

MINUTES

of the Meeting of Occold Parish Council held at 8pm on Monday 8th March 2010 in the Village Hall.

Present: Mr K Chittock, Mr C Cripps, Mrs M Grange, Mr J Hewitson,
Mr S Hubner, Mr B Hull, Mr A Miller, Mr R Owen

Also for part of the meeting County Councillor Andrew Stringer, District Councillor Charles Tilbury

1. Apologies and Declarations of Interest

Apologies had been received from Mr Burnett and from the Community Police Officer

2. Reports from County Councillor, District Councillor, Community Police Officer

The Clerk read out the following reports: -

2(1) County Councillor's report

Broadband Update

Last month's Haughley parish meeting had a presentation from District and County council officers regarding the possibility of funding from E.E.R.A for improved internet access.

Many residents have contacted me frustrated at the poor Broadband provision in our area. This evidence is backed up in the digital Britain report (2009) that identified Suffolk as having "significant broadband problems". Given that more and more agencies conduct increasing amounts of their business online poor access will put our area at a substantial disadvantage. To bid for this funding we need to encourage as many people as possible to log on to the Erebus website to give evidence to enable our bid to have the best chance to bring to reality a better broadband service.

The website address is <http://www.erebusonline.org.uk/>

Local Government Review

The old chestnut of re-organising Suffolk's governance has taken yet another twist, The Secretary of State has sent a communication that states that a Suffolk Unitary should be put on hold until a convention can take place to achieve unity between existing district and county councils as to the make-up of any new unitary authority or authorities.

Both Norwich and Exeter are being allowed to form unitary councils with rural Devon and rural Norfolk as second single tier local government in each of those counties.

This all seems to be political code for saying the whole thing is heading for the long grass. Given the inordinate amount of time and money we have all spent on this it all seems an incredible waste, with the only progress being made is Mid Suffolk working closer with Babergh District Council something we started over 3 years ago without any interference from the government or boundary committee.

Budget Setting

Last week's full council meeting enshrined Suffolk County Councils budget for next year. The budget contained few surprises apart from a large number of £100 k + salaries.

Few of the forecast cuts are evident in the budget book, Suffolk County Council had a 5.5% settlement this year from central government compared with Mid Suffolk's of 0.5% -

these figures might help explain the different approach from both councils.

2(2) District Councillor's report

Local Government Review

Following the judgment by the Court of Appeal, on February 10th the Government announced its decision on unitary local government structures in Devon, Norfolk and Suffolk. In the first two, approval for unitary status was granted to Exeter and Norwich. However, in Suffolk's case the Government has taken no decision, but instead will set up a constitutional convention in the county to ask elected representatives to agree on local government structure.

In parallel with the new review process, Mid Suffolk has decided to seek an alternative model, of partnership with the neighbouring Babergh District Council. Against a background of reduced Government funding likely to lead to budget deficits of £0.5m-£0.75m in the years ahead and hence the need for further efficiencies, we now intend to build on the successful cost savings generated by the joint waste partnership with Babergh, by looking for other areas of co-operation. The two district councils now plan to undertake a comprehensive joint review that seeks to develop fully integrated systems of service delivery and management and operational level by April 2011 at the latest.

Finance

At the Full Council meeting on February 25 a Council Tax increase of 2.5% was for the forthcoming financial year was approved. This equates to an annual increase of £3.69 per Band D household, so that 78% of householders in the District will pay an increase of no more than 7p per week. This result has been achieved as a result of significant cost savings, not all of which are painless. As one example, it has been decided to end the annual subsidy of £38,000 to Thornham Walks, with a final, one-off amount of £10,000, while the organisation is encouraged to seek alternative funding sources.

Affordable Housing

In the first nine months of the current financial year, 42 new dwellings had been completed, against a revised target of 60 for the full year. A further 40 units are expected to be completed by the end of the financial year, as a result of schemes in Wortham, Stowmarket, Barham and Fressingfield currently on schedule. The application for 113 affordable housing units at Great Blakenham (as part of the Snoasis development) are going through the due diligence process

Planning

I recently heard very positive things about the new Enforcement Officer Karen Bolton, who has been described as "exceptional" in her ability to deal with even the most difficult customers.

Recycling

In spite of the severe winter weather, there was only one day when the waste collection crews did not go out, because of treacherous road conditions. Instead, they were redeployed to carry out waste collection tasks in and around Stowmarket. In the event of further bad weather in future years, Suffolk County Council will be providing and storing 20 tonnes of salt for Mid Suffolk's use, which will be cheaper than our present suppliers. The recycling rate stood at 42.7% in the quarter to December, but should increase as a result of the improving weather.

Garden and trade waste services are seeing more customers signing up every week, but there is plenty of capacity for more and if anyone has any leads to those who would like to

subscribe for the service please let me know and I will pass on their details.

Ipswich Street redevelopment, Stowmarket

The public enquiry is scheduled for April 27 and will last up to 3 days. Agreement has been reached with the United Reformed Church, which has agreed to relocate to the Scout Hall site, with a new Scout Hall and church building being provided at nil cost to either party. However, the church will not withdraw its objection to the Compulsory Purchase Order until a contract has been signed, which is not possible before April 27: hence the need for the enquiry, unless the objections are withdrawn beforehand.

