

## Notes on ANNUAL PARISH MEETING HELD IN THE VILLAGE HALL 10<sup>th</sup> May 2010

**Present:** Chairman Mr.K.Durant. Councillors: Mr M Thew, Mr G Shrimpton, Mr R Rush, Ms J Saunders, Mrs B Jackso  
**In attendance:** County Councillor Richard Kemp, District Councillor James Long Marian Peck (Clerk) and nine members of the public.

**Chairman's Report:** Mr Ken Durant welcomed everyone to the meeting and went on to report that it had been another busy year, with 9 meetings of the Council, but not so many sub-committee meetings throughout the county now the Boundary Commission report is complete.

He reported that, fortunately, there have been no changes regarding our councillors, however halfway through the year the resignation of the clerk, Charles Pugh was reluctantly accepted. He had completed 7 years and the Mr Durant added that the council was indebted to Mr Pugh for his dedication and commitment in pursuing his duties. He went on to say that there are always difficulties in finding a suitable person to carry out these duties and it was fortunate that Mrs Marian Peck had volunteered. She was a relative newcomer to the village, with no previous experience as a Parish Clerk, although had considerable experience in a similar position and is proving to be a tremendous asset to the council.

He thanked County Councillor Richard Kemp for the funds from the Locality Budget.

During the year there had been a reduction in the number of planning applications submitted, there being only 6 plus the Affordable Housing Project. The majority of the applications have been relatively minor changes to existing properties.

The main activities for the councillors this year had centred around three major projects, Affordable Housing, Village Hall Insulation and the Children's play Area, which will all be discussed in depth, later in the meeting.

Mr Durant went on to say that a Neighbourhood Watch scheme had been considered, but it was felt that it would not be beneficial, the phone box had been retained, but it must be used, or it will be removed, a new Village Hall Constitution had been negotiated with the VH Committee, which will be discussed at the VH AGM on 26<sup>th</sup> May. Meetings had taken place with the Highways Dept. to implement fitting of kerb stones outside Barn Meadow, plus a time switch has been installed for the bollards leading up to the Village Hall.

Following concerns about speeding traffic through the village, numerous requests have been made for police checks and eventually a check has been made using SID (speed indicator device) system and results are awaited.

Concerns have also been expressed regarding dog fouling of footpaths etc. and the erection of signs has been awaited. Temporary signs have now been placed around the village, close to the start of the footpaths. The question of dog waste bins has been raised and this will be the subject of further consideration at the next council meeting.

Among the large amount of mail received, some has been in relation to overhead pylons in North Essex and South Suffolk, although not in our area, comments have been registered at the Suffolk Council annual parish council meeting. Information has also been received regarding potential problems, on the length of time it takes for heart attack victims to be transported by ambulance to Cambridge. The situation is being monitored and we will be advised of the outcome.

Mr Durant concluded by saying that it had been another active year and he thanked all members of the council for their support and dedicating their time to the issues within the village.

**Financial Report:** Mrs Peck began by thanking Mr Pugh, for his help when she took on the role of Parish Clerk in October and for advice and assistance since then.

The Councils started the year with a balance brought forward from 2008/09 of £2274.34, as rise of approximately £400 from the previous year, which is accounted for by carrying forward funds for the proposed Play-scheme.

During the year the Council received a precept of £4,300, an increase on the previous year due to the allowance for the estimated increase in general basic items and the possible curtailment of the Locality Budget.

however, the Council were very pleased to receive a generous £540 from Richard Kemp's Locality Budget, £240 of which has so far been received. This was towards the cost of new first aid equipment, taps and lighting to be installed in the village hall. Unfortunately, there were no further grants or donations received by the Council, during the year. Total income amounted to £4939.39

Throughout the year the Council spent £413.13 on maintenance of the village hall – servicing fire equipment, grass cutting and £85.90 for new equipment, -£806.41 for insurances (cover raised following a re-valuation of the village hall by David Burr in April 2009) and £377 for grass cutting of the more popular footpaths. Subscriptions, audit fees, newsletters, charity donations, the Housing Needs survey, and VAT amounted to £1142.84. the Clerk's remuneration, general admin, stationery and postage, another £1377.49, so that the total expenditure was £4202.77.

As a result the Council were able to carry forward to this year an increased general reserve of £3010.96.

The Clerk announced that the Parish Councillors once again waived their right to any allowances for the year.

### 6. County Councillors Report:

He commented that the Boundary Commission debate had cost over £2million pound, which had been a waste of money and time, as no changes had been affected.

He reported that it had been another busy year for Suffolk CC and following the recession, the strain on the public sector is beginning to hit and it is envisaged that the situation is likely to worsen over the next couple of years. The budget set by the Council resulted in a 2.4% increase to council tax and this added to a slight increase in Government Grant means that in some areas the Council will be eligible for additional spending.

