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Minutes of the **BLAKENEY ANNUAL PARISH MEETING** which was held on **Thursday 6th March 2025** in the Village Hall.

Written reports where received, are summarised within these minutes.

Chairman:- Rosemary Thew (Blakeney Parish Council Chairman)

Clerk:- Tracey Bayfield (Parish Clerk/Proper Officer, Blakeney Parish Council)

Public Attendance:- 33

1. **Welcome & Introduction** by the Chairman: Rosemary Thew welcomed all present, guest speakers and attendees.
2. **Apologies** for absence had been received from; Willie Weston, Nigel Sutcliffe & Mike Reed.
3. **Resolved** that the **Minutes** of the Annual Parish Meeting held on Thursday 7th March 2024 are signed as a true record.
4. **GUEST SPEAKERS**
 - **Steve Blatch; Chief Executive NNDC gave a detailed slide presentation from the NNDC perspective –**

Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation:

The current proposals for devolution and reorganisation of local government in Norfolk have raised widespread concern, with many feeling the process is being rushed. Under the suggested changes, Norfolk could become the second-largest council area in the country, following Birmingham — which is currently under special measures.

A key issue highlighted in the debate is homelessness, which has significantly worsened. North Norfolk District Council (NNDC) reports that the cost of addressing homelessness has risen from £400,000 three years ago to £1.2 million, reflecting both growing demand and increasing service costs. Importantly, NNDC retains a statutory duty to address homelessness.

At present, none of Norfolk's councils are under special measures. NNDC is required to submit its formal response to the government's interim devolution and reorganisation proposals by 21st March 2025. Debts of other councils would be met via council tax. NNDC is in a good financial position, but overall taxpayers always pick up the costs, so in this respect, really no change. The status quo is not an option.

If the proposals proceed as planned; then the next local elections would likely take place in May 2027. New council structures would be implemented by May 2028. Parish and Town Councils would remain unchanged and those like Blakeney, that have a Neighbourhood Plan in place are in a better position.

The information can be viewed on the NNDC website going forward or search 'Norfolk & Suffolk Devolution.' In terms of asset transfer to Blakeney Parish Council, the toilet block on the quay is very likely, and very unlikely that it would come with any money.

- **Norfolk County Councillor** – *Michael Dalby gave a verbal update on Devolution from the NCC perspective* – The information can be viewed on the NCC website going forward, but it seems as though payback of a unitary is around 3 years.
- **North Norfolk District Councillor** – *Victoria Holliday advised that if anyone had any questions on the NNDC aspect, they could contact her direct. Concerns that the local voice will be lost, that parish & town councils are already working to capacity, and will any services and assets that they pick up have to be added to their precepts. Sees the future as very different and very difficult.*
- **Liberal Democrat MP for North Norfolk** – *Steff Aquarone (Subject to parliamentary attendance) – Did not attend.*

5. COMMUNITY GROUP REPORTS

GLAVEN CARING ICO - Alan Collett

Thank you to the Parish Council for the opportunity to share Glaven Caring's work. Founded in 1974 by Dr Tony Alibone, the charity continues to offer elderly residents a warm, welcoming environment.

Recent Highlights: Celebrated its 50th anniversary with a successful fundraising event raising over £10,000, used to improve the Garden Room's comfort. Welcomed new trustees and is now managed by part-time managers Steph Hunter and Michaela Morris, supported by around 46 volunteers. A "Fundraising and Community Awareness Group" has been established, led by Helen Gimson. Notable individual efforts include a recent sponsored walk by Niamh and Hannah, raising over £1,000.

New Initiatives: Monthly "Who Cares for the Carers" meetings launched, offering support and information to carers with professional input from organisations like Age Concern and Dementia UK. Free transport extended to Melton Constable and Briston; journeys are social and engaging. "Happy Mondays" £5 lunch initiative continues to be popular, serving up to 40 guests. Additional services include podiatry, a hairdresser, and free taster sessions for new visitors.

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March Events: Carers Coffee Morning, St Patrick's Day lunch, Quiz 'n Chips Night & Mothering Sunday celebration

All are welcome, and those unsure are encouraged to try a free session – a warm welcome awaits!

GLAVEN VALLEY NEWSLETTER - Jim Crossley

Objective: To deliver a balanced, non-parish-affiliated newsletter monthly to every household in the Glaven Valley.

Structure: The publication is managed by a trust. Current trustees are Oscar Haynes, Robert Harris, Martin Tyler, Jim Crossley (Chairman), with Lorraine Nairn as the paid editor.

Production: After research, it was decided to self-produce the newsletter. A new XEROX-type printer was purchased this year, offering: Improved photo quality - Lower labour demands - More flexibility (no need to pre-print yellow pages) - Overall similar cost to outsourcing.

Challenges: Volunteer shortage for printing and distribution.

