

**Minutes of the Thompson Annual Parish Meeting (Annual Assembly)
held in Thompson Community Hall
at 7.00pm on Tuesday 17 May 2022**

Present: Jean Kaye Chair
 John Newnham
 Ian Robertson
 Jean Wagner
 Angus Welch
 Kate Winslow
 Kim Austin Clerk
 Phil Cowen District Councillor

Also present: There was 1 member of the public present.

The meeting opened at 7:00pm

1 To accept apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Cllr. Gregory who had family commitments.
Apologies also received from Bronwen Tyler.

2 To agree Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting (Annual Assembly) held on Tues 18 May 2021.

The minutes had been circulated prior to the meeting. Cllr. Winslow proposed and Cllr. Welch seconded approval of the minutes of 18 May 2021 meeting and they were signed as correct by Cllr. Jean Kaye, Chair of the meeting.

3 To discuss any matters arising from the minutes

There were no matters arising.

4 To receive Chairman's annual report:

In person meetings have been held through the past year.

Continue to seek sources of help and funding to improve the village's flood resilience. Met with Lord Dannatt the Chair of the Norfolk Strategic Flood Alliance to bring to his attention the vulnerability of the village at times of heavy or persistent rainfall and the lack of assistance to improve matters. Applied to be included in NCC's forthcoming Reclaim the Rain project. Met with representatives from NCC Highways and NWT to discuss responsibility for maintenance of the ditches and watercourse at the edge of the NWT land. A leaflet was delivered to all village properties bringing people up to date with what has been done to get action from various official bodies as well as providing suggested actions to get better prepared should one be at risk of flooding and a list of useful contacts.

A number of planning applications were received during the year. Unfortunately, in a few cases Breckland Planning Officers disregarded the recommendations of the Parish Council.

The rescheduled Public Inquiry relating to the footpath running between the end of Pockthorpe Lane and Sparrow Hill which was due to be held at the end of February 2022 was once again postponed. This is now scheduled for mid-November.

Three litter picks were held during the year, June, Autumn 2021 and Spring 2022. We will not participate in the national spring clean this year, should one be organised, as the roadside vegetation obscures most of the litter in early summer.

Participated in organising the September 2021 Thompson Celebration event held on the Green. Are also part of the group planning the Platinum Jubilee parties for children and adults to be held on 4 June.

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Date

5 To receive annual reports from Norfolk County Council (Fabian Eagle) and Breckland District Council (Phil Cowen)

Norfolk County Council (Fabian Eagle)

No report received.

Breckland District Council (Phil Cowen)

Cllr. Cowen delivered his report on Breckland achievements 2021-2022

When we review what your Council has undertaken over the past twelve months it is right that we look at what we set out to achieve so that we can measure performance against expectation.

We set out to address four key areas of workflow that impact upon the lives and routine of our residents and businesses to some extent or other. Coming off the back of the Pandemic these themes were selected through their ability to support, regenerate, facilitate and drive the district beyond Covid and to work in tandem to grow and enhance the communities within Breckland.

The themes were:

1. Inspiring Communities
2. Thriving Places
3. Working Smarter
4. Breckland 2035

1. Inspiring Communities. We have:

- Delivered a £1.8 million temporary accommodation facility in Thetford to help those who are homeless. Other similar projects are planned elsewhere in the district
- Introduced the Breckland mobile food store to support those most in need through subsidised food in the rural areas
- Trained 100 mental health champions to work within the community
- Utilised the inspiring communities match funding scheme to support 30 community groups across the district
- Created the Early intervention fund to provide support to those most in need
- Supported residents through the roll out of the Disabled Facilities Grants
- Established a discrete team to work with residents who require adaptations to their homes
- Worked closely with the Daisy project to support victims of domestic abuse
- Continued our crackdown on littering and fly tipping leading to a significant number of fixed penalty notices being issued
- Worked throughout the pandemic to support all through our Covid Response team

