

**Minutes of the ANNUAL PARISH MEETING held on Tuesday 24th May 2016 at
THE TOWER HALL, Broadlands Way at 7.30pm**

CHAIRMAN: Mr P Richings

PARISH COUNCILLORS: Mrs M Brown, Miss A Cracknell, Ms C Evans, Mr D Francis,
Mr M Newton, Mr P Richings, Mr M Sones,
Mrs B Richardson-Todd, Mr B Ward, Mr J Withey, Mr J Wright

MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC: 2 members of public.

DISTRICT COUNCILLORS: District/Parish Councillor Mr M Newton

COUNTY COUNCILLORS: None

OTHERS PRESENT: Mr M R Bentley - Clerk, Mrs J Potter - Asst Clerk

APOLOGIES: Parish Councillors, Mrs C Gower (family engagement),
Mr J Westrup (holiday), Mr R Whiting (prior engagement)
Police: Inspector Roger Salmon, PCSO Mike Sarbutts

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were noted as detailed above.

**2. TO SIGN AS A CORRECT RECORD THE MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING HELD ON
Tuesday 26 May 2015 at Village Hall**

These were made available to all present. Mr Withey proposed that the minutes be accepted, seconded by Mr Newton with majority 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 2016 – Copies of the Parish Council approved and as yet un-audited accounts were distributed to all present. The accounts have been audited and passed by the Internal Auditor but not yet by the External Auditor. 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 £165,548 were up £31,205 on the previous year (£134,343). Burial receipts were up by £3,858 and miscellaneous receipts were £2,416. Transitional relief, SCDC Enabling Communities Grants, SCC Locality Grant and Playspace funding received last year amounted to £32,826. VAT Refund at £5,539 was the amount re-claimed for 2014/15 transactions, a decrease of £1,324 on the previous year.

PAYMENTS: 'Total payments' for the year at £206,887 an increase of £87,513 from £119,374 in the previous year. This was accounted for by expenditure on establishing the new cemetery extension comprising £43,000 on constructing new roads and pathways, £7,408 on levelling, grass seeding and shrub borders, plus £3,500 on the layout of new cremation plots in the middle part of the cemetery. In addition £24,000 was spent on new play area equipment the majority of which was for adult keep-fit equipment. Most of the monies for the play equipment were grant funded.

All the monies spent on the cemetery came from burial and memorial receipts with no precepted funding required.

Thus total cash assets at the bank were £136,304 at 31st March 2016 a decrease of £41,829 on the previous year. Of those assets £83,250 were earmarked reserves.

The end of year balance in the general account was £8,654 greater than the amount at the end of the previous year, whilst the cemetery current account balance ended the year £35,515 lower than the previous year, with the addition of £15,000 cemetery reserves still being held in the Base Rate Tracker account. Note that roadways and landscaping on the new cemetery extension had all taken place during 2015/16 – a very busy year.

The running of the cemetery currently makes no demand on the precept as it is self-financing.

A question was asked about the grants received for various projects. Mr Bentley referred to page 3 of the accounts which includes a list of grants.

The members present accepted the Parish Council Financial Accounts for year ending 31st March 2016.

4. POLICE REPORT – THE SAFER NEIGHBOURHOOD TEAM

Inspector Roger Salmon and PCSO Mike Sarbutts were unable to attend. A short written report was distributed.

Mr Withey asked if a response had been received to his query raised previously at a Parish Council Meeting. No response received to date.

5. COUNTY & DISTRICT COUNCILLORS REPORTS and QUESTIONS

County Councillors – No report available and no councillors present

District Councillors – District Councillor Mr Newton spoke about his circulated report. It was also noted that Mr Newton should become Chairman of Suffolk Coastal District Council on 26 May.

6. 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.

The Chairman of the PC thanked Mrs Julie Clarke who had recently retired after a 14 year period of service on the Parish Council.

There were no questions. Mr Wright proposed a vote of thanks to the Chairman for a comprehensive report.

7. OPEN FORUM

Request from councillors – A letter to be written by the Clerk to Greenways thanking them for their involvement in the Jubilee Walk project. Mr Newton explained that Greenways is managed by an average of two full time people working with a large number of volunteers, some of whom are difficult to employ). £1m worth of work was carried out by Greenways volunteers last year. Copy should be sent to Chief Executives of Ipswich Borough council and Suffolk Coastal District Council.

Mr Newton reported that Suffolk Coastal District Council Planning Committee had instigated a new scheme of delegation. Fairly seamless transition to new system to date.

