

**Minutes of the ANNUAL PARISH MEETING held on Tuesday 27th May 2014 at
TOWER HALL, Broadlands Way at 7.00pm**

CHAIRMAN: P M Richings Esq. (PMR)

PARISH COUNCILLORS: Mrs M Brown, Miss A Cracknell, Mr D Francis, Mr G Laing,
Mr R Nunn, Mr P Richings, Mr S Skinner, Mr M Sones,
Mr P Tarling, Mr R Whiting, Mr J Withey,

MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC: Nil members of public

DISTRICT/ COUNTY COUNCILLORS: District Cllr Mr J Withey, County/ District/ Parish Cllr R Whiting.

CLERK: Mr M R Bentley, Mrs J Potter (Asst Clerk)

APOLOGIES: Parish Councillors Mrs J Clarke, Mr B Ward, Mr J Wright,
County Cllr C Hudson, District/Parish Councillor M Newton

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were noted as detailed above.

**2. TO SIGN AS A CORRECT RECORD THE MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING HELD ON
Wednesday, 22nd May 2013**

These were made available to all present. Miss Cracknell proposed that the minutes be accepted, seconded by Mr Tarling with all in favour. The minutes were duly signed as a correct record with no alterations.

Matters arising: - None

3. ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR

Parish Council Accounts for the year ended 31st March 2014 – Copies of the Parish Council approved but as yet un-audited accounts were distributed to all present. The Clerk to the Council explained the various expenditures and incomes and noted variances on the previous year.

RECEIPTS: Of note were:- Total receipts at £149,597 was up £33,000 on the previous year (£116,438). £12,000 of this was Miscellaneous Income – accountable by transitional relief from SCDC for play area maintenance and play space funding received. Cemetery receipts were also up £8,677. VAT Refund at £8,616 was the amount re-claimed for 2012/13 transactions, an increase of £4,087 on the previous year

PAYMENTS: 'Total payments' for the year at £134,558 were up from £126,986 the previous year, attributable to the £12,500 allocated to The Street footpath project. Thus total cash assets at the bank were £163,263 at 31st March 2014 an increase of £15,000 on previous year. Of those assets £125,254 were earmarked reserves.

The end of year balance in the general account was within £200 of the amount at the end of the previous year, so the big difference in monies actually lies within the cemetery account with funds carried over of £34,323 plus £30,000 earmarked in the BBRT account. It is also worth noting that the Cemetery Management Panel agreed that the fees should be held for a further year. There is of course a lot of work remaining to bring the cemetery extension into use.

Mr Laing asked a question about the Parish Project Note 7 which was answered by the Clerk.

The members present accepted the Parish Council Financial Accounts for year ending 31st March 2014.

4. POLICE REPORT – THE SAFER NEIGHBOURHOOD TEAM

PCSO Mike Sarbutts was absent so no police report was given [*PCSO Sarbutts had indicated he would be attending but subsequently informed the Clerk that he had been called out to an incident*]

5. ANNUAL REPORT FROM THE CHAIRMAN OF THE PARISH COUNCIL

Mr Richings gave a report looking back on his year as Chairman of the Parish Council. The full report is attached to these minutes at **Annex 1** and would also be placed on the parish website.

Questions: -

Should we now engage our councillors on SCC and SCDC to help deal with the raw sewage problem in the Mill Stream and surrounding area, in order to get Anglian Water to do something to eradicate the problem? Felt more pressure was needed. The Clerk had responded and written to Mr Peter Ross at SCDC as they own the

land. He had contacted Anglian Water and the Environment Agency. Anglian Water had previously taken measures which they assured us had solved the problem, but clearly flash flooding was still a problem.

Another question as to why surface water was allowed to be channelled through sewage drains on new buildings, should we insist that soakaways be built for all new properties as this would help?

6. COUNTY & DISTRICT COUNCILLORS REPORTS and QUESTIONS

District Cllr John Withey spoke about: the District Council Enabling Communities Budget of £4,000 for each councillor. Part of his grant had gone to a local Parent and Toddler group for new equipment. A local nursery had also benefitted.

District Councillor Robert Whiting highlighted the grant of £10,000 given to help extend the car park at Tower Hall Community Hall. £4,000 also given to Broke Hall School for outdoor learning project which was now underway.

Project for a replacement SCDC HQ underway as current site no longer fit for purpose and too costly to maintain.

Questions: None

County Councillor Robert Whiting spoke about the footpath project for The Street Rushmere, which was hoped could now be extended to Bent Lane as well.

