

# Fornham St Martin cum St Genevieve Parish Council

Email: [fsmsgpc@gmail.com](mailto:fsmsgpc@gmail.com)

## MINUTES of the Annual Parish Meeting of Fornham St Martin cum St Genevieve Held in the Village Hall, at 7pm on Thursday 8<sup>th</sup> MAY 2025

**Present from the Parish Council:** Cllrs J Borrett, M. Collier, P. Butler, P. Borrett, J. Rushman, C. Last & B. Mahon.

**Also present:** David Yates – St Martin’s Church and 6 members of the public.

- 1. Cllr. Borrett to preside as Chair of the meeting.**
- 2. The minutes of the last Annual Parish Meeting held Monday 13<sup>th</sup> May 2024 were adopted as a true statement and signed by Cllr. Borrett.**

### **ANNUAL REPORTS**

#### **3. Report from the Parish Council Chairman, Cllr. Borrett**

Your Parish Council has had another busy year with a number of matters to deal with and I offer personal thanks to my fellow Councillors for their considered opinions on all PC business and particularly for their help and support throughout the year. Special thanks go to Mike Collier for taking over the Chair on a number of occasions and going over and above to help me through a difficult year.

I would also like to thank our Clerk, Vicky Bright, for her hard work through the year and for her very welcome advice and guidance, and for her patient reminders, prods, corrections, and needful chastisements.

We are most grateful too for our two District Councillors, Rebecca Hopfensperger and Sarah Broughton, for their most helpful assistance.

The Parish Council has responsibility, as trustees, for the King George playing field and through the year we have carried out minor repairs as necessary and continue to make weekly inspections to identify any problems.

As always we have to express our gratitude to the many volunteers involved with the Parish Council including...

- PETER FORSTER who collected and sorted the Bugle for many years and finally handed over to DONNA and LAURIE POTT and all the many volunteers who deliver The Bugle to our homes. Donna and Laurie also continued litter-picking our roadways and their much appreciated care of the playing field and flower tubs too.
- DAVID and PAT RANDALL for controlling the weeds on the trim trail and tending the fruit trees and plants in the play field - and for planting and keeping an eye on our flower tubs.
- MATTHEW KEMSLEY who charges and maintains the VAS machines and he is also the village historian.
- Mr and Mrs PAGE for so successfully tending the flower tub at the top of Barton Hill.
- BRANDON MAHON and SIMON LOUGHE who check on and maintain the Defibrillator in the old telephone box outside the village hall.
- The Village Hall Committee for their work in managing and maintaining the hall.
- AND, residents who involve themselves in vetting and/or commenting on Planning Applications and those who attend meetings to offer their opinions on any matters - after all, we Councillors are here to represent you.

Today, sadly, some Councillors - including myself - will be standing down and I implore all Parishioners to persuade friends or neighbours or even themselves to get involved. Whatever happens, this Parish Council will look very different from now.

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## 4. Report from County and District Councillor, Cllr. Rebecca Hopfensperger

### LGR

I've already explained/talked to the council about this at previous meetings but just to recap, the government have decided to push the agenda for devolution and local government reorganisation in Suffolk. With regards to devolution Suffolk and Norfolk were successful in being accepted onto the Devolution Priority Programme which will mean the creation of a county combined authority of Suffolk and Norfolk which will be governed by a mayor. The likely powers the mayor will have will be strategic transport, population health, potentially blue light services and economic development. Running alongside this there will be a local government re-organisation which is formation of unitary council/councils in Suffolk and Norfolk. There will elections for the mayor in May 2026.

The government asked councils in Norfolk and Suffolk to submit interim business cases of what unitary structures can look like in the areas by the end of January. Suffolk County Council submitted a business case for one unitary Suffolk and the districts and borough put one in on multiple unitaries with either two or three but have since come out in favour of three. We have since heard from the government that all proposals will be asked to be developed into a full business case to be submitted to government by the end of September, I've attached the press release and full feedback from the government to this e-mail.

### Junction at Fornham St Genevieve

Due to safety concerns at this junction I was able to get improvements made to signage and refreshing the white lines with vegetation clearance. We are now exploring whether signage can be improved further by the addition of a illuminated sign.

### Vegetation Cutting Back

There has been ongoing issues with getting vegetation cut back at various locations, rather than waiting until the vegetation meets the HMOP intervention criteria particularly with regards to the pathway leading from Fornham to Barton Hill I have provided the parish council with details of a private contractor which I will pay for out of my locality budget to get the footpath cut back. Other areas we managed to get cut back are near the bus shelter and some work coming from Bury. We will continue to monitor other areas that need work.

### Russel Baron Road Manners Road etc.

I was pleased to be able to get roads in this area re-surfaced after awaiting a long time.

### Flooding near the BMW garage

After having flooding in this area I was pleased to be able get work carried out which appears to have alleviated the flooding in this area.

If anyone has any highway issues I suggest that they use the highway reporting tool on SCC website but if they feel that they are not getting the answers they expect they can report it to the clerk and then I can chase and escalate the issues.

### Locality Budget and Highways Budget

Just to remind any community group that have locality budget that can be used in the village, in the past I've supported the village hall, parish council and the church and also various highways projects.

