

Minutes of the Annual Assembly of Pinchbeck Parish Meeting, held in the Community Hub & Library, 18:30hrs Monday, 17 March 2025.

Present: Twelve local electors, seven of whom were parish councillors. Additionally, Cllr James Avery (Chairman), Mr Robert Smith, Clerk to Pinchbeck Parish Council, Nicola Jowett, Administration Assistant.

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 Andy Chamberlain, Cllr Oliver Wood, Cllr Samantha Jeffery, Cllr Sally- Ann Slade, Cllr Elizabeth Sneath.

3. Minutes

The minutes of the previous Annual Assembly of Pinchbeck Parish Meeting held on 18 March 2024 were read and approved by the meeting as a true record.

4. Reports

• Chairman of the Parish Council

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

• 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).

5. Matters raised by Members of the Public.

- Several electors present raised concerns about catchment areas for secondary schools. They noted an apparent 'gap' in the catchment area within a 3-mile radius of Crossgate Lane, Pinchbeck. Local children were not being offered places at Spalding secondary schools and were instead being allocated places in Deeping and further afield. The electors, while aware this matter was not within the Parish Council's statutory powers, requested the Council's support.

Chairman's Response

The chairman confirmed that the Parish Council would raise the matter with County Councillors and lobby on residents' behalf. Cllr Moore presented information he had previously gathered and noted he had requested a meeting with MP John Hayes to support the cause.

- A concern was raised that the PA system used during the Remembrance Day Parade was not loud enough, as spectators standing only a few rows back struggled to hear clearly.

Chairman's Response

Cllr John Smith explained that the PA system used was a new model and noted that the issue may have been user error rather than a fault with the equipment. The matter was acknowledged and would be addressed at future events.

- Residents highlighted that some open spaces in Pinchbeck were not easily accessible to mobility scooter users, citing the gate at the entrance to Blue Gowt Field and the alleyway on Pinchbeck Road leading through to Brayfields.

Chairman's Response

The chairman acknowledged that while the gate should be accessible, its primary purpose was to prevent access by motorbikes and other vehicles. The Parish Council agreed to investigate alternative solutions that could improve accessibility while maintaining restrictions on vehicle access. The chairman also confirmed that he would raise the issue of the Pinchbeck Road alleyway with Lincolnshire Highways.

There being no further business, the chairman declared the meeting closed at 19:20hrs.

Appendix 1: Chairman's Report

Blue Gowt Cemetery

This piece of land was chosen several years ago to continue to provide residents with a choice for burial, or interment of ashes.

Cherry Holt Cemetery continues to provide some space for burials and interment, but is gradually filling up, and takes up more time than it should to manage.

The Blue Gowt development should complete this spring, and it is envisaged it will provide burial space for perhaps the next 50 years.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Cllr Terry Moore for his efforts in managing this project.

Cherry Holt Railings

The old green railings must have been as old as the cemetery, but they themselves had become somewhat end of life, and were in dire need of replacement.

The new railings were manufactured and installed by R&B Wood and Welding and are now reflect the level of respect the cemetery, and those within it, deserve.

Green Space Management

Typically, Pinchbeck Parish Council put out a tender for grass cutting and maintenance of green spaces, and the contract awarded is normally for a period of 3 years.

During the period 2021 to 2023, the Parish Council, quite rightly, received criticism for its perceived lack of care towards the green spaces it owns and maintains. In particular, Cherry Holt Lane was not being looked after as well as it should and although not what we wanted to hear, this was fair criticism.

The Parish Council invested time and effort in producing a detailed specification reflecting the standards expected of a contractor for the period 2024 to 2026, and this contract was awarded early in the last calendar year to T N Sneath.

During the course of 2024 T N Sneath have demonstrated great care and respect of all the green spaces it maintains, and I would like to publicly thank them for their efforts and will ensure the Parish Council write to thank them.

In December 2024 I did note a somewhat negative comment posted on social media complaining the grass needed cutting. I responded to this comment indicating that 'it was December after all, and the grass doesn't normally grow at that time of year' However, we did instruct T N Sneath to perform another cut at the cemetery, but it's important to recognise that every additional cut is an additional cost to the Parish Council, and therefore, the precept payer.

Leaves Lake Building

Resident may recall the Parish Council reported internal flooding to the Leaves Lake Drove building, at least 3 years ago.

The repairs have not been straight forward, but I can report that the building has now been 'fully handed' back to Spalding United Youth Football Club.

Play Equipment

The Parish Council refreshed, and added to, the play equipment on the Glebe Field, Rotten Row Playing Field and Leaves Lake Drove field.

As with all play equipment, wear and tear has a detrimental effect on availability of play equipment, and some pieces have had to be fenced off for safety reasons.

We have recently prioritised a programme of works to ensure all affected pieces of equipment are brought back into service as soon as possible. I believe this has now been completed, but will be an ongoing process, with an associated ongoing cost.

The law, and our insurers, obliges the Parish Council to have appropriate signage in place for its accessible green spaces, and for specific pieces of equipment within those public spaces.

