

WALBERSWICK ANNUAL PARISH MEETING
13th SEPTEMBER 2023
VILLAGE HALL, WALBERSWICK

Minutes of the meeting held Wednesday 13th September 2023 at 7pm.

Present: Cllr. Andrew Lewis (Chair of the Parish Council) and Mr. Mark Knight (Clerk to Walberswick Parish Council) and twenty (20) electors of the Parish.

1 Chairman's welcome.

The Chair welcomed those present to the meeting. They further explained the purpose and process surrounding Parish Meetings and voting rights which were reserved for those on the electoral roll for the village.

2 Apologies for absence.

It was reported that two electors of the Parish were not in attendance.

3 To consider the minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on 10th May 2023

The Chair and Clerk confirmed that the minutes were a true representation of the meeting and signed.

4 Background to the current proposal from the Chair

The Chair gave a verbal report on the existing proposal which was to plant a permanent Christmas Tree on the Village Green.

It was explained that the logic behind this was due to current donors and members of the public who arranged the donation, delivery, decorating and removal of the tree remained the same every year which could possibly lead to either donors or volunteers leaving the process and this leaving the village without a Christmas Tree one year.

It was further explained that this was discussed in the first instance at the February Parish Council meeting and was proposed for acceptance at the July Parish Council meeting. It was thought that following this meeting the matter will be fully resolved at the October Parish Council meeting.

5 Views from the floor on the current proposal

One member of the public asked what the cost of the tree was, which was unknown as the Parish Council did not currently run this process. They further asked who would maintain the tree should it become permanent. It was explained that this would be maintained and owned by the Parish Council.

Another member of the public asked who would decorate it. It was reported that this

would be worked out should a permanent tree be agreed as the favoured outcome.

It was thought by another member of the public that the Walberswick Common Lands Charity had done this in the past, but it was confirmed that this was not so, certainly in recent years, and it was confirmed that it was the work of volunteers.

The Chair then confirmed that the Parish Council owned the Village Green, Jubilee Green and the Bell Green.

Objections were then heard from most of the residents whose properties bordered the Village Green, it was reported that the seasonal nature of the arrival, installation and decoration of the tree was what made the process special and traditional and that a permanent addition would unbalance the space and possibly infringe on the children's play equipment.

One member of the public expressed an opinion that to put the tree in open space would be inappropriate and questioned who would decorate it, where the decorations would be stored and what would happen to the tree and its condition for the rest of the year. It was confirmed that this would be the Parish Council.

One member of the public stated that the Village Green had been unchanged in 70 years and the open space was unique to the location in the village. The ceremony and timing surrounding the arrival and disposal of the tree was intrinsic to the character of the village, which would be lost if there was a permanent addition. It would also impact on the Village Fete in the summer.

One member of the public then asked the Chair why the Parish Council would not want to do it. It was stated by the Chair that this was not the case, but that if the process ended up being a responsibility of the Parish Council then there would be an ongoing cost which would then be reflected appropriately in the annual Council Tax precept.

It was then asked if fundraising could take place to cover these costs, should a donor back out of the annual gift. It was confirmed that this was possible, but not reliable.

Standing Orders were then suspended at 7.33pm to allow a non-electoral of the Parish to speak.

One non-electoral of the Parish spoke passionately about the importance of ritual and ceremony to a community and whilst the proposal was a sound one, it did not address tradition.

Standing Orders were reinstated at 7.39pm.

6 Views from the floor on any alternative proposals

The possibility of an artificial tree was discussed as well as the logistics of disposal. Both of which were not considered a viable way forward.

7 Consensus on one or more proposals that the floor would like to bring

to the attention of the Parish Council

A vote then took place and it was **AGREED** that no permanent Christmas Tree would be planted on the Village Green. But instead a working group would be formed to take on the annual project and the matter would be reviewed by the Parish Council in a year. Interested volunteers were encouraged to forward their names and details to the Parish Clerk.

All were in favour.

The next steps were confirmed as obtaining names for the working group and placing the matter on the October Parish Council meeting for discussion and ratification.

8 Any other matters from the floor

One member of the public asked who maintains the footpath by the Harbour. It was stated that this was the responsibility of Suffolk County Highways.

9 Meeting close

The meeting then closed at 8.06pm.

Signed by the Chair.....

Dated.....

