**Present**: Councillors S. Broke Chairman, A. Scarlett Vice Chairman, W. McNeil, A. Lyndsay, County Cllr F. Eagle, Reverend S. Thorp - St Andrews Church, G. Tranter - Church funds and finances, Mrs P. Angus Parish Clerk (retiring on the 16th April) and Ms C. Prentice new Parish Clerk. There were no members of the public.

1. **Welcome and to accept any apologies of absence**

Mr Jack Griffiths- NCC Highways and District Cllr N. Wilkin.

The Chairman welcomed Claire Prentice who is taking over from Pauline Angus.

1. **To confirm the minutes of the meeting held on 9th April 2019 (no meeting held in 2020 due to Covid-19 restrictions)**

All agreed that were present at that meeting that the APM minutes of the meeting held on the 9th April 2019 were a true recode of that meeting, the Chairman signed the minutes and these will be made available on the website and notice boards.

1. **Permissive footpaths – latest update**

Cllr Scarlett said that an agreement has been reached in principle with Broke Brothers Farms and Holme Hale Farms and subject to finalising the written agreement the permissive footpaths will be available for use by members of the public within the parish on an ongoing annual basis.

1. **Matters arising**

None outstanding.

1. **Chairman’s report**

We have all received the sad news of the death of Prince Philip the Duke of Edinburgh, as a Parish we send our condolences to her Majesty the Queen and all the Royal family at this difficult time. Having had the privilege of meeting the Queen and the Duke on several occasions and my brother having worked for her for a few years, I will be writing a letter to her Majesty. Also, this year we recorded the death of Arthur Bailey who was a life long resident of Holme Hale who worked for the village, played cricket for the village and sat on the Parish Council for many years and he retired as a Councillor at the age of 80. Sadly, I report that Pauline Angus is retiring as our Clerk. She was following on the excellent work of Ron Graham and kept us in good order and up to date especially in Zoom. She gave notice of her intention many months ago but Covid got in the way of her plans and she agreed to remain in post until we could find a replacement. I am pleased to say that following Zoom interviews we have offered the position to Ms Clair Prentice who is with us this evening and is currently the Clerk to Foulden Parish Council, she has accepted and is looking in on this meeting and there has been a hand over session today, we look forward to meeting Claire in person at a future meeting, perhaps we could also arrange to meet with Pauline to express our thanks to her for her hard work on our behalf and keeping us well informed during this difficult time. In addition, my thanks go to Julian Pearson who has retired from the Council but still keeps an eye on matters for us and has volunteered to help if needed on any projects. His greatest success has been in respect of the Vattenfall application and thanks to his tireless input we are in a much better position than a year ago, more of that later. Covid has resolved we will follow these rules until we meet face to face again, in the meantime, the Parish has benefitted greatly in the initiative shown by Cllr Nev McBrien in organizing a team of helpers to look after those residents who were housebound or faced other problems due to Covid and being in need of assistance during lock down 1, 2 and 3. Some financial help was provided by Breckland. We had ambitious plans to celebrate the 70th anniversary of VE day with a party on the playing field, with the opportunity to honour those parishioners who served in the forces during both World Wars, this was not allowed to take place. We have not yet resolved the matter of speed restricting gates at both ends of Station Road, the money is in the budget so it will happen. With people being at home, we have had many planning applications in which we have dealt with as appropriate, we have had one or two instances where work has started without the proper approval, these have been reported to Breckland and are now proceeding on correct footings. Vattenfall and Borias has hung over us, however, the stirling work from Julian and Andy and other Parish Council, the tide has been turned at the judicial review, we will have to wait and see how the developers propose to move forward from here. We remain financially sound and for many years we have kept the precept at £8,000 whilst managing to balance the books. We have had a kind offer from two parishioners to renovate the two bus shelters, one in St Andrews Close and the other in School Road, we will be paying for the materials to allow this work to proceed. I trust that you all manage to keep safe and well and receive your second jabs as soon as possible.

