish Council were uncontested, leaving four vacancies. A recruitment process arose, and from the eight who applied, four new councillors were selected - John Smith, Ben Sear, Dean Roizer, and Phil Tweddell.

Because of Barbara's illness, no handover was possible. This made the implementation of some Council practises and processes very difficult. One of the most difficult was organising payments. At the time the Council was unable to pay for products and services electronically, and the bank decided that I no longer existed as a signatory. Cheques could not be issued. For almost four months, quite a frustrating time was had.

Barbara's last working day was 30 June 2023, and sadly, Barbara died 11 September 2023.

As it was determined that Robert was a safe pair of hands and a calibre individual he was offered the post of permanent clerk, which he took up on 01 October 2023.

In remembrance of Barbara, we have planted a tree on the field at Blue Gowt Lane and a bench will be installed outside the Community hub and library. The bench is to be paid for by the Herring Lane Cake Ladies, Julie, and Lisa. Memorial plaques will be placed in both instances.

On other matters the Parish Council applied for and secured planning permission for the new cemetery.

This has been taking shape for some time, with the fence installed and more recently, groundworks and building works have commenced, undertaken by the chosen contractor Gunns and Roses Ltd.

Given the overall cost of the cemetery, it was decided that this could be financed from general reserves, with some future funding promised from S106 money. Borrowing the money would have been very expensive. The project should be completed by late summer. I would like to take this opportunity to thank councillor Terry Moore for his inexhaustible energy in driving forward the cemetery project and making it happen.

In addition to the cemetery, the village stocks, the War Memorial gates, and the Village sign, have been repaired and reinstated. The Village Sign was handed over to the Parish Council by the Women's Institute for its ongoing care.

A big part of what the parish council does is cut grass and look after many of the parish's green spaces. I think Pinchbeck is very well off for green space and I think we have some fabulous areas. Historically, the Council has tried to be as cost effective as possible in maintaining these areas and this may have backfired on us a little bit last year. A level of criticism aimed at the parish council relating to the level of maintenance, particularly at the cemetery on Cherry Hill Lane, was received. Some of this was justifiable, and in response the Parish Council initiated a detailed specification and tender for grass cutting and ground maintenance works from which a contractor has been chosen through 2024-25 and beyond. With this company's historic link to the Parish, knowledge, attitude, productivity, and price, it is expected that this area of the Parish Council's performance will visibly improve.

At Leaveslake drove, the Parish Council's building was damaged by flood on Christmas Eve 2022. After some snagging issues, repairs are now complete, and the tenants are back in situ.

In November 2023, the council held its annual Remembrance parade, which went off very well.

Personally, I feel very privileged to have been the parish council chairman not only for the last five years, but particularly within the last 18 months where we've had a significant period of change within the Royal family.

We had the Queen's Platinum Jubilee in 2020, the death of the Queen in 2022. The accession of King Charles III to the throne and his coronation 2023. A personal highlight for me was going to the Pinchbeck Schools and giving coins out to the children. It was fabulous.

A young couple gained 1900 signatures for a petition request for a footpath along Market Way. They asked for the Parish Council's support, and we have made numerous submissions to Lincolnshire County Council who have now agreed to undertake a feasibility study. Whilst this has yet to go-ahead, we will continue to pursue our traffic strategy and pressurise County Council highways for the much-needed improvements.

We have seen a lot of Facebook comments, some of which are particularly negative, a few are more positive.

Sometimes, there is confusion about which services the Parish Council is responsible for, so summarising the activities of the different levels of government:

The UK Government sets up the road map or direction of travel.

The County Council is generally responsible for education, highway strategic planning, fire and public safety, social care, libraries, waste management, trading standards, registrar of births deaths marriages.

The District Council is responsible for benefits, housing, licencing with alcohol premises, well-being, leisure, economic development, environmental health, council tax collections, rubbish and recycling collections, and planning applications.

Town, and parish councils like us, are in that category responsible for matters like green spaces, play areas and equipment, allotments, cemeteries, some street cleaning. Income the Parish Council received from its 190 acres of farmland helps offset the cost of the Parish Precept, which at £67.73 for a household at band D is considered good value. Regarding planning, the Parish Council does not make planning decisions. It is merely a consultee.

The Parish Council is at pains to demonstrate transparency in all that it does. Members of the public are always welcome to attend parish council meetings and to make comments or ask questions. The majority of a meeting's content is held in open session. Some things do need to be held in closed session due to commercial or contractual sensitivity or relate to specific employment matters. Our clerk, Robert, can always be contacted by e-mail to discuss any matter.

Finally for interest, Pinchbeck Parish Council has been existent since 1894. It held its first meeting almost 130 years ago on 04 December 1894. Many of the family names listed as councillors attending this first meeting are still to be found in the parish today. If you wish to stand as a Parish Councillor, the next elections will be held in 2027.

Cllr James Avery

Chairman

18 March 2024

Appendix 2: Clerk's Report

The Parish Council's accounts for year-end 31st March 2024 should be finalised by the end of April and available to view once the details have been accepted as correct. The accounts will be published on the Parish Council's website, along with the dates for the public inspection period, when an appointment can be made to view the accounts at the Parish Office. In the meantime, the Council's financial budget for 2024-25 has been published on the website. Additionally, it can be reported that:

- The Council's income year to date is £192,543. This is a reduction on the previous year of £14,035 (-6.8%).
- The main changes related to:
 - Precept £112,236 (+9.5%)
 - Land rent £43,985 (+23.5%).
 - Burial Ground receipts £1,059 (-41.7%)
 - Grant received £1,547.55 (-89.8%).
 - S106 money received £0 (previous year £47,647).
 - Exceptional insurance pay-out for Leaves Lake Drove clubhouse £22,600.
- Total expenditure year to date is £226,856, down £30,602.
- The main changes were:
 - General administration expenses increased £12,329 to £25,543. This was largely due to interim staff costs in the absence of the clerk and a carry-over from the previous year of auditors' fees.
 - Expenditure on Highways increased £3,370 to £15,082.
 - There had been a large investment in play equipment of ~£110,000 which was not repeated this year.
- Looking ahead to the next financial year, the Parish Council precept requirement has been set at £134,850, an increase of 19.3p per week per household at Band D.
- The Council has set aside the following earmarked reserves:
 - Pinchbeck Hub and Library maintenance £15,000.
 - Play equipment £15,000.
 - Office equipment £750.
 - Street Furniture £5,000.

Robert Smith
Clerk to Pinchbeck Parish Council
18 March 2024