£1.5million – one-off payment for road maintenance, following the harsh winter; £1.7m to continue investment in social workers to support vulnerable children and their families. £1.6m for the additional numbers and more complex placements of young people coming into the care system. £4m to help care for older people with need for specialist support and £1.6million to pay for extra landfill tax.

In some areas the budgets are overspent, namely, Children and Young Persons by £2m, mainly due to the cost of Home to School transport and for Adult and Community Services by £1.7m due to the increasing numbers of elderly residents in the County. In addition to this within the capital budget, Schools Organisation Review will be costing over £100m.

There are now an additional 500 employees working at the council, compared to the previous year. Some positions are entirely government funded, forming staff for the newly created Children's Centre.

Mr Kemp then spoke about Waste Development Framework, saying that 4 sites are now under consideration

The former Sproughton Sugar factory, Sproughton, Eye Airfield Industrial Estate, Eye and Brome, Mason's Quarry, Great Blakenham and Suffolk County Highways dept, Great Blakenham.

Regarding the School's Organisational Review, which has been slower than anticipated, due to the economic crisis 4 middle schools have now been identified for closure by 2013, Great Cornard, Stoke-by-Nayland, All Saints CEVC and Uplands.

With regard to the Pylons debate, Mr Kemp told the meeting that Babergh wanted an accurate price for the cost of putting the cables underground in Suffolk and a response is still awaited.

He went on to confirm that the locality budget will still be available for 2010/11, approximately £10,000 to be shared among the Parishes. There is also a Quality of Life budget, available for minor road repairs, some of which had been used to provide the kerb stones outside Barn Meadow.

Mr Robert Rush then asked what would happen to the sites of the schools ear-marked for closure. Mr Kemp replied that he would think it be sold for housing.

Mrs Suzanne Dobney then asked if anyone would be held accountable for the £2m used for the LG Review.

Mr Kemp replied, No, that this money had been used to pay for staff time and consultancy work undertaken. Some councils had taken legal action, costing more time and legal costs. The preferred system had been one Unitary Authority for Suffolk, then there had been an alternative proposal for North Haven Unitary Authority and Rural Suffolk Authority, followed by a six week consultation period. Finally it was announced that there would be no change for Suffolk, resulting in a status quo, which had never been offered as an option under the proposals. He added that he believed there would be cuts in things like police force numbers and possibly other areas.

### District Councillor's Report..

He reported that savings of £1.3m were needed and that Babergh staff had agreed that, whatever proposals by their unions, they would abide by 1% increases for wage claims. The cutting of staff numbers is being achieved through voluntary redundancies. Mr Long said that maintenance of services at their current level is going to be difficult and reminded those present that Babergh is the 2<sup>nd</sup> lowest council tax in Suffolk. The free swim available for people over sixty were well used, but cost the council quite a lot of money. He then spoke about the collection of blue and black bins. He remarked on the success of the blue recycling bins and how this was helping to reduce the amount of waste going to landfill sites. Discussions are ongoing regarding some items which cannot currently be recycled, but may be in future. He spoke of the joint working of Babergh and Mid-Suffolk for waste management, helping to keep costs down. Mr Long stated that smaller bins collected more frequently would be too expensive, but that this may be investigated further, in the future.

**Village Hall Committee Report:** Mr Charles Pugh reported another successful year for the village hall, in spite of reduction in income from lettings, by 12.5% on last year. The increase was offset by money raised through events run by the committee, some 68% of the income, but they also represented 50% of the expenditure. For every £100 spent, £34 was the cost of electricity, mainly to heat the hall and this is one of the reasons why the committee is most interested in the Parish Council's proposal to insulate the hall, reducing heat loss and hopefully, eradicating the problem of condensation inside the building.

Throughout the year the hall has been used by regular organisations such as the WI, Church and Young Farmers, for whist drives and coffee mornings, but it has also been used for a number of parties and organisations from outside the village.

The committee has put on events such as an Old Tyme Music Hall, talks on the Cathedral Tower and Alpheton Airfield in WW2, a Murder Mystery, a valuation day, another quiz evening and a 50/50 Auction. The highlight of the year was a very successful pantomime, which played to near capacity audiences for all three performances. Mr Pugh then thanked Mr Mike Fahie-Wilson, who wrote, directed and produced the show.