1. **To receive a report from Highways**

Not at meeting – apologies received.

1. **To receive a report from County Councillor F. Eagle**

See attached report from County Cllr F. Eagle.

1. **To receive a report from District Councillor N. Wilkin**

Not at meeting – apologies received during the meeting by email saying that he was having problems with his Wi-Fi and therefore unable to connect to the Zoom meeting.

1. **To receive a report from Holme Hale Fuel Allotment Trust**

Cllr Scarlett said that during the course of 2020 the fuel allotment trust has provided grants of £6,000 to various groups in the village organizations and towards part funding within infrastructure which will be a benefit to the community and we are just on the cusp of providing a similar level of funding in the very near future. We have also attempted to offer grants to other individuals should they be experiencing hard ship especially during the course of the last 12 months during lock downs, but unfortunately, the lack of a village magazine has restricted our ability to communicate to a degree, Cllr Scarlett pointed out that this was not a criticism to Cllr McNeil because it is known that there was very good reasons why the Moon Raker could not be published, but none the less it does restrict things somewhat for us and many village organizations, hopefully this can be addressed in the near future, otherwise, we look forward to receiving applications for funding and for grants for assistance from any village organizations or individuals that may require it.

The Chairman suggested putting a notice on the notice boards and it was agreed that this would go ahead.

1. **To receive a report from St Andrews Church**

The Reverend S. Thorp gave the following report:

This year has been a peculiar year for churches, as it has for everyone else, way back in March last year when the Archbishop of Canterbury advised all churches to close because of the Pandemic, we did just that, however, we were first of all advised that we could keep our churches open for private worship and that is what we did, and I would like to say how grateful I am to Geoff Tranter and Andy Scarlett because they worked really hard to make sure that we had all the right Covid precautions in place so that when people did come to church they were safe and knew what to do, but, very quickly after that we were told that churches had to close completely and therefore all our services went on line taking benefit of the Necton Benefice You Tube channel and we have managed to have an online service every week since March 2020, and we have also been able to have a true representation from across the benefices which is my churches of Holme Hale, Necton and North Pickenham and to some degree South Pickenham, and at the end of the year we had over 47 different faces from across the Benefices featured in those services, Holme Hale was very well represented and I would like to thank everybody for their support in that way and in a sense it has been good because people have started to recognise each other and learn faces and names and things that they did not no much about before and that has been good, however, it did have an impact on our ministering as baptisms and weddings were curtailed and first of all we were only able to have funerals by the graveside and very limited numbers in the crematoria. Baptisms and weddings basically ceased all together, unfortunately the number of funerals has remained the same across the Benefice. Fortunately for me Holme Hale did have a few funerals but not as many as other places. During that period of lockdown, we carried out fairly major repairs to the main East Window in St Andrews Church and again I would like to thank my PCC for all their hard work in getting that done. When we came out of lockdown (between the first two lockdowns) we did have services in church and numbers held up as every body was anxious to get back together again although it was a very strange experience because we could not sing but people got into the flow of it and started to worship in a different way and even at a distance people enjoyed seeing each other, however, we have maintained a very high level of care and concern about the Covid restrictions and looking out for one another in that way. We have not been able to do the fund raising that we would like to do as we don’t have the services with the collections so our ability to give to the church has gone down, although we have managed to pay a substantial portion of our parish share which contributes to the parish share paid by the Benefice which in total is in the region of £65,000, we paid just over £6,000 towards that and that is a very good effort and I would like to thank everybody for their generosity and support in that way. We still maintained a presence at our school, myself and Mrs Denise Scarlett are school governors at Necton Primary School, I have just stood down from that position and I would like to thank Denise for all that she does in supporting the school. The school was open for a little while and we did manage to have a Christmas Morning service at Holme Hale Parish Church and that was a great joy to be able to worship on that day altogether. I would just like to express again my grateful thanks to all members of my PCC who have worked so hard and to the members of the congregation who have been extremely faithful in very difficult circumstances and for the general good will of the Parish. We did have plans for a big VE day celebration which did not take place for obvious reasons, but did manage to have a small act of thanksgiving which took place at the War Memorial and that was filmed and placed on You Tube and that particular item which was only 15 minutes long was viewed by 115 people.