2. Thriving Places. We have:

- Started construction of a £3.5 million electricity substation in Snetterton that will provide energy to support more jobs.
- Increased housing stock through enabling new developments in Mileham and Attleborough with more in the pipeline across the district
- Supported over 300 businesses to achieve Covid safe scheme accreditation
- Created an innovative Spring Back Programme supporting over 1,360 businesses and provided over £4.5 million investment to support the most vulnerable and in need areas of our local economy
- Supported 45 enterprises through the Breckland Business start-up scheme
- Launched a new commercial waste collection service
- Supported our own tenants through a scheme of rent deferrals and lease variations
- Launched the Future Breckland project through engagement with residents and businesses to drive forward each of our 5 market towns to enable them to thrive post covid
- Created the Ellenor Fenn garden in Dereham by repurposing waste ground
- Improved the riverside area of Thetford by removing the unsightly boat, a move supported by local businesses and neighbouring communities

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3. Working Smarter. We have:

- Created a partnership to deliver a more cost effective and more efficient waste collection and recycling service
- Launched our online chatbot to allow for a fully automated 24hr interaction with the council.
- Delivered an agile working policy that reflects more efficient ways of working
- Improved the accessibility of our website so that we are now ranked 14/406 local authority websites
- Improved the digital communication opportunities via the website
- Expanded and improved our contracts and procurements team
- Re written our recruitment policy, strengthened our armed forces covenant and made Breckland Council a better disability employer
- Expanded our range of services delivered by our class beating Anglia Revenues and Benefits Partnership
- Took advantage of empty buildings during Covid lockdown to reorganise workstations and reduce footprint. Now fit for purpose and thriving.

4. Breckland 2035. We have:

- Embedded the Climate Change agenda across all departments - to reduce carbon footprints
- Launched our sustainability strategy
- Expanded our garden waste service to over 25,000 households
- Supported the replacement of 133 streetlights with LED lamps
- Promoted local environmental sustainability through our Community Green Grants
- Encouraged and worked with our leisure providers to make the leisure facilities more environmentally friendly
- Developed plans to plant hundreds of trees across the district and supported the Jubilee green Canopy initiative

All of these initiatives are in addition to the 90+ statutory duties that we as a District Council are required to deliver and moreover, we are doing all this and more within a **balanced budget**.

Nutrient neutrality

Alongside all other local planning authorities in Norfolk, Breckland council received a letter dated 16 March 2022 from Natural England concerning nutrient pollution in the protected habitats of the River Wensum Special Area of Conservation and the Broads Special Area of Conservation. The letter advised that new development within the catchment of these habitats comprising overnight accommodation has the potential to cause adverse impacts with regard to nutrient pollution. Whilst the council assesses the implications of this letter, it has concluded that ALL planning application decisions in Breckland will be paused. For applications for building outside the settlement boundary there may be a 6-month extension and for those inside the settlement boundary, an extension of up to 12 months. This could have a huge impact on housing delivery and a knock-on effect on the construction industry. Disconnect between housing and protecting the environment.

Council Tax rebate

£150 rebate for council tax bands A-D. Paid to the 70% of people paying by Direct Debit. Remaining 30% asked to set up a Direct Debit to receive payment, otherwise can receive credit on council tax account.

6 To receive annual reports from local organisations

- 6.1 Thompson Millennium Green Charitable Trust (Martin Hayman, Chair, Management Committee)**
Cllr. Welch delivered the report from Martin Hayman.

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Overview

The Committee has continued to manage the Green for the benefit of the community now and for the longer term. It has, as with every part of society, been impacted during the year by the continued Covid pandemic.

Stakeholders

Parish Council. We are, of course, accountable to the Parish Council as our Trustee, and are grateful to the two Parish Councillors who sit on our committee and who more than pull their weight in just about every aspect of our activities.

Local community. The overarching mandate is to maintain and manage the current and longer-term health of the Green for the community. It is in the nature of community organisations that criticism often seems to outweigh credit, and we have had one or two adverse comments during the year, mainly about flooding, lack of consultation on an art project, weed killing without proper notices being displayed, and Covid restrictions on the use of the playground and exercise area. All were promptly responded to but only one was considered justified and in that case immediate and suitable action taken.

On the plus side, we wrote to every household with a questionnaire seeking suggestions for affordable initiatives to improve the use of the Green. We received a limited number of responses most of which were more relevant to the Community Hall. Overall, the tone of the responses was supportive. We continue to look at ways of improving communications with the community, in particular through upgrading our website.

