

Tuddenham St Martin's Parish Council

Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on 19th May 2015 commencing at 7.05pm at the Village Hall.

Present: Mr W Pipe, Mrs J Kelm, Mr H Brightwell, Ms P Procter, Mr D Lugo, Mr P Hodge, Mr C Denny, Mr P Bellfield (County Councillor), Mr R Whiting (District Councillor), Mrs G Cruikshank (Village Hall Chairperson), Mrs C Frost (Clerk).

- 1. Chairman's Welcome and Apologies.** Apologies were received Mr J Punton & Mrs M Pipe (both of the Parochial Church Council). The Chairman welcomed every one present to the meeting.
- 2. Minutes of Meeting held on 6th May 2014.** The minutes for the meeting were approved.
- 3. Matters arising.** There were none.
- 4. Chairman's Report.** The Chairman presented his report, which was as follows:

In one form or another, planning issues crop up at all our meetings, and with a steady stream of planning applications often minor, we have needed to convene extra Council meetings from time to time. Of greater concern has been the Ipswich Local Plan consultation regarding the Core Strategy and Site Allocations and Policies. Our concerns have been recorded with copies going to the local MPs and Councillors. We have also initiated a joint meeting with Westerfield and Bealings Parish Councils, and the County Council Highways department, to put forward our concerns regarding the traffic implications of the proposed Ipswich Northern Fringe development.

I am pleased to report that the high speed broadband has arrived in Tuddenham, although I understand that a few properties on the edge of the village are unable to benefit from this facility as yet.

Highways issues of one sort or another have featured at our meetings all through the year. This year has seen the establishment of our Community Speed Watch team organised by Pauline Procter. During November a speed monitoring device was installed for a week in the street near the church, and recorded nearly 30,000 movements over the week with an average speed of 23.7mph and 7.1% exceeding the 30mph limit.

We are particularly grateful to Mike Trotman and Clive Denny for looking after the playground facility over the past year. Most of the equipment is in reasonable order thanks to their efforts, however we will in due course need to address the future of this asset. The playground is not currently attracting much activity and the cost of maintenance is set to rise considerably as the District Council withdraw their funding of the grass cutting.

We continue to support the village hall, however due to the fact that their accumulated reserves are in danger of reaching a level which will incur payment of rates, we will now set aside funds for when it becomes necessary to refurbish the structure of the building or such other appropriate work. The refurbishing of the kitchen is about to go ahead and has benefited from a Communities Enabling Budget grant thanks to Councillor Stephen Hudson.

Our Parish church receives a grant from our funds to help pay for the upkeep of the churchyard, and we also pay Suffolk Coastal contracts to maintain various small areas of grass within the village. The street lights are also our responsibility and we have recently had to bear the cost of replacing the one opposite the bottom of Church Hill.

With continuing pressure on our expenditure, we have increased our precept from £5,000 to £5,350 with any shortfall funded from reserves.

I would like to record our thanks to our County Councillor Peter Belfield and District Councillor Stephen Hudson, who have both supported us well throughout the year. Stephen has not sought re-election this year and we look forward to meeting his successor. Sadly Erica Lopez has resigned as one of our longstanding Councillors and one time Parish Clerk. Over the years Erica has contributed greatly to our village both as a Councillor, Parish Clerk and producer of our Tuddenham Tattler. On behalf of us all, thank you Erica. Whilst a rather more recent addition to our number, I regret to report that Mike Trotman has decided not to continue on as a Councillor. Mike's contribution, particularly in relation to the playground, has been much appreciated. Thank you Mike. Thank you also to Ian Watson for carrying out our internal audit of accounts as required under the regulations.

Finally, a very big thank you to Carol for being so very efficient and enthusiastic in serving us as Parish Clerk and handling the ever increasing workload thrust upon her, and of course thank you to my fellow Councillors for their continuing support and contribution to the wellbeing of the village community.

5. Presentation of Accounts to 31st March 2015. The Clerk presented the Accounts for the year ending March 2015. These would go forward to the meeting of the Parish Council.

6. Report from Village Hall Committee. Mrs Cruikshank presented her report, which was as follows:

The hall continues to be well used nearly every evening and during the day for the Art Club and local events. It is well used by the village, and by regular groups from both the village and outside. Our income remains steady and we have not had to increase our hiring charges for the last two years.

We are commencing the replacement of the kitchen next week and we hope that most of it will be completed in about two weeks. There will be some decorating to do afterwards but hopefully the kitchen will be functional for the groups using the hall by mid-June. All the groups using the hall have been very understanding and will continue to use the hall in the meantime without the use of the kitchen. We are very grateful to them.