The Chairman congratulated and thanked the Reverend Thorp on his You Tube services that have been very uplifting and very cleverly orchestrated.

Cllr Scarlett said that in remembrance of the death of the Duke of Edinburgh there was a bell tolled half muffled on Saturday at midday in Holme Hale as they were across all parishes across the country.

1. **To receive a report on Church funds/finances**

Mr Tranter gave the following report:

Due to the restrictions, fund raising was badly affected and this in turn will have a knock-on effect next financial year because the claim for tax will be much lower. We can not do much about the fixed costs such as insurance, maintenance and utility costs as they all have to be paid even when the church is closed. Income was near enough £5,000 below outgoing and even then, we did not pay all of our parish share by about £2,000. £3,000 pounds was spent on the maintenance of the East Window. The Church is very thankful for the grant that the Parish Council awarded them and he would like to assure the PC that it is not lost in general funds, in actual fact it goes towards the upkeep of the church yard which keeps it very presentable for the villagers to come and visit their loved ones. With regard to recycling, we are grateful to Broke Brothers for giving us a new site for our bins which is just through the hedge, the money from the recycling accounts for 3-4% towards our funds. The full accounts will be presented at the church APCM meeting which is yet to be arranged.

1. **To receive a report from Holme Hale Playing Field Trust**

Cllr McNeil gave the following brief update:

At the beginning of the Pandemic we were unable to open the Hall, when the summer came I was getting enquiries from some people wanting to come back to the hall, I made it Covid safe and a few people were able to make use of the hall, unfortunately, many people were unable to come back as their activities were not allowed in the space that was available, we did get some bell ringers and some keep fit people.

There have not been any meetings as the First Treasurer and the Booking Agent have both been quite poorly.

After the summer, the car park was resurfaced and we are in the process if installing new heating in which over the year I have managed to raise £26,000 for the works.

A letter will be going out to all villagers as we do not think that we will be able to open up for indoor activities until May.

There have been a few activities and walkers have met at the Community Centre and there are some outside activities that will be going on.

They have received two separate grants form Norfolk County Council and Breckland for which they are very grateful and that has enabled them to pay for the various outgoings and they are, despite everything, in quite a healthy position.

There was a problem with the Moonraker and I am now looking into getting it printed and receiving more income from advertising, I did ask for a grant from Norfolk County Council but was told no, however, I am looking at available funds and am hopeful to have the magazine up and running again hopefully in June.

County Cllr Eagle said that Breckland Council should be able to help with grants of up to £5,000.

1. **To receive a report from Necton Primary School**

Reverend Thorp said that the school has been working very hard during the lock down and key workers children have been attending school during this time and have been with their teachers in their bubbles. Parents surveys that have gone out have been very praise worthy of the school. Also, the online activities for children unable to attend school have been very well received.

1. **To confirm end of year Parish Council account balances**

**Current account £12056.68**

**Savings account £4806.64**

**Total - £16,863.32**

1. **To discuss other village matters**

Cllr Scarlett raised a point that the pot holes that were reported around 6 – 8 weeks ago are still not repaired, the Clerk will chase this up.

Cllr Eagle said that we will all be able to visit the election booths to place our votes in the up-and-coming elections, he advised voters to bring their own pencils. He is standing for re-election and he would like to say that he hopes to still be with us after the election, but, he does not want to count his chickens before they are hatched.

The Chairman thanked Cllr Eagle for all that he has done for the Holme Hale.

1. **To confirm date and time of next meeting**

17th May 2021

Parish Council AGM starting at 7.00 followed by APM

The Chairman said that he would like the meeting to be held in person rather than by Zoom and asked the Clerk to check the availability of the hall for that evening.

With nothing more to discuss the meeting closed at 20.16

Signed\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_