## 5. Report from St Martin's Church, David Yates

Normal services were held last year, with the fortnightly Sunday services, alternating with Tuesday services. Also, the monthly services at Fornham House.

The Easter and Christmas services, were well supported, especially the Crib Service on Christmas Eve, full to capacity. One wedding service was held, as well as 4 baptisms and 6 funerals.

All these combined services were attended by 1219 people, including 88 children.

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Including the Remembrance Service, held outside at the War Memorial, to remember the 15 fallen from FSM in the Great War of 1914-1918.

Revd Dr Andrew Miller our Team Rector, with his wife Revd Alison Miller as Team Vicar, form the principal ministry team, for the church, in the Benefice Group of 10 parishes.

I regularly distribute the Parish Council's Village Welcome Guide to new residents, some 10 annually.

These continue to be very well received.

During 2024 we had many visitors, both local and from UK and abroad.

So, the church remains a strong focal and historic place for many former residents and parishioners who supported the church.

Under the strict guidance of the Diocese Authority, detailed inspections of the building are carried out every 5 years. The recent report makes recommendations for maintenance and repairs, and amounts to some £5,000, a reasonable sum compared to some in previous years.

As part of the Bells Project, to refurbish and tune the 8 bells, and replace the old defective oak supporting bell frame with a new steel one, steel lifting beams have been installed above the bells to facilitate their lowering, and the 50 stone steps in the tower have been repaired, and a Lightning Conductor installed.

The Project has now been virtually completed after 8 years, with great thanks to all those involved in fund raising, personal donations and grants, including Suffolk County Council and West Suffolk Council thanks to Beccy Hopfensperger and Sarah Broughton, and the Suffolk Historic Churches Trust

With considerable help and support from the Suffolk Guild of Bell Ringers.

A Dedication Service of Blessing, in celebration, will be held on 18 May with the Bishop and guests.

We are now forming a Band of Ringers, so the church has a competent and useful band to ring at festival events, maybe for national celebrations, and weddings and similar.

We were especially pleased they were ready to ring fully for the first time in 50 years at the Remembrance Day Service last November.

Our gardener Martin Richmond has maintained the high standards of cutting and strimming the grass around the church and graves, keeping the churchyard neat and tidy and respectful, greatly appreciated by relatives tending family graves, together with Green Scene trimming the large hedge at the back of the churchyard once a year.

Following advice from the Diocese about remaining graves capacity in the churchyard, I need to formally notify the Parish Council that it will eventually be full and then declared legally "CLOSED" by an Order of the Privy Council. When granted, our PCC would then serve a written request to the Parish Council to take over churchyard maintenance, under the Local Government Act 1972.

Future maintenance would then be transferred to the Parish Council.

Currently there are available some 25 full grave coffin plots, and 70 burial of ashes plots.

Finally, grateful thanks to the Parish Council for the annual grant of £800 last year, towards the £2,535 annual cost of the churchyard maintenance of grass cutting, hedge, trees & yews trimming, which maintains the churchyard in tidy condition and appearance, and is often commented on such by many visitors, and has been recognised as such by the Diocese.

## **6. Report from the Village Hall Committee**

The Hall continues to fulfil its purpose of giving space to small groups who wish to meet on a regular basis. It is also attracting more 'weekly' groups who are finding out about our hall through social media. This is thanks to our hardworking Hall Manager, Lynne Quelch, who is proactive in promoting the Hall and maintains a Village Hall page on Facebook.

The main concern remains the very large electricity bill and groups have been asked to try to reduce the amount of use during their booking by switching off the heaters at least 30 minutes before the end of their session. The hall now retains the heat far longer as a result of the

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installation of the double glazing. A new thermostat has been installed and this is regulated by the Hall Manager.

The Committee had talked about the possibility of exploring the installation solar panels on the roof of the Hall and so took the opportunity to obtain a quote from Greenscape, through an initiative from West Suffolk Council/Solar. Sadly, we were unable to obtain any funding despite trying various sources.

We have been able to address the problem of the rotten joists in the small hall. The local builder, Paul Mullen, started on the work in February and we soon realised that there was more damage than at first thought. The work took three days instead of the one day originally planned. We had to shut off the small hall and store the chairs/tables in a corner of the main hall. The Committee would like to thank the groups using the hall at this time, for their patience and understanding. A huge thank you to the Parish Council who helped us with funds toward the large cost of repairs.

Our representative from the Parish Council, Paul Butler, decided to step down from our committee after many years of service and we would like to thank him for his work in support of the Village Hall. We do not, as yet, have someone nominated to replace him.

A meeting was held in March with representatives from the residents of the lane to discuss how we could contribute to repairs to the road surface. We have arranged to undertake work to the downpipe next to the car park in order to divert water from this into another pipe which then goes into a soakaway. When this work is completed then James Robinson, the residents' representative, will contact Martin Welham (a local contractor) to arrange for some suitable material to be laid on the lane surface. The cost will be shared appropriately amongst the properties and the Hall.

## 7. Reports from Local Clubs & Societies

None received.

## PUBLIC FORUM:

- A
- B
- C

**Meeting Closed at 7.25pm.**

**Signed:**

**Date:**