Funding gap: £7,200 printer deposit raised, hoping for a grant from Blakeney Parish Council. Declining response to appeals for donations and ad support, possibly due to increasing second-home ownership.

Opportunities: Need for new trustees, especially younger and active individuals - Recruit 1–2 new trustees - Attract more volunteers - Encourage greater local contributions - Expand use of the website - Offer printing services to other groups

BLAKENEY NEIGHBOURHOOD HOUSING SOCIETY – Madeleine Collet

Overview: BNHS, founded post-WWII by Norah Clogstoun, owns 40 properties (35 in Blakeney, 2 in Wiveton, 3 in Cley), plus 4 in Cley leased to Broadland Housing Association. Housing is prioritised for individuals with local birth connections, without ongoing means-testing.

Key Developments: New Property: A home in Queens Close was purchased and renovated using funds from the sale of 1 Little Lane. A family has moved in, and their former High Street home is now allocated to the next person on the waiting list.

Energy & Electrical Certification: All properties now have Energy Performance Certificates; most are rated E, with refurbished ones at C. Electrical checks are ongoing and repeated every five years.

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Cost Challenges: Rising repair and renewal costs due to inflation and energy prices. Rents, held at pre-COVID levels until 2024, have recently been increased but still lag behind costs. Maintenance; Regular servicing includes boilers, alarms, electrical testing, and building repairs. Rent remains the main source of income.

Projects & Sales: A small bungalow proposal at Queens Close was withdrawn due to planning constraints. A Cley property is currently for sale but facing delays due to market conditions. If unsold by summer, renovation will be reconsidered. A proposed joint development with Broadland Housing Association for eight homes on Langham Road is progressing, with a planning application expected by March 2025.

Legacy & Future Funding: BNHS received a generous property legacy in autumn 2024. If sold, funds could help buy units in the new Langham Road development. BNHS will have allocation rights on all eight future homes.

Trust Transfer: The transfer of the War Memorial Cottage Trust to BNHS is still pending Charity Commission approval, expected in 2025.

Governance & Volunteers: The committee meets bi-monthly, and officers handle day-to-day tasks between meetings. Four tenants and representatives from Cley and Blakeney serve on the committee. However, new, younger committee members are urgently needed as several current members are over 70.

BLAKENEY PARISH COUNCIL - Report for the past year and a glance to the year ahead by **Rosemary Thew (Chairman)**

Key Issues –

Closure of Blakeney Medical Surgery: Despite a strong three-year campaign, the surgery will close. A Pharmabox (automated medication dispenser) will be installed near the village hall. Prescriptions and medication collection will continue temporarily from the old surgery.

North Norfolk District Council Local Plan: In addition to long-anticipated housing south of Kingsway, new development is now proposed for Oddfellows Field, raising concerns about infrastructure strain. However, the Council supports plans for affordable housing on Langham Road, in partnership with BNHS and Broadland Development, which has received strong local support.

Parish Room (former Scout Hut): Now under Parish Council management, but underused. Public use is encouraged.

Village Hall Car Park Consultation: Blakeney Parish Council is exploring the introduction of parking charges, with exemptions for residents and short stays. Feedback is being sought from residents and local businesses.

Other Updates - Routine maintenance continues (potholes, trees, streetlights) -

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New football goal posts and a boules/petanque court have been installed after public consultation - Sheep bridge replacement (by County Council) caused some disruption but is now completed - Awaiting further details on possible local authority restructuring, though minimal impact on parish councils is expected, that said, you have heard from both NNDC and NCC representatives already this evening.

Events – This year, we will continue with our successful events, Party on The Pastures and the end of season, Bonfire & Fireworks event. These are organised by the Parish Council, particularly Tracey, and a very small number of volunteers. We really do need more volunteers to help, particularly on the day. If you can help, please do let Tracey know.

Acknowledgements - Thanks to County Councillor Michael Dalby, District Councillor Victoria Holliday, fellow councillors, and Parish Clerk Tracey for their support and hard work.

- 6. OVER TO YOU - OPEN SESSION; Approximate close at 8:00pm.** A chance for the **Electors of the Parish of Blakeney only** to comment on any items already discussed.
- Well done and thank you to Blakeney Parish Council for all the work you do for the village.
 - There is a wide range of community organisations in the village, many of which are unique and deserve recognition.
 - Will there be a public meeting at the end of the car park consultation period?
 - Question to NNDC: Are we too focused on the current (older) council demographics?
 - Suggestion made to consider starting with a blank canvas for future planning, if possible.
 - How can we have any influence on what can be built in terms of affordable housing? (NNDC: This will be via the Local Plan and policies, and will be determined by the financial viability of the developer. It should be 35%, but that final decision is subject to financial viability.)
 - It is very attractive to developers to build million £ houses here, but they can then offset and build further inland, this should not be so.

Meeting closed at 8pm.

Chairman _____