



# **WEASENHAM PARISH COUNCIL**

Parish Clerk: Mrs Kelly Pickard  
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## **Annual Report of Weasenham Parish Council 2023 & Invitation to the Annual Parish Meeting 25th April 2023**

**Commencing at  
7pm in the Community Building on the Recreation ground**

## **CHAIRMAN'S REPORT 2023**

Dear Resident,

I am delighted to provide you with this year's Weasenham Parish Council annual report. I would like to take this opportunity to share with you some of the work the Parish Council has carried out on your behalf and our plans for the year ahead:-

It is now 10 months since Breckland Council was forced to step in and ask three local District Councillors to take over the running of Weasenham Parish Council following the resignation of all of the previous Parish Councillors and Clerk in May 2022.

This has been a significant undertaking for me and my colleagues. Along with our temporary Clerk, Kelly Pickard who works closely with me at Swanton Morley Parish Council, we were forced to examine in great detail how the previous administration had managed its financial affairs, policies & procedures and a project to build a new community building. This followed a number of complaints submitted to the previous administration by a local resident who they had deemed to be a persistent complainer. This resident subsequently submitted an objection to the external auditor in relation to the Council's 2021/22 accounts. In total this resident submitted thirty one objections to the accounts and working with the external auditor, PKF Littlejohn, we investigated all of the objections. We agreed with twenty seven of those objections. It was deemed that four others required no further action.

In their final report PKF Littlejohn noted that there were several payments made during 2021/22 which did not have supporting documentation, a number of procurement decisions taken in respect of the new community building did not have regard to the Council's financial regulations, there were some errors and omissions in respect of VAT reclaims and the Council failed to follow its own financial regulations in respect of verifying bank reconciliations and budget monitoring. The Council had also failed to hold either an Annual Parish Council Meeting or Annual Parish Meeting in 2022. As a result of this PKF Littlejohn requested that we amend and resubmit the Annual Governance & Accountability Return (AGAR) submitted by the previous administration, to accurately reflect their findings. This additional work for the auditor has cost the Parish Council £2,962.50. I would like to place on record our thanks to the objector for his courtesy and assistance to us in trying to resolve the matters he raised and subsequently minimise the financial impact on the village. He was perfectly within his rights to raise an objection to the way the Council had been managed and he was found to be correct in the majority of points he raised.

We have now implemented new policies, procedures and a financial software package to better manage the Council's affairs. We recently put together a comprehensive budget for 2023/24 and have managed to slightly reduce the precept level to help residents.

In relation to the new community building, having reviewed the original design plans, inspected the building and obtaining a professional fire risk assessment, it was apparent that a number of deficiencies were present including inadequate emergency lighting, incorrectly fitted escape doors which were not procured and installed in accordance with the Architect's design, poorly installed incoming water main, inadequate surface water drainage and a 90M access footpath constructed of poorly installed rubber matting. Since last Summer my colleagues and I have worked hard to rectify these issues and to meet the requirements of the fire risk assessment. The last one of these items, the footpath, will be addressed in the next few months. We have undertaken a formal tender process having had a design plan drawn up to construct a brand new access footpath complete with lighting. As part of the Council's budget, we will seek to finance this work using a public works loan of £25,000 payable over 7 years. Once

constructed this new path will provide safe and easy access to the community building all year round. Leaving the old footpath in place is not an option as it is not fit for purpose. New procedures have also been put in place for the management of the community building for maintenance, licensing and hire agreement for users. We have also recently had extensive repair work carried out to the play equipment on the recreation ground following receipt of the annual Rospa inspection report.

A new Parish Council website has been constructed and is now online at [www.weasenhamparishcouncil.org](http://www.weasenhamparishcouncil.org). In addition to this we now have ongoing external IT support and a dedicated Parish Council phone which it didn't have before.

I am also pleased to report that Kelly Pickard, who has been our acting Clerk since last June, has decided to apply for the post on a permanent basis and will continue as your Parish Clerk. She brings experience and good humour to the role and will provide some important continuity for the Parish Council in the months ahead.

I am disappointed that some of the previous Parish Councillors who resigned last May decided to write to the press criticising me and my colleagues for our work and for not apparently consulting with them. With all due respect to them they chose to stand down and leave us with an awful lot of work to do to turn around an organisation which was clearly not fit for purpose. I think what would be best for community cohesion right now is if they observe a sustained period of quiet reflection and support me, my colleagues and a new Parish Council which will take office in May. I urge EVERYONE in the village to find it within themselves to draw a line under the past and move on. Weasenhamp can have a bright future if people are willing to stop the unnecessary rancour which, judging by press reports, has blighted its reputation locally and nationally.

I and my colleagues have been greatly heartened in recent months to see some lovely community spirit with many residents volunteering to help restore the village pond and a local landowner, Nigel Joyce volunteering to cut all of the hedges around the recreation ground. I would also like to place on record my thanks to Judy Grimwood for her stirring effort in organising events at the community building. We need to nurture this spirit to heal the wounds in this community and move it forward for everyone's benefit.