Thompson Primary School. Two of our committee members are governors at the school and we have urged the school to come forward with suggestions for greater engagement. The response has been positive in principle but Covid seems to have continually interfered with practical follow up.

Thompson Community Hall. We continue to work well with the Hall and helped them to stage a very successful Village Day last Summer, in an effort to bring some good cheer to the village after the extended lockdown. Similarly, this year we are working with the Hall and other local organisers of the Queen's Platinum Jubilee to celebrate this milestone. One of our members has donated a young oak and this was ceremoniously planted by three local children in the Spring. An engraved plaque donated by another member will be "unveiled" at the Jubilee party next month.

Norfolk Art Project. The Green was invited to pitch for an art installation as part of a County-wide initiative. We met with Norfolk County Council and their consultants, all of whom seemed enthusiastic about the opportunity. Unfortunately, restrictions in the trust deed meant that we required to seek Natural England's approval, and the Council's very tight time schedule meant we ran out of road. This was a disappointment to members who had spent a great deal of effort in a short time working up the proposal.

Other matters:

Finances

Notwithstanding reduced income due to Covid impact on local donors and reduced numbers on the Thompson Run, we have been able to avoid dipping deeply into reserves, due in no small part to fund raising efforts by the Parish Council members on the Committee, notably the Green's Lottery scheme.

AGM

Held by Zoom with only one other attendee present whose principal interest was flood relief.

Surface Water management

This issue continues to be a priority for us. The Committee has been the subject of complaints in the past arising from the flooding of properties on Hallfield Road, which in turn led to litigation. Although it was clear that the Green was not responsible and the litigation was withdrawn, the Green does act as a sponge absorbing run offs and drainage from higher neighbouring land. In this respect, there is a limit to its capacity to retain this additional water, particularly during periods of torrential rainfall. We have taken action to improve two of the principal ditches and tried to encourage a neighbouring property owner to improve the continuation of one our ditches on his land.

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We have been grateful to the Parish Council for their engagement with NCC Environment and Highways departments and with the Norfolk Strategic Flood Alliance. It is very clear that this is Regional wide problem. There has however been little evidence of the NCC financing, let alone implementing, an effective flood mitigation strategy in our locality.

Maintenance

Regular maintenance has continued throughout the year and we are particularly grateful to one of the committee, supported by other members, for his efforts to keep the Green healthy and safe for users. Funding for various improvements has been obtained from The Countryside Stewardship Scheme after significant efforts by one of our Parish Council members.

Thompson Run

The committee was determined that, notwithstanding Covid, we should hold the Run last year. This took place with a reduced number of runners but did offer the community some well received light relief from the rigours of the Pandemic. We are optimistic that this year's Run (limited to 10k) will have a much wider appeal and a sub committee is working hard to achieve this.

Covid

The restrictions imposed by the epidemic meant we had to continue restricting the use of the playground and exercise area until negotiations with Breckland compliance office enabled us to open up again. More generally, the availability of the Green as a local asset available to all members of the community - and their dogs - was undoubtedly a plus point during this challenging period.

Insurance

We have been seeking clarity on our public liability. Zurich provides cover but the actual status of the Committee remains somewhat shrouded in mist given the lack of any contemporaneous minutes setting out its original terms of reference. The Parish Council is reconfirming its understanding that membership of the committee does not entail any liability attaching to individual members.

Committee Membership

We have been trying to increase the committee membership and now have two new members, Tina Sales and Suzanne Marshall, who each bring a broader range of experience to our work. Since the current Chair will be reaching 80 at the end of this year and wishes to resign, a younger successor who can bring new energy to the role will be sought.

Volunteers

Finally, special mention should be made of all the volunteers who, at their own cost, have enabled the work of the committee to continue. This includes not just the committee members but also additional support provided at working party days, the sub-committee running the Thompson 10k (a hugely time consuming task), and members of the Parish Council and Community Hall committee who have supported us regularly throughout the year.