Mr Pugh continued, that during the year the Committee had proposed a revision of the original Constitution, under which it is formed and acts, drawn up at the time the land, on which it stands, was conveyed to the Parish Council in 1953. The committee felt that it no longer reflected the present way and means of the village and its inhabitants. He hoped that the revision would be more coherent, understandable and workable. After a few minor changes this has now been approved and accepted by the Parish Council, who are Trustees of the hall and it will be tabled for final consideration and acceptance at the VH Committee's AGM, to be held on Wednesday 26<sup>th</sup> May 2010.

Mr Pugh concluded by saying that the committee had arranged a full programme for the autumn and are currently planning for spring 2011. He invited those present to come forward with any ideas for entertainment, recreation or social gatherings and hope they would attend the AGM on the 26<sup>th</sup>.

**Police Report:** PCSO Hannah Partington had given apologies, as she had been called away on a police matter. However, the following report was available. During the period of 1<sup>st</sup> April 2009 and 31<sup>st</sup> March 2010 5 crimes were recorded within the parish, compared to 6 in the same period of the previous year.

Burglary dwelling	no reports	
Burglary other building		2 reports
Vehicle crime		1 report
Assault/public order	no reports	
Theft		2 reports
Criminal damage	no reports	
Other crime		no reports

#### **Other Matters:**

**a) Affordable Housing** In November 2008 a survey was carried out to establish whether there was a need for affordable housing within Shimpling. The response from the survey was very good and established the need for 4 units, 3 x 2 bedroom and 1 x 3 bedroom. It was then necessary to identify a suitable site and of the ten selected for evaluation, Hallifax Place was felt to be the most suitable, although this was objected to by a number of residents. Plans were drawn up and the open public meeting which took place on February 3<sup>rd</sup> 2010, was very well attended. Final plans were submitted to the Planning Dept on March 8<sup>th</sup>. These have received no objections and the planning decision is expected on 18<sup>th</sup> May and it will then go for a final decision on the second Wednesday in June (9<sup>th</sup>). Icen are going to out to tender to four local contractors, with the intention of work starting at the end of June and completion possibly in Dec/Jan 2011, subject to no further problems. Although this project will have taken four years, this is very quick, as it is usual for the time scale to be nearer 4 to 5 years.

**b) Village Hall Insulation:** As condensation in the village hall has now become a serious issue, it is now apparent that something must be done. Extensive research and investigation has taken place to establish the most effective and economical way of overcoming the problem. The solution recommended, is to double insulate the inside of all external walls and it was felt that this would be a good opportunity to include additional, enhancing features. These would include improved lighting, incorporating a loop for those with impaired hearing, possibly an amplifier system and other additions, as required. The costings for the insulation amounted to just under £10k. Having received an indication from the Lottery organisers that it would be possible to apply for a grant to cover the work, it was very disappointing to learn a few days ago, that the application had not been successful. The clerk, Mrs Peck, had spoken at length to the Lottery Board representative and had been told that the application had not quite fitted their criteria.

Mrs Jackson asked if there were some other way that the funding could be re-applied for to fit their criteria, Mrs Peck replied that funds could only be used as designated and the most important thing to be done was the insulation work.

This now puts everything back to stage one, with some funds available, but with the difficult task of raising a further £10k and will necessitate further discussion by the council for the way forward.

**c) Children's Play Area:** Over a period of time it has been brought to the attention of the Parish Council that there were no play facilities for the children, within the village, except for a couple of goal posts. As there appeared to be an increase in the number of children in the village, it was necessary to establish this as a fact. A questionnaire circulated through the newsletter, brought a 58% response, showing that there are now 67 children within the village and a further 73 children visiting grandparents.

The only available site is Hallifax Place and while 91% were in favour, the remaining 9% were against.

A well attended open meeting on 27<sup>th</sup> March allowed both parents and children to have an input, to establish what kind of equipment was most popular.

Following discussions with suppliers for the requirements, quotations have been received within the last few days.

The Council is working closely with Kate Lowe from Babergh Council to make a lottery application under the Play Builder scheme, but this must be submitted before the end of May. Should the application be successful, there will be a great deal of work to complete before the scheme can be completed. This will include establishing Health & safety regulations, the most suitable siting on the field, insurance applications, risk management and examining future maintenance plans. Consideration will be given to establishing a separate committee to control and run the project and volunteers from within the community would be welcome. If lottery funding is not forthcoming, it will be necessary to scale back the project and although Hallifax Trust has indicated there will be some funding available, it may be necessary to run some fund-raising events.

#### **Any Other Business:**

i) Following an e-mail from Mr P Richards, regarding ditches being dug adjacent to properties, there was no further information available. Those houses affected should receive letters informing them of the work..

There being no other business, the meeting closed at 8.28pm

**Date of Next Meeting:** The next Annual Parish Meeting will be held on Monday 9<sup>th</sup> May 2011 at 7.30pm

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