



GELDESTON PARISH COUNCIL

Meeting of the Parish Council

Minutes

Held in the Village Hall

Wednesday 14 May 2025, 7.30pm.

Parish Councillors Present: Cllr R Fogerty (RF), Cllr A Wade (AW), Cllr P Cracknell (PC), Cllr S Salt (SS) and Cllr J Ashfield (JA)

Also present: Tina Bunn (Parish Clerk) and District Councillor Bernard.

1. To elect a Chairman and the signing of the DAO

Cllr Fogerty was nominated. (Prop: JA; Sec: AW) unanimously agreed. The DAO was signed.

2. To elect a Vice-chairman

Cllr Wade was nominated. (Prop: PC; Sec: RF) unanimously agreed.

3. Chairman's Welcome

a. To receive apologies for absence.

Apologies were received from Councillors Barrow and Ansell.

b. To receive declarations of interest and dispensations:

- To receive declaration of Disclosable Pecuniary and Other interests for councillors on items on the agenda

Cllr Ashfield declared an interest in respect of item 6i where he will update on the discussions with the environment agency in respect of the riverbank as this is land that he owns.

Cllr Fogerty and Cllr Ashfield declared that they are the Parish Council representatives on the Poores Allotment Trust.

- To receive and consider written requests for dispensations for Disclosable Pecuniary Interests and those previously granted.

c. To record the number of members of the public present.

There were 9 members of the public present.

d. To update the General Power of Competence (GPC).

The freedom of GPC is available to local councils that meet two criteria for eligibility (LA 2011 s8) set out in a statutory instrument known as the parish councils (General Power of Competence) (Prescribed Conditions) Order 2012 that came into force in April 2012.

The award of the GPC is based on certain criteria which include the Clerk having specific qualifications. The current clerk does not have these qualifications therefore advice was sought in respect of the entitlement to the GPC of Geldeston Parish Council.

A local council must decide, at a full meeting of the council, that it meets the criteria for eligibility at that particular point in time. A resolution to this effect must be written clearly in the minutes of that meeting. This criteria was fulfilled and recorded in the minutes of the meeting held in May 2024 (after having been missed in May 2023). The council is then required to revisit that decision and make a new resolution at every 'relevant' annual meeting of the council to confirm that it still meets the criteria (if it does). This means that eligibility remains in place until the first annual meeting of the council after the ordinary election even if the condition of the eligibility criteria has changed. Therefore the criteria is fulfilled and in place despite the current clerk not meeting the criteria. It must be revisited after the next election.

4. Minutes of last meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 12 March 2025 were unanimously approved (Prop: SS Sec AW).

5. To Discuss any working group and committees to be set up or continued.

The Chair suggested that the Finance Working Party be continued and meetings to be convened in the next two months.

RESOLVED: To continue with the Finance working party. (Prop: JA Sec: PC) Unanimously agreed.

6. Matters arising from last meeting and outstanding actions, discuss and agree:

- a. Confirmed that the grant monies in respect of the Neighbourhood Plan have been returned.
- b. Scots Pine update

Cllr Cracknel advised that the required work will be completed on Thursday 5 June.

- c. Update on the signage in respect of parking.

This work is ongoing in respect of parking at the Clumps and Stone pit, a sign will be erected stating that there should be no parking in these areas and any parking is at the owners risk and the PC take no liability.

- d. Update on the signage for the Bus Shelter.

A sign will be put in the bus shelter advising that any contributions should be placed on the shelving only and any additional items will be removed.

- e. Update on application for Green Project to become a Village Green.

Investigations have revealed that the Growth and Infrastructure Act 2013 has made a number of significant changes to the law on registering new town and village greens under the Commons Act 2006.

There is an alternative means of protecting land through the planning system. The new Local Green Space designation empowers local communities to protect green spaces of local importance without the need to meet strict statutory criteria. Sites may be designated for a variety of reasons, including their setting, nature conservation benefits, or their quietness. Local communities will be able to identify green spaces through their local and neighbourhood plans, which will then receive protection equivalent to Green Belt, ruling out new development other than in very special circumstances.

The land is owned by The Geldeston Poor's Allotment and they have very kindly provided a letter of support for our proposed application.

- f. Website updates and to confirm resubscription to domain name.

The subscription to the domain name is now due in order to continue with the same website.