The County Council had to save £156m over the four year period.

He is seeing the Deputy Chief Executive re the bollards issue for St Andrews Walk.

There will be a special bus service 500 running from Park & Ride to Suffolk Show every 10 minutes.

The new urban traffic control system should be switched on in Ipswich in a months' time.

Spa Pavilion Project – the S106 agreement re affordable housing signed last week.

Questions:

What would happen to Spa Gardens at Felixstowe? Subject of a Legal issue at present so not yet able to be in public domain, but hopeful that it would be resolved by Spring 2015.

Problems re anti-social behaviour on car park at Tower Hall. Barrier gates to car park would be installed shortly. Explanation of other methods such as mosquito devices on Tower Hall and Taste of India Restaurant, infill of Porch because of arson incident.

7. OPEN FORUM

Other Questions and issues raised by meeting attendees were:-

Grass Cutting of verges now so infrequent that it is difficult to pick up dog mess. There are fewer cuts per year due to cutbacks at SCC and SCDC.

8. CLOSE OF MEETING

The Chairman thanked everyone for attending and raising points of concern.

The meeting closed at 8.12pm and tea and coffee was served.

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Annex 1 – Chairmans Report

Chairman's report to Rushmere St. Andrew Annual Parish Meeting – 27th May 2014

Ladies and Gentlemen,

During the year, no changes have occurred to our body of 15 Councillors. All Councillors' terms of office expire in May 2015 when the 4 yearly elections are due. 3 of our Councillors (Mark Newton, Robert Whiting & John Withey) also serve as Councillors at District Level at Suffolk Coastal District Council. Robert also serves as Councillor for Suffolk County Council, together with Christopher Hudson. The Parish Council has 2 remunerated Officers, our Clerk, Mel Bentley, and our Assistant Clerk, Jean Potter.

Under the Chairmanship of Julie Clarke, our General Purposes & Finance Committee have ensured that statutory activities such as Budget Setting, Parish Risk Analysis, Asset Register and Insurance Valuations, Financial management & Audit procedures have all been satisfactorily carried out. I'm pleased to report that our internal & external auditors once again gave a clean bill of health to the way the Council is managed and accounting procedures undertaken.

With the increasing number of services the Parish Council are funding nowadays, our budget calculation determined that a small increase from £97,000 to £98,900 needed to be raised. Historically this amount would have been declared as the Precept, all to be funded via the Council Taxation Process. However last year, the Government changed the formula by which the number of households sharing the burden is calculated leading to a reduced number of households sharing the total tax bill. To mitigate this, they made a grant to inhibit increases to householders due to this formula change. This year another grant was made available, albeit at a lower level. The mathematics of all this are that the 2013/14 total requirement of £97,000 was raised via Precept of £92,916.98, collected from Parishioners via the Council Tax system, and £4,083.02 from Government Grant. For 2014/2015, the corresponding figures are for a total requirement of £98,900, of which £95,979.19 comes from the Precept & £2,920.81 from Government Grant. It is very unlikely that the transition Government Grant will be available in future years. It should be pointed out that Council Tax band bills for Parishioners still remain well below those charged to residents of neighbouring Ipswich and are less than the neighbouring Parishes of Kesgrave & Martlesham.

Since I last reported, under the Chairmanship of John Withey, our Planning and Development Committee have met 13 times and have reviewed 44 planning and tree preservation applications, before passing our comments to Suffolk Coastal District Council, the determining Authority.

It is pleasing to note that, from time to time, members of the public take the opportunity to attend and submit comment personally at these planning meetings prior to the Committee's deliberations.

During the year, the Parish Council has again organised an exhibition of a significant application for members of the public to review prior to Councillors considering the applications. In The Street, significant interest was shown over two applications at the site of the thatched house known as Redecroft. One for 3 houses behind Redecroft is still with Suffolk Coastal for determination. However the second, more contentious one, for up to 14 dwellings was subsequently withdrawn by the applicant after the Parish Council, and members of the public, had made their recommendations to Suffolk Coastal.

Last year I mentioned that a composite application, covering 3 discreet large areas of land at Bixley Farm, included plans for traditional housing, retirement bungalows & affordable housing had been approved by Suffolk Coastal. Construction of the retirement bungalows has proceeded apace. Work has very recently started on the traditional housing but the allocated area for affordable housing still remains barren.