6.2 Thompson Community Hall (Bronwen Tyler)

The Clerk delivered this report. It has been something of a roller coaster year with the ups and downs caused by the pandemic and its associated lockdowns, lifting of restrictions and then further lockdowns, to the point we are now at with greater freedoms once more. All of this made holding events and activities quite difficult. We continued to hold regular committee meetings but used Zoom instead of in person.

It was at about this time of year in 2021 that we were able to begin re-opening the hall for hirings, though it was a slow and cautious start with many people still reluctant to mix. Our first hiring was a christening in July which was mainly outside in the marquees we had acquired through a covid grant. We were fortunate to receive covid grants from Breckland during the pandemic which helped with being so long with no income. Wayland Quilters returned for the first time at the end of July and we held our first coffee mornings. Private parties began to be held in August.

We had our first major event on 11 September with a picnic on the Green, veg show and a giant celebration cake. It was a lovely day with good weather and many villagers enjoying the first gathering for so long. We hosted the first Thompson 5k/10k since covid began. We also cautiously began Ice Cream Thursdays in the autumn term and had some craft activity for the children with pumpkin carving for Halloween, and Christmas crafts in late November so that the children had

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them ready to decorate the Hall tree. We began Lunches again in October but attendance was low. A new regular private hire has been for table tennis.

One of the victims of covid has been the Stitchers group which had been going for nearly 30 years. Several of the members had health issues, making meeting difficult for them. We held a daytime meeting November to see if we could start again in a different way and planned another for December which was cancelled due to the new lockdown restrictions. Since then, it has been difficult to get the commitment of sufficient numbers at any one time to make hire of the hall viable.

We were able to hold the village Christmas Tree Lighting event at the beginning of December, culminating with refreshments at the Hall. Things looked as if they were picking up only to be faced with new restrictions over the Christmas period and the cancellation of some events. The Norfolk Wildlife Trust cancelled their information event, replacing it in 2022 with a committee meeting. The covid news continued to get worse, resulting in the second Christmas with no events possible and a number of cancellations.

Our first major event was the 2-day consultation in January by the Woodland Trust about their purchase of Green Farm. The Public Enquiry re Pockthorpe Lane was postponed yet again due to illness.

It was February before we resumed regular events such as coffee mornings once more. Lunches began in March. The long periods of no hirings and the slow return to some sort of normality has reduced our income considerably. Things are now picking up with a lot of recent enquiries. We have a wedding later in May - our first - which is very exciting. We have had another enquiry for a wedding in 2023 but no progress as yet. A new Pilates class has started on Monday evenings. Quilters held a workshop day to make quilts for Ukrainian refugees coming into Norfolk and so far, have handed over about a dozen which have been much appreciated, and earned the Hall some good publicity. We have a booking in October for the Norfolk WI AGM and party enquiries are picking up once more. We have re-started our popular film nights. The very popular book sales begin on May 21st. We have attracted new volunteers to join the coffee morning rota and help at other events.

Our next major event will be the Jubilee when we will be joining with other village organisations and the school to hold a village picnic and a tea party for the children in the afternoon. There will be a giant cake similar to that at the September picnic. This will be followed in the evening by a BBQ and bar with screening of the large concert at the Palace. The winning recipe in our own Platinum Pudding Competition, held on May 8th, will be served.

Over the past year we have continued to maintain the building and improve the facilities. For example, we now have a card reader and have upgraded the AV, installed a TV aerial and are about to acquire a TV licence for the Jubilee. The building has continued to cost money in utilities and routine outgoings but, inevitably, with a very reduced income, expenditure has exceeded income in the past year. Fortunately, we have good reserves but we are working towards turning this around. We look forward to a busy, active and successful year to come.

6.3 Thompson Parish Church (KWo)

No report for Thompson Parish Church.

6.4 Parish Land (Bronwen Tyler)

The Clerk delivered this report. The land belonging to the charitable trust continues to be rented out for grazing, earning an income for the charity. The balance remains stable.

Our main payments to recipients in 2021 was to aid those of pensionable age who live alone and do not own their own property to have some assistance with the expenses of Christmas and winter.

As living costs increase, especially the cost of heating homes in winter, we would like to remind the village that the fund is there to assist residents in Thompson in times of need. We cannot place anyone in a fraud situation with any benefits they may be receiving, but there may be many one-off ways in which we can assist in moments of crisis. For example, the current cost of fuel may mean that some people cannot afford regular visits to a loved one in hospital or for their own treatment. We will, of course, consider all requests in total confidence.