Weasenhamp will not have a contested Parish Council election this year with only three people putting themselves forward for election. Martin Romanovsky, John Donachie and Tom McClenaghan are therefore elected unopposed and will take office at the Annual Meeting of the Parish Council to be held in May. The remaining four vacancies can be filled by co-option at a later date. I sincerely wish these gentlemen all the very best for the future and they know that they can call me for advice if they wish.

Weasenhamp is a lovely parish, and it has been my sincere honour to be its Parish Council Chairman.

**Roger Atterwill**

**Chairman, Weasenhamp Parish Council**

**12th April 2023**

**WEASENHAM Parish Council – Financial Summary**

| <b><u>Income</u></b>                                     |                             | <b>Actual 2022/2023</b> | <b>Budget 2023/2024</b> |
|----------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| <b>Precept</b>                                           |                             | <b>£17,000</b>          | <b>£16,776.24</b>       |
| <b>Interest (General Funds)</b>                          |                             | <b>£28.45</b>           | <b>£120.00</b>          |
| <b>Recycling</b>                                         |                             | <b>£30.58</b>           | <b>£0</b>               |
| <b>Solar Grant</b>                                       |                             | <b>£10,485.44</b>       | <b>£10,485.44</b>       |
| <b>Community Building hire fees</b>                      |                             | <b>£165.00</b>          | <b>£680.00</b>          |
| <b>New Public Works Loan</b>                             |                             | <b>£0.00</b>            | <b>£25,000.00</b>       |
| <b>Total</b>                                             |                             | <b>£27,709.47</b>       | <b>£53,061.68</b>       |
| <b><u>Expenditure</u></b>                                | <b>Budget<br/>2023/2024</b> | <b>Actual 2022/2023</b> | <b>Budget 2023/2024</b> |
| <b>Staff costs</b>                                       | <b>£6,500.00</b>            | <b>£7528.72</b>         | <b>£8109.84</b>         |
| <b>Clerk and Council<br/>Training</b>                    | <b>£100.00</b>              | <b>£0.00</b>            | <b>£596.00</b>          |
| <b>Councillor<br/>Expenses</b>                           | <b>£0.00</b>                | <b>£271.95</b>          | <b>£313.00</b>          |
| <b>Council Elections</b>                                 | <b>£0.00</b>                | <b>£0.00</b>            | <b>£924.46</b>          |
| <b>Office costs &amp;<br/>Stationery</b>                 | <b>£0.00</b>                | <b>£517.97</b>          | <b>£220.00</b>          |
| <b>Sundry expenses</b>                                   | <b>£100.00</b>              | <b>£0.00</b>            | <b>£0.00</b>            |
| <b>Grass cutting</b>                                     | <b>£4050.00</b>             | <b>£3336.25</b>         | <b>£7,000.00</b>        |
| <b>Parish Insurance</b>                                  | <b>£1,700.00</b>            | <b>£856.75</b>          | <b>£700.00</b>          |
| <b>Recreation<br/>Ground &amp;<br/>Building expenses</b> | <b>£850.00</b>              | <b>£7259.52</b>         | <b>£32,357.40</b>       |
| <b>Subscriptions</b>                                     | <b>£300.00</b>              | <b>£1862.11</b>         | <b>£1495.80</b>         |

|                  | Budget 2022/2023 | Actual 2022/2023 | Budget 2023/2024 |
|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|
| Donations        | £250.00          | £295.00          | £375.00          |
| Audit Fees       | £4,000.00        | £3232.50         | £1200.00         |
| Contingency      | £1,000.00        | £0.00            | £1,000.00        |
| Old Public Works | £0.00            | £8098.23         | £0.00            |
| loan             |                  |                  |                  |
| Communications   | £0.00            | £0.00            | £678.00          |
| Community        | £0.00            | £0.00            | £1750.00         |
| Legal Advice     | £0.00            | £0.00            | £500.00          |
| Parish Assets    | £0.00            | £0.00            | £2,000.00        |
| Totals:          | £19,200          | £33,259.00       | £59,219.50       |

Notes: All figures exclude VAT (and VAT recovered) and are from unaudited accounts

The Precept for 2023/2024 has been set at £16,776.24



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## **INVITATION TO ATTEND THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING**

***Notice is hereby given that the ANNUAL PARISH MEETING will be held at The Community Building on Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> April 2023 at 7pm***

***All whose names are on the Electoral Register have a statutory right to speak and vote at the meeting. The electors may give others who attend, the opportunity to speak. The meeting is open to everyone.***

### **AGENDA**

- 1. To Receive Apologies for Absence**
- 2. Chairman's Report – Mr Roger Atterwill, Chairman of Weasenham Parish Council**
- 3. Reports from Village Organisations (Order to be Agreed by the Chairman)**
- 4. Report on the Management of The Community Building**
- 5. Parishioners' Questions**
- 6. Date and Time of Next Annual Parish Meeting**

17<sup>th</sup> April 2023

Chairman of Weasenham Parish Council  
*Roger Atterwill*