At Rushmere Sports Club in The Street, a major refurbishment and enhancement of the club and its sporting facilities had been approved by Suffolk Coastal with funding gained via the creation of an associated small housing development. Both have progressed to plan, but to further safeguard & protect the open area from any future development, the freehold of the remaining 17 acres of sporting facility land would be divested to a body such as the Parish Council. This should happen once all the houses have been completed and occupied, probably fairly soon.

The Committee have also dealt with other issues such as tree preservation orders & planning enforcement issues, the latter seemingly becoming more prevalent.

Also considered was a response to the Boundary Commission who had been tasked with carrying out a review of a proposal to reduce the number of Councillors sitting at Suffolk Coastal District Council from 55 to 43. Currently the number of Councillors serving Rushmere St Andrew is 3 but with the new allocation and our electorate numbers, that would need to drop to between 2 and 3 based on a consistent ratio between Councillor and Electorate across the whole of the Suffolk Coastal area. The initial Boundary Commission report suggested an allocation of 3 Councillors be allocated to a wide area covering Rushmere St Andrew and a plethora of sparsely populated Parishes to the north. We have responded to this giving a preference to an allocation of 2 Councillors for our Parish area and 1 to the remaining group of Parishes. We await the final Boundary Commission findings which are likely to come into force for the May 2015 elections.

Our Parish Amenities and Services Committee, met 6 times during the year with James Wright at the helm. The Panel's responsibilities cover Parish facilities such as the ponds, play areas, allotments, the provision of notice-boards, litter, doggie and grit bins, the condition of footways and roads, vegetation clearance, litter clearance and grass cutting.

At Chestnut Pond, touch wood, the problems with flooding in The Street seems to have abated following the works carried out to the overflow pipes.

At Limes Pond, the refurbishment of the village sign was completed to a very high standard and it once again stands proud in the village. Unfortunately, it was away for longer than expected to the disappointment of a number of Parishioners. There are very few craftsmen in this field and their workload was high whence the delay.

At our play areas at Broke Hall, Tower Hall, Chestnut Close & Kelvedon Drive, regular safety inspections and maintenance have continued as normal. A fifth site, located at Yewtree Grove, will probably come within the remit of the Parish Council shortly. The Council declined to take over responsibility for this during the past year, not being willing to inherit an area which had clearly not received any tender loving care for a long time. Refurbishment has been undertaken by its present owners but the Parish Council will only be willing to acquire it should an inspection report, provided by a qualified third-party, make good reading. Clearly we will be financially responsible for keeping these areas up to scratch but the prospect of a slow decline under the previous ownership was felt to be unsatisfactory whence our portfolio will have increased from two to five areas in a relatively short period of time.

Over the years the Parish Council has paid for doggy and litter bins where they are felt to be needed and this has continued. In recent years, we have also provided grit bins where requested by Parishioners but, before installation, the Highway Authority, Suffolk County Council, have to give their permission, hitherto readily given to allow us to install them with grit refills provided by Suffolk County Council. Times are changing as, during the past year, only one request was granted but three were declined with reason quoted "the need to focus our limited resources on roads which benefit the general public, not the few residents of a quiet cul-de-sac". Has the cost of grit and sand rocketed?

The Mill Stream & Sandlings Local Nature Reserves continue to be maintained to a high standard by Greenways, financed by ourselves and Suffolk Coastal. There are still concerns regarding sewage seepage into the Millstream, despite Anglian Water having promising an enhanced maintenance regime at their pumping station. This type of problem, seen at various locations, tends to occur in times of heavy rainfall. Inevitably, the catalyst is found to be pump-clogging items flushed down the toilet by Joe Public – baby wipes, cotton buds, nappies and more unsavoury items being classics.

One item of significant irritation to the Parish Council has been a delay in the installation of bollards to inhibit unauthorised vehicles being driven illegally through the disused bus lane at the Bixley Farm Centre. Despite requesting the money from us up front, Suffolk County Council Highway Department has procrastinated for over 11 months to date. Should we send an anniversary card on 20th June?

I'm pleased to advise that a much requested bus shelter, near the Golf Hotel in Foxhall Road, is being provided by the Parish Council. Costing over £3,600, the order is in a long queue at Suffolk County Council – fortunately the money is still in our bank account.

At the allotments, the advisory panel, consisting of a mix of Councillors & allotment holders, has met no fewer than 4 times during the year. The main thrust has been to carry out a major revamp and tidy-up of areas, which over a period of time have become untidy and cluttered. Muck and compost bins have been installed.