We are installing a small commercial dishwasher. We are also installing a wall mounted electric water boiler which will be a very much safer way of producing large amounts of hot water and also improve our condensation problems. There will also be a plate warming cabinet. All these items will improve the facilities of the kitchen for all users.

We have built up a good reserve towards the kitchen refurbishment. We are also grateful to Suffolk Coastal District Council for a grant of £2109 from the Community Enabling Budget. Finally we would like to thank the Parish Council for its continuing support of the village hall.

A discussion followed about how the Village Hall Committee could get the most efficient use of the £500 grant which the Parish Council had put in reserves from last year's budget. It was suggested that Parish Council may be able to purchase items on behalf of the Village Hall Committee and the Clerk agreed to check the implications of this proposal.

Mrs Cruikshank was then asked questions by the Parish Council. These related to the necessary repair to faulty heaters, whether the rent would be increased following the kitchen refurbishment, and the necessary repair to the lighting in the entrance lobby. Mrs Cruikshank informed the parish council that the faulty heaters would be repaired when the electrician next visited the hall, a rent increase was not being considered at the moment and that the repairs to the entrance lobby lighting was also being looked into. Mrs Cruikshank informed the parish council that non-emergency repairs were not generally completed individually so as to keep call out fees to a minimum and that the village hall committee kept the rent amount reviewed but did not wish to deter possible users if the hiring costs were increased.

7. Report from County Councillor. Mr Bellfield presented highlights of his report, a full copy of which was as follows:

A personal comment

From a personal point of view this is a year which I would rather forget. However I am now making good progress and it will be nice to be able to drive again. I have nothing but praise for the NHS, Ipswich hospital and all those who work in the three specialist areas that have treated me in the last twelve months, not forgetting my own GP. My gratitude to them all is immense.

Unfortunately this has meant that I have not been able to provide the service to you all which I would like, particularly in being unable to attend meetings which help me to appreciate the problems and concerns in the 26 parishes I represent. My apologies, but I hope that from this summer "normal service will resume"

Council Tax

I am sure that you all know that for the fifth year in a row the County Council has frozen council tax. This means that Suffolk residents will not pay any more than they did in 2010/11. We have delivered savings of £130m over the last four years. However, if central government policies remain unchanged, we estimate that we will have to make further savings of £120 over the next three years, having started with £38.2 for the forthcoming year. A significant proportion on the savings have been achieved by a reduction in the workforce of 47% across all council services.

Two major operational changes

As far as what has happened at the County Council, two significant service changed responsibility in order to reduce costs just before or in the early part of the year. The CSD services which were in partnership with BT, were brought back in house after ten years, and the Highways maintenance contract was put out Kier MG.

CSD contract

The transfer of the CSD contract, which included the financial, IT and HR activities of the council, came back into our direct responsibility seamlessly. Even the few adverse comments which we were getting towards the end of the contract seem to have dried up. It is also saving us money.

Highways contract

The transfer of all highways maintenance to Kier MG has proved a very different matter. To start with we negotiated the contract with May Gurney with whom we had had a good relationship, but at the last minute they were acquired by Kier. The idea was that the council staff would transfer to Kier MG under the normal arrangements, but some of the more important staff decided to take redundancy where it was offered, thus resulting in a shortage in the workforce. It seems that the council did not insist in adequate corrective action being taken soon enough, although us Councillors were complaining to the highways department and the Cabinet member because of the frustration you and we were having in getting anything done. I am glad to say that it all came to a head in the second half of last year when meetings at the highest level within Kier MG produced action on their part. A list of all outstanding work was drawn up and given priority and most has been undertaken. However we discovered subsequently that a number of tasks which councillors and parishes thought were outstanding had never got on to the outstanding list, that is the reason why we still have work outstanding for more than a year but it is now being scheduled.

Highways fault reporting tool

A very important new highways fault reporting tool was introduced earlier this year and any member of the public can use this system by going to www.suffolk.gov.uk/report-a-highways-problem. The new highways reporting tool which allows photographs to be up loaded can be accessed by tablets and mobiles. This means that people can access the map on the go and these will be recorded and actioned straight away. The tool also allows anyone to follow up the report to see the progress being made to complete the work. This means that if any member of the public sees a highways maintenance problem they can report it there and then.

Energy from waste

Towards the end of last year our new energy from waste plant at Great Blackenham was commissioned. This was a major success for the staff responsible because we had relatively little opposition to the development, unlike Norfolk where the cancelation of the contract has cost the council over £30m. On top of that the plant was opened on time and on budget, again quite an achievement for a Government body.