Some signage was recently installed that caused quite a stir on social media. Although the Parish Council approved the wording for the signage, the wording printed on the signs was incorrect. An error for which the contractor apologised most profusely, and would endeavour to ensure the signs, with appropriately agreed wording, would be in place with some urgency.

Just in case any residents remain unclear about the Parish Council's policy towards dogs and its green spaces. Dogs and their owners are fully welcome to use our green spaces, provided that those individuals in control of a dog within one of our green spaces, clear up after them should any deposits be made.

Dog poo gets a mention at most Parish Council meetings, so whilst I am on this engaging subject, we continue to invest in degradable dog waste bags at several locations around Pinchbeck. Ideally these are to be used in an emergency i.e. the owner has forgotten to take bags out with them. There is a cost attached to supplying bags, so we would rather dog owners did not use the dispensers as their personal bag supply.

Pinchbeck Hub and Library

Funding of a Youth Club in collaboration with Pinchbeck Community Land Trust which is being delivered by YMCA, last week 67 young people attended, and this number continues to increase every month.

Over the Summer we provided funding, in partnership with our 3 District Councillors, for 5 weeks of activities and events. Over 2000 people visited the Hub and took part in dance, cookery lessons, art and crafts, history sessions, rock music and many more fun activities.

We worked in partnership with the NHS to provide a Look after your Heart event which attracted over 40 local organisations and was attended by over 300 people. This has led to ongoing sessions and events being provided on-site at The Hub and at no cost to the Parish Council including mammogram awareness, smoking cessation, mental health support, breast-feeding awareness, autism sessions and several other education events.

We have worked with LIVES and SHINE, 2 local charities to provide CPR and Defib training to 40 local people, again at no cost to the PPC, in fact we have managed to help their cause by securing donations from course attendees. These courses will continue throughout the year.

We have secured over £40,000 of external grants for activities provided at The Hub including £21,000 from the levelling up fund.

Been the recipient of £4,200 of research funding from the NHS to continue the awareness raising work we have been doing to prevent Trips and Falls

The library has now expanded its provision and continues to work alongside LCC Libraries to make services available to local people.

Over 12,000 people visited the Hub and Library over the past 12 months.

The Hub and Library could not function without the support of our volunteers which now number 25 and we are very thankful for them giving their time to this valuable community asset which is managed and run by the Parish Council.

Pinchbeck Community Hub and Library was voted Hub and Library of the Year by The National Peer Network for Community Libraries. This is a fantastic achievement and is recognition of the fantastic work that they do on behalf of our population.

I would like to thank Cllr John Smith for driving the hub forward, on all fronts, and at every opportunity.

The above clearly goes to show that the Hub is well used and is a significant and valued asset.

Road Strategy and Safety

We continue to lobby LCC Highways on all matters of road and pavement usage, and speeding.

Using interactive speed signs, we continue to capture speed data at specific locations within and around Pinchbeck and West Pinchbeck, and will shortly be discussing our findings with Lincolnshire Road Safety Partnership

If residents have issues with the potholes or safety aspects with regards our roads and pavements, these should be reported to 'Fix my Street.'

Just google 'LCC – Fix My Street.'

We have been installing additional passive speed signs around the village, and I would like to thank Councillor Philip Tweddell for his efforts to install these signs, without the aid of a ladder.

PlayZone

A new £280,000 multi-sports facility could be built in Pinchbeck.

Its parish council has applied and been shortlisted as a location for a new PlayZone on the Glebe Field. It is an initiative by the Football Federation using investment from the Premier League, FA, and government to build 250 mini pitches in the UK.

As well as football, it will be built with nets to play basketball and netball on, as well as being advertised for use by cricket and other sports.

It would be gated so organisations would have to book the facilities and will receive a code to gain entry.

Pinchbeck Parish Council, which held a meeting about the project on Monday night, say it is pledged to contribute £70,000 of section 106 developer contributions towards the PlayZone with the remaining £210,000 coming from the Football Federation.

A spokesman for the authority said it was 'delighted to be short listed for potential funding'.

"If the project proceeds, the PlayZone will increase sporting opportunities for residents and sports organisations while also creating new partnerships with GPs, the NHS, the local authority, and other agencies.

"This initiative will explore innovative ways to improve community health and wellbeing and help reduce health inequalities in the area.

"Securing this funding requires a thorough and detailed process, and it is essential that the council fully understands its financial and contractual obligations before moving forward.

"To ensure transparency and informed decision-making, the council has unanimously agreed to seek professional advice before signing any contracts.

"This step is not intended to delay the project but to ensure that all long-term commitments, including the Football Foundation's 21-year funding commitment, are clearly understood.

"Pinchbeck Parish Council is committed to delivering a high-quality facility that will serve the community for many years to come. We look forward to keeping residents updated as we progress with this exciting opportunity."

Remembrance Parade

Once again, the Parish Council were involved, along with the Royal British Legion, in organising and conducting the 2024 remembrance parade, which was well attended, certainly by the uniformed brigades as well as members of the public.