Rushmere Commoners are cleaning up the heath as well as rubbish associated with illegal camping. The Police are aware but due process has to be observed.

Reported that the corner of Bell Lane with Foxhall Road, the view is obstructed because of verge growth. This is a well-known accident blackspot. Would be reported via the Highways reporting tool.

8. CLOSE OF MEETING

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

The meeting closed at 8.45pm and tea and coffee was served.

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Annex 1 – Chairmans Report

Chairman's report to Rushmere St. Andrew Annual Parish Meeting – 24th May 2016

Ladies and Gentlemen,

When I reported last year, a short time after the 4-yearly Parish Council elections, we had a complement of 13 Councillors with 2 vacant positions. At that time we were looking to co-opt people to fill these vacancies to bring us up to full strength and in June we were pleased to give a warm welcome to Claire Gower and John Westrup on joining our ranks.

Sadly a vacancy then occurred in August when Councillor Peter Tarling passed away after battling numerous health issues with fortitude over many years. Despite living just outside the Parish, Peter had his heart deeply rooted within the Parish and served the Council for around 30 years, many of which as Vice-Chairman. Passionate about many local issues, he served us brilliantly well and it was so sad to lose him. Our thoughts went out to his wife Margaret & son Jonathon.

We again looked to bring Council back up to strength and in November another new face, Carole Evans, joined us via the co-option process. Again a warm welcome is extended to her.

After quite a long period of continuity, the past year has been quite a dynamic period for membership and this continued in April when Julie Clarke finally decided to call it a day. You may recall that last year Julie took a similar decision but her commitment was such that she stepped into the breach when we really were short of Councillors. Having given many years' service to the Council, both as Councillor and Chair of Committees, but with a number of other Community interests taking more and more of her time, she felt this was a good time to retire. However she's not far away as she retains her parochial interests via the Parish Halls Management Committee. Sincerest thanks to her for all her commitment to the Council highlighted especially by the "bonus" year we benefitted from.

Having gone through our statutory obligation to offer the opportunity for the electorate to call an election to fill this vacancy, no request was forthcoming so the Parish Council has the right to co-opt a person to fill the vacancy and the opportunity for people to put themselves forward has recently been advertised

At District Council, no changes to elected members have taken place over the past year. Following 4-yearly elections in 2015, Mark Newton & Deborah Dean continue to represent Tower Division, south of the A1214, and Robert Whiting as member for Fynn Valley Division which includes the area of the Parish north of the A1214 plus a number of nearby Parishes.

At County Council, Christopher Hudson and Robert Whiting continue as Councillors for the Kesgrave & Rushmere St Andrew Ward. Their terms of office will finish in 2017 when the next election round is due.

Whilst we appreciate that our District and County Councillors have very busy schedules, concern is often expressed by Parish Councillors that some - not all, of our elected representatives at District and County level do not necessarily have their fingers on the pulse of local activity and concerns owing to a very low attendance rate at Parish Council meetings.

The Parish Council has 2 remunerated Officers, our Clerk, Mel Bentley, and our Assistant Clerk, Jean Potter. Changes are afoot here as Jean intends to retire at the end of this year and Mel the following year. With both currently working from home this sets the Parish Council a challenge regarding office accommodation. However we have a potential new home at Tower Hall but this will necessitate kitting out the existing committee room with office furnishings and communication facilities. However, we have some ring-fenced money, built up over the years, to cater for this eventuality.

Under the Chairmanship of John Withey, 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. Yet again, I'm very pleased to report that our internal & external auditors once again gave a clean bill of health to the Council management and accounting procedures.

With the increasing number of services the Parish Council are funding, our 2016/2017 budget calculation determined that a small increase from the previous year's £101,436.61 to £105,800 would be needed. This figure is broken down into two portions - £341.64 from a Government Transitional Grant and £105,458.36 Precept. The Precept amount is collected from Parishioners via the Council Tax system. Using the Government's baseline band D property calculation basis, the Parish Council's Precept requirement works out at £42.07 per annum or £0.81 per week per household – a £0.025 rise.

Looking now at planning issues, our Planning and Development Committee met 11 times and reviewed no fewer than 69 planning and tree preservation applications before passing our comments to Suffolk Coastal District Council, the determining Authority.