A small Panel look after the strategy for our Lawn Cemetery and have met 3 times during the year. On a day-to day basis, our Burial Registrar, Andrew Duncan, ably manages the Cemetery administration. As always, regular maintenance (grass and hedge cutting, bin emptying / dead flower removal, earth replenishment, grass reseeding and weed elimination) has been carried out to keep the area very presentable.

Patronage of the cemetery remains good and there are no financial issues to give us concern. A review of cemetery fees took place but no changes were made this year.

During the year, work has continued on land, which reverted back to us from tenanted agricultural use, to turn it into a cemetery extension. Due to inclement weather, hedge planting took place a bit later than expected but was completed earlier this year. Also installed was a water supply which is proving invaluable to ensure the hedge whips are given the best chance to establish – looking at them recently, they appear to be thriving.

Maintenance of our website continues with regular updates taking place. Additionally, two editions of newsletter were produced and distributed to Parishioners. Costs have been offset by income received via our new policy of permitting advertising.

With regards to the need for suitable accommodation for the Parish Council to conduct its business, we have not progressed this over the past year. We continue to recognise our facilities are totally inadequate and unsuitable for a Parish of this size but we have continued to allocate a little bit of money each year to build up funds for this project.

We fully recognise and appreciate the efforts that the Police put in and are pleased to note the preparation and highly visible efforts they are making to tackle problems. The Parish Council remain active members of the 12PT (Twelve Parishes Together) group. Meeting regularly, Council, Police, School and other representatives discuss "issues of the day" which affect the area and determine possible solutions. The Parish Council, in conjunction with Kesgrave Town Council, continue to part fund an additional Police Community Support Officer, Mike Sarbutts.

At Bixley Farm District Centre, tackling anti-social behaviour during the evenings and into the early hours has been a priority. The area seems to have become a Mecca for youngsters skateboarding, shouting, playing loud music, driving noisy cars and mopeds together with even more unsavoury activities well into the early hours. Things got so bad in the open porch area at Tower Hall that the area has been fully enclosed by the installation of doors and glazing – the Parish Council, who are paying for the hall under a long-term loan, donated £2,600 towards the costs.

A theme, throughout my report, has been one of the Parish Council taking on more and more responsibility for functions hitherto carried out by others. Sometimes we have to take something over to alleviate a potential decline or abandonment – an example being play areas. Finance is often now required either to provide a facility in its entirety or as an aid to kick-start one. Whilst we would prefer not to spend money at times, there are occasions when we realise nothing will ever happen if we don't dip our hands into our pockets – in reality probably better described as the bank vault. An excellent example has occurred recently with work currently in progress on the provision of a footway along the dangerous "rat-run" stretch of The Street between Chestnut Close and Playford Road. With significant efforts from our County Councillors, together with funds allocated from their locality budgets, we have allocated £25,000, split over 2 financial years, towards the estimated £100,000 total costs. Parishioners then asked whether a similar project could take place in Bent Lane to provide a safe route all the way to the major bus artery. At short notice, with the equipment already on site leading to a reduced overall cost, I am pleased to advise that the Parish Council have authorised another £12,500 contribution towards this project costing around £40,000.

I hope this report has given a fair assessment of what has happened through the year, but before I close, I must put on record the following appreciations and thanks: -

- To Greenways for their sympathetic management of the Mill Stream and Sandlings areas, and all our other regular contractors who have carried out work on a regular basis to keep the Lawn Cemetery, grassed areas and playing fields so neat and tidy.
- To the Police for their unstinting effort to keep our neighbourhood safe.
- To Parish Councillors for their unstinting unpaid hard work on behalf of you, the Parishioners.
- To our Suffolk County Councillors and Suffolk Coastal District Councillors for fighting our cause & getting information to help us manage our business.
- To our Committee Chairs for carrying out the "meat and bones" of the Parish business and for their support, both past and future.

And finally, sincere thanks go to our Clerk, Mel Bentley, and Assistant Clerk, Jean Potter. As always, both of them have given their wisdom, guidance and sterling effort over the past year.
Thank you.

Ref:- P&D – 05/06/13 → 19/05/14 (13 meetings); PA&S – 20/06/13 → 15/05/14 (6 meetings); GP&F – 13/06/13 → 10/04/14 (6 meetings); PC – 09/05/13 → 15/05/14 (8 meetings); Cemetery – 03/06/13 → 24/02/14 (3 meetings); Newsletter – 13/08/13 → 20/02/14 (2 meetings); Allotments 13/08/13 → 12/05/14 (4 meetings)