High speed broadband

During the year we put in a second tranche of £10m towards high speed broad-band for Suffolk which should mean that 95% of the County will have improved speeds by the end of 2017. The latest news is that 75,000 premises are now connected to high-speed fibre broadband thanks to the Better Broadband for Suffolk programme.

Young people's employment centre

Last November we, in collaboration with other organisations, opened in Ipswich the very first young people's employment centre in the country for 16 to 24 year olds. What is notable about this project is that it is not just an employment centre but they are trained how to write CVs and approach interviews. In the first month more than 500 young had made use of the centre.

Education

Under the councils new School Improvement Strategy we have recently sent out the second risk-rating letter in which each school is rated red, amber or green, based on information the school has provided as well as government data. This is all part of the work we are doing to keep on top of poor performing schools and to be able to pin point where assistance to improve their outturn is required. Meanwhile last year's exam results showed an improvement at all levels, in some cases reaching national levels, but there is still a long way to go.

Locality and minor highways grants

During the year I was very pleased to be able to help various people and organisations with financial assistance, the locality grant being over- subscribed. However, due to the problems mentioned earlier, the highways grant was not fully utilised, but I am able to carry the balance forward to this year.

Mr Bellfield then added that Ofsted had recently issued its report and it had accepted that schools in Suffolk were making progress, all be it too slowly, He also reported that he was using the locality budget to purchase another speedwatch device for the Community Speedwatch group and he offered possible help with funding towards the Tuddenham St Martin village hall kitchen refurbishment.

Mr Brightwell offered his Thanks to Mr Bellfield on behalf of the Parish Council and asked why the Highways contract was being outsourced to save costs in light of the CSD contract being brought back 'in-house'. Mr Bellfield answered that the objective was to save costs but that the service would be continued to be monitored to ensure that service was not reduced as a result of being outsourced. Mr Brightwell also informed Mr Bellfield that although the broadband connection to most of the village had improved, there were still some homes not benefitting from an improved service in spite of being located close to the new mast and asked who he should contact at the County Council to ensure that all residents could benefit from the improved broadband connection as he had not been able to achieve this answer from his enquiries with BT. Mr Bellfield informed Mr Brightwell that the County Council had provided a small portion of the grant towards this improved service but that Mr Jonathan Chown was the County Council member to contact in connection with this question.

Ms Procter enquired whether there had been a decline in morale for teaching staff in the county in light of recent reports and stated that it was important that teachers were valued. A discussion followed about pupil funding in the county, which was one of the lowest in the country

8. Report from District Councillor. Mr Whiting introduced himself to everyone present at the meeting. He then presented his report which was as follows:

Suffolk Coastal District Council is now represented by 42 councillors. The conservatives have control of the Council with 37 councillors. There are 2 Liberal Democrat councillors, 2 Independent councillors and 1 Labour councillor. Mr Whiting is the member responsible for Resources at the District council and has been overseeing the move of the council offices from its current location to purpose built offices at the former Girdlestons site opposite Melton railway station and the move is likely to take place at the latter part of next year. One of the key aims of the move is to reduce the Council's running costs and the council will continue to drive down costs and deliver services in a more efficient way.

Mr Whiting also drew the Parish Council's attention to the Enabling Budget in the Fynn Valley ward of £5,500 per year.

Ms Procter asked which villages make up the Fynn Valley ward. These are Playford, Rushmere St Andrew village, Swilland, Tuddenham St Martin, Westerfield and Witnesham.

Mr Brightwell asked if it was likely for Suffolk Coastal District Council to liaise with other local or district authorities if the links with Waveney were working so well. Mr Whiting replied that the administration side of both Suffolk Coastal and Waveney District Councils were very like-minded so the shared services between these two councils had worked well and it was understood that other councils were following suit.

Mr Hodge sought Mr Whiting's views on the reports that Ipswich Borough Council were likely to seek working with neighbouring councils to pursue the possibility of a northern bypass for Ipswich. Mr Whiting stated that his own personal opinion was that a northern bypass would be too expensive a project to pursue and that a northern bypass would not be a solution to the highways problems around the dock area. Mr Whiting reported that he considered there was an area of contention in the Highways infrastructure and the Northern Fringe development and that Suffolk County Council should endeavour to pursue sustainable modes of transport for this development.

9. Date of Next Annual Parish Meeting. 3rd May 2016.

The meeting closed at 8.05pm.

Mrs C Frost
Parish Clerk. Tuddenham St Martin