From time to time, we look at planning issues which are physically located outside the Parish but where we feel there may be some sort of impact upon our Parishioners – for example vehicular traffic increases. The past year has been no exception and we have made representations on major applications at Martlesham and Bell Lane, Kesgrave. We have also kept a watching brief on the Ipswich Local Plan Consultation and the Ipswich Garden Suburb (Henley Gate) evolving development proposals.

We have provided feedback on the evolving “Suffolk Coastal District Council Site Allocations and Area Specific Policies” document which will provide a “Bible” with regards to the allocation and location of developments in the future.

To reinforce this “Bible” on a more local basis, we are currently liaising with Kesgrave Town Council with the objective of generating a joint Neighbourhood Plan. With significant input from the Councils and local resident representatives, this should provide guidance to planners as to how the local population wishes the area to evolve.

As always, it is pleasing to note that, from time to time, members of the public attend and submit comment personally at these planning meetings.

Over the past couple of years there has been significant public interest in 2 applications pertaining to the site of the thatched house in The Street called Redecroft. The first for 2 houses behind Redecroft was granted approval by Suffolk Coastal on 13th May 2014. The second application for 14 dwellings, located to the west of Redecroft, was subsequently refused by Suffolk Coastal for non-compliance with their Planning Policies. However, the application subsequently went to appeal for final determination by a Government Inspector who decided in the applicants favour. To date no building works have been noted on site.

Nearby, a couple of presentations have been given to the Parish Council by Pigeon Investment Management Ltd regarding proposals to develop the area of land straddling the Ipswich / Rushmere St Andrew border between Humber Doucy Lane, Ipswich, & the Redecroft land. With this area historically protected against development by both Ipswich & Suffolk Coastal development policies, some rather negative feedback was given.

At Bixley Farm, the three areas of land currently with planning approval include discrete areas for open market housing, retirement bungalows & affordable housing. Construction of the retirement bungalows is more or less complete and work on the open market housing has proceeded apace. However, the area allocated for affordable housing still remains barren. “Ticking over”, as it has been for around 30 years, probably best describes this area.

The Committee have also dealt with other issues such as tree preservation orders & planning enforcement issues.

At the Ipswich School (Rushmere Sports Club) sporting facility in The Street, I reported last year, that 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 the Parish Council. I am pleased to say that this transfer was completed during the year.

Ipswich School have developed this area into a valuable sporting and leisure facility and the Parish Council, in conjunction with Suffolk Wildlife Trust and Greenways, have also been proactive in assisting with the development of a managed wild life zone to provide a natural buffer between this site and Eaton Place.

We have also made approaches to acquire a small “pencil” of land between this site and The Street – again with wild life zone objectives.

Our Parish Amenities and Services Committee met 6 times during the year with James Wright at the helm. The Committee’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.

In the Chestnut Pond area, at long last I am pleased to report that problems with flooding in The Street have been virtually eradicated. The root cause of the flooding was mainly due to a failure of the highway surface water drainage system. Last year, following meetings organised by our M.P. Dan Poulter, the outstanding works entailed Suffolk County Council agreeing to give their surface water pipes a heavy clean, to enhance their periodic drain cleaning regime and to install additional drainage channels in the highway and the clearance of silted ditches. Frustratingly, it took two attempts, and two road closures, to deal with the work required but eventually the project appears to have been completed as originally promised.

Whilst the first tranche of work took place and the road was closed, the Parish Council persuaded the County Council to install a dropped kerb pedestrian crossing access point near the Baptist Church. We had less success with the depression in the adjacent greensward where the former village well capping has sunk. We're still waiting but chasing.

We continue to be aware of other flooding issues mainly in The Street, Bent Lane & Playford Road & have raised these with the Highway Authority, Suffolk County Council. Unfortunately, despite Parish Council & Parishioners concerns, they have not seen these as issues of urgent enough priority to deal with. However, our County Councillor has been heavily canvassing the Authority regarding the meagre budget allocated for flood alleviation works and this has been increased as a result. He is doing his utmost to raise the profile of these necessary works.

An element of controversy occurred during the year in the Chestnut Pond area. Over the years, a gaggle of geese had become larger & were becoming a menace to local residents with aggression, fouling, traffic danger and early wake-up calls being a cause of significant complaint. Conversely, some liked their presence as part of the village scene. The Parish Council took the challenging decision to have the birds removed and, despite the timing in December, they went to a place of safety rather than the Christmas dinner plate!

Our five play areas at Broke Hall, Tower Hall, Yewtree Close, Chestnut Close & Kelvedon Drive receive regular safety inspections and maintenance as required. Some refurbishment works have been carried out during the year. As promised last year, we arranged installation of adult exercise equipment at a number of these locations. The costs to the Parish Council were minimal as significant external funding was provided for this project as I reported more fully last year.