- g. Pedestrian safety within village

Cllrs Fogerty and Cracknell undertook a site visit with the Norfolk County Council (NCC) Highways engineer and County Councillor Stone in order to review the Street and to discuss pedestrian safety issues. One item that was highlighted were the overgrown hedges in the village which overhang the road forcing cars and pedestrians out from the roadside or narrowing pavements to an unreasonable width. At this meeting highways advised that nothing would be done about this unless they deemed it necessary and the Parish Council could show that they have contacted the landowner several times to request remedial action.

Action: to contact the relevant landowners to request remedial action. Clerk

An additional suggestion made at this site meeting was that there are funds currently available for bus stops (subsequent enquiries in respect of the funding revealed that NCC would fund 80%) and if the PC felt it appropriate and could identify a suitable site it might be possible to get a bus stop installed which would also act as a pedestrian refuge. It would include kerbs and a tarmac standing area with potential options to extend in the future.

It was noted that there are no funds available via the County Council to support this work and it is not known how much it would cost in total and therefore how much 20% would be.

Action: to explore options further and review at a future meeting.

h. Progress on registration of land

This work is ongoing, investigations have led to a law firm who had some documents which seem to be helpful on the ownership, these have been collected.

In relation to the ownership of the Stone Pit, the Land Registry records the Sewage Pumping Station under Title NK324226 and the Register for that title mentions a conveyance between Geldeston Parish Council and The Rural District Council of Loddon. Our investigations indicate that the Stone Pit has probably been owned by the Parish since at least 1802.

i. Environment Agency update

Cllr Ashfield briefed the PC on the site visit made by the Broads Authority and the Environment Agency (EA) in respect of the riverbank.

There are different opinions in respect of which work has to take priority, the EA have had to rebuild the riverbank but their priority is the SSSI area.

Work will commence around June 2025 where the river footpath will be closed for 2 – 3 months, the timing is not ideal but outside the remit of the PC.

Updates to be provided at future meeting.

j. Future plans for playground

Cllr Fogerty asked the PC to consider the long term options in respect of the playground. Moving forward there will be a significant financial requirement in respect of repairs and maintenance. The annual costs could be up to £3,000 per annum with a potential cost of £70,000 to replace everything in a few years. Therefore unless there are any further grant options there would need to be a considerable increase in the annual precept to cover these costs.

Cllr Wade advised that there might be an option to lease the playground to Saffron Housing which would alleviate the pressure on the PC funds or there might be other interest groups within the community. He updated on the annual inspection report which has just been completed and there is some damage already.

Cllr Wade also updated on the outstanding works, the sensory garden still requires completion. The car park has been cleared of abandoned items by Saffron Housing. The line of trees is on PC land and requires tidying up as it obstructs light to the sensory garden.

Cllr Cracknell reminded the PC that the Football Club use privately owned land and wondered if they may be interested in using the play area.

District Councillor Bernard advised that there had been a similar situation at Ditchingham a few years ago, they increased the precept by £5,000 and built up a capital reserve over several years to £35,000. They also used a local handyman to undertake repairs.

Action: to explore further at a future meeting.

k. Application for footpath to be included on Definitive Map

This refers to the driveway at the Old Rectory, across the church car park and across the Glebe land to join up with an existing listed footpath. Cllr Fogerty has had discussions with the Rev Smith about this and the PC has been invited to submit suggestions to him in respect of the Church land.

Action: Submit information to the Rev Smith.

l. Outstanding Allotment Agreements

All complete.

7. Chairperson's report

The Chair addressed the PC in respect of the problems that will be faced over the next few years. Already discussed was the playground but this will be symptomatic of the funds required to do any significant work moving forward. It is particularly noted that most projects require a percentage contribution from the PC. The Parish will need to consider what they would like to be undertaken and how this can be financed.

Action: to discuss at the finance working party.

8. New issues

Suspend Standing Orders for Reports from the County Councillors and District Councillors.

a. Annual Report from Cllr Barry Stone.

Noted.

b. **Parish 10** - The meeting will be adjourned for public participation, 3 minutes per member for items to be discussed on the agenda only.

- i. Allotments – concern was expressed that the Parish Council (PC) was considering cancelling the water account, but it was confirmed that this was not the case. If at some stage the PC were to consider this, it would be done in consultation with the allotment holders. There was a discussion about how the Clerks time for dealing with the allotments might be reduced in future, which might include a rental cycle of four years, like other councils. The Green Project is an asset to the Village and a great amenity.
- ii. Parish Magazine – it was noted that there is no mention of the Parish Council meetings in the local Parish Magazine, it was mentioned that no-one had complained about a summary of the meeting not appearing in Tidings.