And we will continue to show our respect to those that lost their lives during WWI and WWII with this annual event.

Who Does What When it comes to "The Council"?

Sometimes there is confusion among some residents about 'who are the Council' and what services we are responsible for...

The UK government sets out the roadmap, or overall direction of travel for the country...

The County Council, in this case currently Lincolnshire County Council, are responsible for education, Highways, strategic planning, fire and public safety, social care, libraries, waste management, trading standards and registrar of births, deaths and marriage.

The District Council, in this case South Holland District Council, are responsible for benefits, housing, licensing with alcohol premises, leisure and well-being, economic development, Council Tax collections, rubbish and recycling collections and planning applications.

Town and Parish Councils, in this case Pinchbeck Parish Council, are responsible for green spaces, play areas and play equipment, allotments, cemeteries and some street cleaning.

How is the Parish Council funded

The Parish Council receives its income from Land rent, burials, grants, S106 monies (developer contributions) and the precept, paid by residents.

All these aspects wax and wane year on year.

The precept for Pinchbeck residents, based on a Band D property, was £67.73 for 2024/25, but will increase to £71.01 for 2025/26. An increase of £3.28 per annum for a Band D property.

Transparency

Pinchbeck Parish Council work hard to demonstrate transparency in all it does. Members of the public are always welcome to attend Parish Council meetings, to make comments or ask questions. Most of a meeting's content is held in open session, but some things need to be discussed in closed session due to commercial or contractual sensitivity or may relate to specific employment matters. The Clerk to Pinchbeck Parish Council – Robert Smith – can always be contacted by email to discuss any matter.

Regarding the Clerk, I am delighted to report that Nicola Jowett was recruited during the latter part of 2024, with the specific role of supporting Robert with the workload, and Nicola is already proving to be an asset to the team of Pinchbeck Parish Council.

Appendix 2: Clerk's Report

Clerk's Report – Annual Assembly of Pinchbeck Parish Meeting, 17th March 2025

The Parish Council's accounts for the financial year ending 31st March 2025 are expected to be finalised by the end of April. Once reviewed and confirmed, they will be published on the Parish Council's website, along with the statutory public inspection period, during which appointments can be made to view the accounts at the Parish Office. Meanwhile, the budget for 2025-26 is already available on the website for public reference.

Improved Administrative Efficiency

The Parish Council has made significant strides in improving efficiency and modernising its operations. While staff costs have increased from £61,450.17 in 2023-24 to £74,790.20 in 2024-25, this reflects:

- Digitalisation of Council processes, reducing reliance on paper records and improving workflow efficiency.
- More activities undertaken in-house, reducing external consultancy costs and increasing direct oversight.
- Enhanced administration, ensuring better responsiveness, service delivery, and governance.

These improvements have allowed the Parish Council to provide more effective support to the community, streamline decision-making, and enhance public engagement.

Financial Overview

The Parish precept increased from £112,236 in 2023-24 to £134,850 in 2024-25, supporting an increasing number of households, essential services, and community projects. The precept for 2025-26 has been set at £144,642, equivalent to a 4.8% increase per household in Band D.

Other key income sources include:

- Farmland Rent & Garden Allotments: £35,731.85, in line with budgeted forecasts.
- Hub Room Hire: Increased from £12,500 in 2023-24 to £13,022.53 in 2024-25.
- Cemetery Fees: Increased from £10,500 in 2023-24 to £11,060 in 2024-25.
- Grant Income: £5,167 annually from Lincolnshire County Council to support library services at the Community Hub. This grant agreement will be reviewed by Lincolnshire County Council in 2026.

The opening balance for 2024-25 was £432,347.90, with a forecasted balance of £413,277.17 for the year ending March 2025.

Reserves and Major Projects

- New Cemetery Construction: £150,823 has been spent from capital reserves on the Blue Gowt Lane Cemetery, which is nearing completion. £8,383.34 remains allocated for the final stages of this project.
- PlayZone Project: £70,000 from S106 reserves is earmarked as matched funding for a new PlayZone Multi-Use Games Area, with the Football Foundation providing £210,000 in additional funding.
- Earmarked Reserves:
 - Hub & Library Maintenance: £14,364.87
 - Play Equipment Maintenance: £14,883.84
 - Village Sign Maintenance: £247.55
 - Community & Youth Initiatives: £6,120 for Youth Club, £3,000 for Maths Champion Grant, and £4,165 for NHS Slips & Falls Grant.

Community Engagement and Services

The Pinchbeck Community Hub & Library continues to serve residents, offering room hire and volunteered services. The Parish Council meets regularly, with meetings open to the public for participation in discussions on local matters.

Looking Ahead

The Council remains committed to financial stability, improving local services, and maintaining community facilities. It encourages residents to engage with councillors and the Clerk, attend meetings, and provide feedback.

Robert Smith

Clerk to Pinchbeck Parish Council

<https://pinchbeck.parish.lincolnshire.gov.uk/>