Further funding has been arranged, courtesy of Suffolk Coastal Councillors Mark Newton & Deborah Dean with their Enabling Communities Budgets, to install some toddler play equipment at The Tower Hall play area.

The Mill Stream & Sandlings Local Nature Reserves continue to be maintained to a high standard by Greenways with financial support from the Parish Council and Suffolk Coastal District Council.

As part of the Queen's 90th Birthday Celebrations, refurbishment of the Jubilee marker posts is in hand. Additionally, a new walk leaflet has been produced and all will be formally re-dedicated at an event taking place on Saturday 18th June based at the Sandlings. Stalls, refreshments and guided walks will all be provided – all are welcome to attend. Thanks go to Mark Newton for providing funding via his Suffolk Coastal Enabling Communities Budget.

There's some positive news on the bus front. The long awaited bus shelter was finally erected in Foxhall Road at the Heathlands Park entrance. Following discussions with the Parish Council, Ipswich Buses changed the route of their service 4 in the September to bring back a much requested service via the Bixley Farm District Centre. To the north of the Parish, the Suffolk County Council sponsored route 72 contract was re-tendered and the service continues with the same provider. Changes were made, specifically the days of operation, together with a customer-led change in timetable. The contract also specified the need for a fully accessible bus and this made its appearance at the end of March.

We're pleased to note that work was completed on the new footway along Bent Lane. This was funded mainly by Suffolk County Council but with a contribution of £12,500 from the Parish Council. In consequence, a safe pedestrian access is now available all the way from the Village, via The Street & Bent Lane, to Woodbridge Road.

The long awaited "No Through Road" sign in Tuddenham Lane was finally installed during the year.

Requested by local residents, the Parish Council has installed 3 additional grit bins in Foxwood Crescent, Melford Close & Malvern Close. All we need now is some snow and ice which has been noticeable by its absence the last year or so.

In Woodbridge Road a "dot matrix" traffic information sign suddenly appeared and the Parish Council started getting complaints from local residents regarding its siting relative to nearby properties. We had previously enquired of Suffolk County Council the reason for an adjacent electricity service point being installed – they did not know. When the sign was installed, they asserted a full consultation had taken place. Within a week or so, they finally admitted the error of their ways that no such consultation had taken place and the sign was removed to be relocated somewhere else. Presumably it's still in a store somewhere!

Following serious concerns regarding the condition of footpath no 3 running between Lamberts Lane & Seven Cottages Lane, a site visit was arranged with the Suffolk County Council Rights-of-Way Officer. Curiously, the footpath runs through a farm building which has serious structural faults and broken asbestos lying around. The footpath was swiftly issued with a temporary closure order whilst the dangers are eradicated.

With lots of other things going on, provision of information boards at Chestnut and Limes Pond have been put on the back burner – but they are still on the agenda.

Two highway items which have been looked at over the past year need allocation of funding. Firstly, we have looked throughout the Parish at the availability of drop down kerb provision to aid people in wheelchairs and those pushing buggies cross the roads. Generally provision is good but there are some hot-spots, mainly in the Broke Hall area where crossing the road can be challenging. Secondly, we have been looking at the difficulties being experienced by residents in Holly Lane where the narrow stretch of highway is separated from the footway by a rather muddy greensward. Both of these issues are a Suffolk County Council Highway responsibility. They have no money available to carry out the works but if the Parish Council would like to stump up the money these jobs could be done. We're rather loath to fund other people's work – next we'll be resurfacing roads – so there's a bit of an impasse here!

At the allotments, the advisory panel, consisting of a mix of Councillors & allotment holders, met twice during the year. Day-to day running issues are minimal, vermin excluded. We have plans to carry out replacement of fencing and to change a couple of areas of poor land to car parking. We are also in discussion with the nearby Baptist Church to allow them to use some of the parking area to alleviate some of the roadside parking issues associated with their popular church services.

A small Panel look after the strategy for our Lawn Cemetery and have met twice 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.

The Cemetery is run as a self-financing facility and there are no financial issues to give us concern, despite the fact we expended significant funds over the past year for works as I'll detail later. A review of cemetery fees took place during the year and some minor changes were made, mainly with regards to the level of discount given to Parish residents.

Following a review of our Cemetery Regulations Booklet, minor changes were made prior to carrying out a reprint exercise and subsequent distribution to Funeral Directors.