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We have some expenses we may need to meet shortly e.g. improving the fencing on the land and meeting the costs of formal Land Registry.

The present trustees are Kate Winslow and Bronwen Tyler and they can be contacted direct or via the Parish Council.

6.5 Thompson WI (Annabel Welch, President)

Changes to the constitution last year to allow virtual meetings and make voting online allowable, enabled the WI to continue with their meetings and training via zoom when necessary.

This has included the National Annual Meeting, Norfolk Federation and Group meetings, training for officers, quizzes and discussions on resolutions such as climate change and modern-day slavery.

In February it was wonderful to welcome everyone back in person. Our numbers at present are 20 with hopefully a couple of members re-joining now that we are no longer 'virtual' ! We have a new member on our committee and a recruiting drive will begin later this year.

In March we were asked back to cater for the Trustee's Lunch at Bawdeswell, for the Federation committee and helpers, and in October the Autumn Federation Meeting will once again be held here in Thompson.

Our meetings continue to cover a wide range of topics and activities from the Topsy-Turvy world of Gilbert and Sullivan to an excellent talk by Dr. Louise Humphries, a Thompson resident, on Slavery in Modern Day Norfolk. Future meetings will cover pewter embossing, a visit to a NGS garden and a Bollywood themed talk and dance session.

The resolution being voted on in June at the National Annual Meeting will be Women and Girls with ASD and ADHD - under-identified, under-diagnosed, misdiagnosed, under-supported.

On a final note, I would like to thank our out-going President, Kate Winslow, for her exceptional service and support to the WI. We are delighted to still have Kate on the committee.

6.6 Stitchers Group (Bronwen Tyler)

The Clerk delivered this report. Regretfully, Stitches has not met regularly since the pandemic forced closure. We have held a one-off daytime meeting but the second was also a victim of the 2021 winter lockdown. A number of our members have health issues which make them vulnerable and so reluctantly have had to avoid meetings. This has also meant it wasn't financially viable to use the hall. We will be planning additional workshop days later in the year and hope to work towards more regular meetings once more.

6.7 Wayland Partnership (Bronwen Tyler)

The Clerk delivered this report. In common with many charities affected by the pandemic, it has not been an easy couple of years and, unsurprisingly, we have suffered a lack of income. So much of our activity is community based and relies on grants; the uncertainty of lockdowns and the changes in restrictions made it very difficult to plan or hold activities and to commit to using funding in a given time. This meant being very cautious about applying for money which might have to be paid back. Grants are not as easily come by as they once were either. In addition, we were unable to open the Dragonfly Gallery, losing the income we would normally generate. During the first lockdowns our tenants were on half rents and a couple took the opportunity to retire. Cutting our costs as far as we were able, and business support grants via Breckland have helped. Several of our Parish Partners have continued to make their annual donations which all Parish Partners agreed to when we were formed - quite a commitment and we are very grateful. Thompson is among our most committed Partners, so a huge thank you. We obtained a grant from the Norfolk Community Foundation to help towards the cost of a new boiler. An Awards for All grant has enabled us to make some changes to the gallery, including the installation of a kitchenette are to enable us to offer coffee to visitors. Since things began to get back to some sort of normality, we have had many enquiries for office space and now have new tenants. So, we enter 2022 on a more optimistic note.

Our two members of staff worked from home until restrictions were lifted, although Amanda continued to access the office to manage post and issues that could not be dealt with from a

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distance. It should be on record that we could not have coped as well as we have without the unstinting loyalty and hard work of our Admin Assistant Amanda. She is utterly reliable and successfully worked from home the majority of covid, but also managed to serve the very varied needs of our tenants.

The Gallery was not re-opened until the end of November 2021, mainly due to a number of issues which were covid related. Volunteers were still reluctant to return and be face to face with the public. Many of our former team are older or have health issues, so that was understandable. We put a number of covid safety measures into the gallery and main building including a screen in the gallery. We couldn't man the Gallery with any regularity until we felt it was safe and had new people on board. We finally opened for the excellent Christmas exhibition only to have it cut short due to omicron. We now have a growing band of new and former volunteers so look forward to increasing our opening times, which will include Saturdays. We will always welcome more volunteers!