- iii. Website – updates are required in respect of information on the website.
- iv. Safety for pedestrians – cars are regularly being parked on the pavements, it seems to have become a habit. The members of the PC were not aware of rules or regulations that would allow them to help with this.
- v. Letter of support from the Poors Allotment Trust, enquiries will be made to see if this can be posted on the website.

At this point the public and Cllr Bernard left the meeting.

Resume Standing Orders.

- c. To discuss and agree the insurance for this year.

Agreed that the insurance sourced via Community Action Suffolk with Ansvar at a cost of £547.83 will be renewed.

- d. To discuss that there will be a new assertion on 2025-26 AGAR – Assertion 10 – digital and data compliance. To enable a council to tick yes to this assertion they will have to have the following in place:

An email account hosted on an authority owned domain. This means the clerk's email must end xxxparishcouncil.gov.uk or xxxparishcouncil.org.uk etc. It will be 'best practice' that this is gov.uk

There is an offer in place with Parish online Support who have launched a "Core" version of their email service to help councils on their journey towards best practice within SAPPP. Parish Online Email Core includes a free GOV.UK domain name, and 1 free mailbox for the clerk. This is free.

It then gives an opportunity to investigate further .gov.uk email addresses for Parish Councillors along with the relevant costs in the future.

Resolved to sign up to the free offer. (Prop: AW, Sec: PC) Agreed - Unanimous

9. Finance

- a. To review and approve AGAR Annual Internal Audit Report. (Prop: RF; Sec AW) Unanimous agreement.
- b. To review and approve AGAR Annual Governance Statement (Prop: RF; Sec AW) Unanimous agreement.
- c. To review and approve AGAR Accounting Statement (Prop: RF; Sec AW) Unanimous agreement.
- d. To review and agree the recommendations from the Internal Audit Report received. (Prop: RF; Sec AW) Unanimous agreement.
- e. To agree the dates for the Notice of Public Rights for Inspection. Agree to the default dates of the public rights Tuesday 3rd June to Monday 14th July 2025 (Prop: RF; Sec AW) Unanimous agreement.

f. To approve the Asset Register for accuracy. Action: The Bus Shelter to be added to the Asset Register at a nominal sum of £1. (Prop: RF; Sec AW) Unanimous agreement.

g. To approve invoices for payment,

Invoices for NALC £95.00, reimbursement of land registry expenses for RF £14.00 were agreed. Total £109. (Prop: PC; Sec SS) Unanimous agreement.

h. To discuss the appointment of the internal auditor.

It was agreed that we would use the same Internal Auditors for 2025/2026, with Heelis and Lodge.

i. To discuss and approve training for the Clerk and Parish Councillors

The cost of the CiLCA qualification was discussed, the current cost is £750, the only benefit would be in respect of the GPC. To be discussed at a future meeting. **Action** agenda for next meeting.

j. Review of year end performance against budget

Deferred to the next meeting. **Action** agenda for next meeting.

k. To report on bank accounts and balances

Deferred to the next meeting. **Action** agenda for next meeting.

l. To report on the finances and reserves.

Deferred to the next meeting. **Action** agenda for next meeting.

m. Payment authorization and communications.

An amendment to the authorization to the unity account to be submitted to ensure that two parish councillors are the authorizing persons rather than one of these being the clerk.

PC's were reminded to let each other know if they have completed an authorization.

n. Update on CIL report.

The CIL has now been completely spent.

10. To discuss and agree village matters:

a. Update on footpaths.

Sign on the Street requires updating.

b. To discuss roadside hedges.

Letter to be sent to 52 the Street asking that the Holly Hedge be cut back as it is overhanging the pavement.

11. Updates from village committees & groups

- a. Village Hall Management Trustees.

The report was noted.

12. Planning applications and other planning matters

- a. South Norfolk District Council Planning applications.

Application Number : 2025/1171 App Type : Works to trees in Conservation Area Parish
: Geldeston Grid Ref : 638810 291988 Location : 6 Geldeston Hill Geldeston Norfolk
NR34 0LX Proposal : 7 Conifer trees - Reduce height from approx. 25ft to 9ft

PC is in favour of this application.

- b. Village Clusters – report update

None

- c. To discuss any SNC additional planning applications, received before the meeting.

None

- d. Broads Authority Planning Applications.

None

- e. To discuss any additional planning applications for BA, received before the meeting.

None

Meeting ended at 9.28

Date of next parish meeting: 9 July 2025, 7.30pm

Other dates for 2025/26:

10 September 2025,
12 November 2025,
14 January 2026,
11 March 2026

Tina Bunn
Clerk
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