In the existing part of the cemetery, an additional area has been laid out for cremation burials, the existing one being nearly full. Similarly, we are making preparations to provide additional headstone bases for burial plots.

The most significant area of works has been in preparing the cemetery extension. The hedging planted two years ago continues to flourish. During the summer, the pathways were created using block paving and the intervening areas were subsequently sown with grass seed. Around the edges we also arranged the planting of 300 decorative shrubs. We have plans to incorporate some seats and lay some chipped bark around the shrubs to aid maintenance, but that's about it. As such, we are now moving into an establishment and associated maintenance phase prior to formal use of the facility.

Over the past few years, the Parish Council received a number of complaints regarding the grass in the cemetery immediately behind the St Andrews Church. In places this was reaching head height – a clearly unsatisfactory affair. Originally the responsibility of the church, this cemetery was declared full a number of years ago whence it becomes the responsibility of Suffolk Coastal District Council whose policy is for grass cutting to take place four times a year and no more. In reality, this meant cuts taking place at intervals of around two to three months during the growing season. However they were able to offer an additional four cuts a year on a chargeable basis. As a gesture of community spirit, the Parish Council have agreed to take up this offer and share the costs equally with the Church so that a more adequate eight cuts a year take place.

Maintenance of our website continues with regular updates taking place. Additionally, two editions of newsletter were produced and distributed to Parishioners. With the latest edition we also distributed a copy of the new Jubilee Walk leaflet.

Over the years, we have fully recognised and appreciated our local Police Safer Neighbourhood Team and have been pleased to note the preparation and highly visible efforts they have made to tackle problems. The Parish Council remained active members of the 12PT (Twelve Parishes Together) group. Meeting regularly, Council, Police and other representatives have discussed "issues of the day" which affected the area and determined possible solutions. The Parish Council, in conjunction with Kesgrave Town Council, have continued to part fund an additional Police Community Support Officer, Mike Sarbutts.

However, just before Christmas we were informed that the Police were carrying out a major review of the organisation and associated staffing levels with effect from April 2016. Previously, the local Safer Neighbourhood Team was based at Kesgrave, but the proposals incorporated the closure of this location. As a result, organisational changes were being made to split the 12PT area with most Parishes being looked after from Woodbridge. Kesgrave and Rushmere St Andrew (south of A1214) would be policed from Heath Road SNT office which had been the base for the policing of East Ipswich, while Rushmere St Andrew (north of A1214) would be policed from Woodbridge.

In consequence, our match-funded PCSO would be based at Heath Road but cover an area covered by two police organisational areas. Worse still was the fact that the Police were proposing withdrawal of their side of the match-funding and expecting Kesgrave and ourselves to fully fund the post. With our 2016/2017 budget setting process already started, this set us a financial dilemma and we made appropriate provision to allow for this, even though we were not convinced to continue with the scheme. Another facet, which annoyed us intensely, was that there was a non-negotiable proposal to restrict the PCSO's shift pattern at end-of day to 1800 rather than the hitherto 2400. We challenged, but could not budge, what appeared to be a carte-blanche Human Resources diktat on this time change. Our concerns were based on the fact that Mike had done a fantastic job in curtailing anti-social behaviour in the evenings and all this effort could go to waste. Fortunately, the police had second thoughts on the match-funding issue and subsequently relaxed their stance so it could continue until March 2017. With an air of caution, the Parish Council, in conjunction with Kesgrave, have decided to see how things go and have signed up to continue match-funding until March 2017.

At Bixley Farm District Centre, tackling youth anti-social behaviour during the evenings and into the early hours has been a priority. During the daytime, adult anti-social behaviour with regards to car parking in the Broke Hall School area continues to cause concern. Indeed, over the past year, it has continued to creep wider with complaints now emanating from the Broke Hall area.

Speeding has also been monitored in a number of known hot-spots & tickets issued in appropriate circumstances. As an added deterrent, a local Speedwatch group is being set up, in conjunction with Playford, to monitor traffic speeds. Whilst not able to carry out any enforcement, it is a formal way of drawing the Police's attention to speeding motorists, who will receive a "finger wagging" letter of disapproval. They can then be targeted more precisely. Thirteen locations within the Parish have been identified as suitable for monitoring. Funding for the equipment has kindly been provided by Suffolk County Councillor Robert Whiting via his allocation of money in the Locality Budget.

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 County & District Councillors for the generous donations to provide additional facilities.
- 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.