

Clerks Report August 2021

As the Parish Council's Responsible Finance Officer I want to take the opportunity to address comments in the village in regards to the closed swimming pool on the site that was the First School.

The swimming pool building and the land it sits on is not owned by the Parish Council, we have never had any involvement or affiliation with the swimming pool and have no influence on its future. We understand that it has been placed on the market for sale at a cost of £500k by its owners. It has been noted that some residents have called for the pool to be saved and re- opened.

As the PC does not own the pool or the land it sits on we would have to purchase it from the vendors - noting the price is £500k, we know that over 3 years ago it was estimated there to be over £100k of urgent repairs needed, no doubt that has increased as the building has fallen into further disrepair. If we were to raise the monies needed to buy and refurbish there would then be ongoing costs- employment of lifeguards, cleaners, caretakers, huge heating bills as well as instructing specialised companies to undertake the water and chlorine checks needed on a daily basis.

To support ongoing costs, we could charge the public to use the pool. Dereham charges just over £6 per session and that pool is very large. The pool in Necton is a training pool for children and so it quite shallow and small and no doubt any fees would need to reflect that. After undertaking a brief income and expenditure analysis it clearly would not generate enough income to cover ongoing costs that alone recouping the asset investment costs.

Referring back to the original costs to purchase and refurbish- the monies from this can only be raised via precept as this is the only source of guaranteed income to the PC. In order to raise these kind of monies we would need to consider huge increases to the precept which would see all residents monthly Council Tax payments increase quite severely. If we were to do that we would need to save the monies raised from increased precept payments in order to gather the money together, by which time the land may well be sold. To provide an example, if the precept was doubled it would take in excess of 9 years to save enough to purchase and refurb at today's prices. Noting thereafter the precept would need to be permanently increased just to support its ongoing costs.

I hope this helps to clarify the position regarding the pool. Whilst it may be a great addition to Necton we, unfortunately are not in a position to consider any possible purchase. It may be worth noting that residents are entitled to form their own group if they so wish in order to create a fund raising campaign. It was also noted that comments were made in regards to having some kind of covenant built into any planning permission on the site that the pool is retained. As a Parish Council we have no jurisdiction over planning matters and are only consultees along with other interested parties, we do make decisions on planning matters and cannot impose any kind of covenant when it comes to planning applications, all planning applications are considered by Breckland District Council and is not within the remit of a Parish Council.

Further to my last update regarding the broken posts at the trod on Hale Road I have received further communications from NCC that they have taken this forward with the contractor who cut the grass there and can confirm they have scheduled this into their works for the posts to be removed and replaced. I would like it noted that Tom Cox the Highway Technician has been extremely helpful in this matter and ensured the contractors have taken responsibility for the damage and has kept me updated throughout.

I have also reported the damaged BT cover outside the community centre and NCC are investigating this and will revert back to me in due course and, following a request I have also contacted Breckland in regards to the grass and pathway cutting at the area behind Elizabeth Drive as this appears not to be to the usual standard with nettles and weeds still left very high and covering the pathways and the grass cuttings left in piles everywhere.

Breckland have recently launched grant funding for Green projects with small projects receiving £500 if successful. Therefore, I have registered our interest in this in regards to the bike shelters we are looking to have installed. Any grant decisions will be made after the closing date in September and monies awarded in October.

On that note, I can confirm that the bike shelter should be with us any day now. I have been in continued contact them as they were experiencing severe delays at the manufacturing stage. Once I have a confirmed date for delivery I will make arrangements for the concrete pad to be laid and the shelter erected.