Our gallery co-ordinator worked from home on regular online exhibitions, increasing the number of artists contributing. She trained as a teacher during the pandemic but did not obtain a post, returning to Wayland House to plan the Christmas exhibition and new 2022 programme, mounting the first in house exhibition for two years in November 2021. However, she was offered a teaching post in early 2022 and left at the end of January. We very much miss her and her talent and enthusiasm. We recently advertised for a new manager and will be holding interviews shortly

The gallery activity funded by Awards For All was held up partly due to covid, and partly due to the wider ongoing issues over supplies and getting work done, but it has been possible to meet most of the plans outlined in the submission. As mentioned, we now have a small kitchenette area making it much easier for making drinks at workshops and avoiding the volunteers having to leave the gallery unattended. We hope people will use us as a drop in for a coffee and, in good weather, enjoy this in the Sensory Garden. One or two workshops remain outstanding and the grant has a short time left to run. One or two of the planned children's activities had to be cancelled due to covid spikes in the schools. However, we plan to replace these. We have had a number of very successful adult workshops and have a new programme being developed. Mindfulness is very much a buzz word at the moment after the stresses of the last two years, and we have a series of workshops entitled Sewing for The Soul running at the moment.

We have exciting plans for a Jubilee photographic exhibition. We will be featuring photos from the Coronation and subsequent Jubilees from across Wayland as well as photos showing how life has changed in the area over the last 75 years. Although it will be open from 6 June, we will be officially launching with a bit of a Jubilee party atmosphere on 11 June. The exhibition will remain open all of June, though lack of volunteers to man the Gallery means closing over the main Bank Holiday. Offers of photos are coming in and we hope to create an archive as a lasting legacy.

Our wonderful garden volunteers continued to work during the last two years to maintain the Sensory Garden, and considerable tidying has been achieved. We have attracted new volunteers to the garden team. Rotary planted some roses in memory of Martin Anscombe, who was also a founding trustee of the Partnership, with a small plaque. They have offered to do some additional work such as improving the fencing and creating a welcome sign.

Our biggest issue has been the need for a new boiler and we still have to fund a shortfall not covered by grants. Still seeking extra funds! The delay has been due to some errors and delays by the police in vetting the installer, which is now resolved and we expect work to begin soon.

The car park has severely exercised our patience and ingenuity, with many complaints from the tenants due the spaces being filled by those not associated with the building. One or two local businesses rent a space. Parking permits fail to work and personal approaches to those without permission are often ignored or responded to with aggression. It is especially frustrating for those of our tenants who have clients with mobility issues. We are reluctantly considering a CCTV company, if the police are in agreement. We had the car park wall demolished by a speeding car in the early hours of a Sunday morning. Town CCTV did not work and police did not pursue the incident. Insurance paid out but we had to pay the excess.

The proposed Digital and Creative Media Centre continues to progress significantly; Breckland have been conducting feasibility studies and costings profiles. It has a great deal of support from the

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gaming and digital community. Norfolk County Council, Breckland, The Police, Hethel Innovation, Lotus Cars are among those involved in regular meetings with the Chamber of Commerce and The Partnership to take this forward. MP George Freeman is supporting an application to the Levelling Up fund. It will be an exciting enhancement to the town and area with many opportunities for leisure and employment in an iconic building.

A recent highlight has been the visit by the High Sheriff to Watton and to Wayland House.

We have a new trustee on board and we would welcome additional enquiries to increase our number. Younger blood would be most welcome!

We look forward to a continued improvement in activity during 2022, with workshops and exhibitions already planned, more tenants in the building and the opportunity to further develop our activities as restrictions ease. We need to rebuild the Representatives group as several former Reps are now less active in their communities. We shall also be revisiting plans put on hold for further Heritage Group projects.

Finally, a huge thank you to the whole team at Wayland House and to the wider community of Wayland for sticking with us and helping us get through such a difficult 2 years.

7 To receive comments from the public

There were no comments from the public

The meeting closed at 7:40pm

Signed

Date