2(3) Community Police Officer's report

Reported Crimes

Since the 9th February there has been no reported crime in the Parish of Occold.

Thefts from Churches

Lead has been taken or attempted to be taken, from roofs and windows of Churches in the area. You can help us with this and other thefts by looking out for:

Anyone behaving suspiciously

Unfamiliar vans or lorries parked near target buildings please make a note of their registration number.

Suspicious sounds or lights coming from a building when it is closed.

The sounds of vehicles stopping and starting near these buildings, especially at night.

Any conversations overheard that arouse suspicions.

Farmwatch

One of our current priorities is to promote Farmwatch, which is operated in a similar way to the Police Direct scheme. The objective of the priority is to prevent farm related crime by establishing new working relationships with partner agencies sharing information and increasing the feelings of confidence within the farming community.

You can help us with this and other thefts by:

Immobilising vehicles or equipment when not in use and if possible removing machinery from fields, especially near roads.

Keeping a record of serial numbers, chassis and model numbers of machinery

Painting the owners name on tarpaulins in large letters.

Using metal engravers to mark tools with postcode and first two letters of farm's name.

For further details please contact any officer at Debenham.

Anti Social Behaviour

As the evenings start to lengthen more people will be out on the streets especially children and young adults. Please encourage parents and guardians to ensure children are suitably supervised. The community should report any instances of anti social behaviour (including fly tipping and litter in general) immediately.

**IF YOU HAVE INFORMATION OR ARE SUSPICIOUS ABOUT ANYTHING
REPORT IT ON 01473 613500 and IF YOU THINK A CRIME IS BEING COMMITTED
ALWAYS DIAL 999**

Suffolk Safe Key

We will remind you of the Suffolk Safe Key Scheme

By registering your key holder details the police will be able to save valuable time gaining access to your property should an incident occur whilst your property is left unattended.

This service is currently offered at a discounted figure of £6.00 for one year.

Have Your Say

The Neighbourhood Police Meeting is now open to the public - please come along and raise any issues with us. The next meeting will be on 7th April at The White Horse, The Street, Badwell Ash IP31 3DP. It will start at 7pm and finish at 8pm. All members of the Parish Council are invited to attend when they will be able to bring any issues/concerns to the meeting's attention.

The following month's meeting is on 12th May at The Sports and Social Club, Church Road, Old Newton, Stowmarket. IP14 4JP. This meeting also starts at 7.00pm.

Councillors commented on the amount of litter on roadsides and verges. The layby on the B1077 is in need of a clear up. Clerk to contact District Council "hit squad"

3. Minutes of the previous Meeting held on Monday February 8th 2010, which had previously been circulated to Councillors, were approved

4. Matters Arising

4(1) Item 4(1) 8.2.10: Grit heaps

The grit heap at the end of Church Lane had been added to the official list by the County Council. It had also been confirmed that it could not provide grit for use on Old Rectory Gardens as it is a private road. An appeal for volunteers to manage the grit heaps next winter is to be put in the next edition of Oracle which will appear at the end of March/early April

4(2) Item 4(2) 8.2.10: Bus stop

Paul Horne at Suffolk County Council had informed the Clerk that the question of funding had been referred back to the locality board engineer [Brian Lomax]. Nothing further had been heard from either of them. The problem was that the £1000 funding from Jeremy Clover would be lost if the project was not started by the end of the month. County Councillor Stringer agreed to take up this matter with the officers concerned. He hoped that it would be possible to transfer the money from Councillor Clover to the project so that it was not lost

4(3) Item 4(5) 8.2.10: Meeting dates for 2011 booked

The Clerk had booked the village hall on the following dates for meetings in 2011 (all Mondays): -

10th January
7th February
7th March
4th April
9th May
6th June

4th July
12th September
10th October
7th November
5th December

4(4) Item 4(6) 8.2.10: Highways matters

The problem with water running across the road at the junction of the B1077 and the Cranley Green Road had been resolved before the Clerk had had a chance to report it to the highways department. The other issues regarding the banks on Castle Hill and verges near Occold Hall had been reported and were being monitored by the County Council. The Clerk had been informed that there was little that could be done about the banks on Castle Hill without the land on either side being bought and the banks cut back, and there was insufficient funding available for this. With regard to the verge Councillors asked the Clerk to suggest to the County Council that kerbs or reflector posts might be considered to alleviate the problem

4(5) Item 5(1) 8.2.10: Correspondence for circulation

An article concerning grants for maintaining war memorials had been noted. Mr Hull reported that the process for applying for a grant had been so complicated that he and his son Daniel had now decided to fund the cleaning of the memorial themselves

5. Correspondence

5(1) Correspondence for circulation – Suffolk Fire & Rescue Service Draft Fire Action Plan 2010-2011; information from Energy Saving Trust on membership for Parish Councils; Mid Suffolk Walking Festival brochure; Clerks & Councils Direct March 2010; letter from Suffolk County Council regarding campaign for faster broadband access for Suffolk

6. Parish Paths Partnership

6(1) Councillors thought that the broken footpath sign at the end of The Causeway may have been reinstated [*Have checked and this is the case – Clerk*]. The finger post part of the sign for the footpath from Redlingfield Road towards Benningham Green is missing. Clerk to report

7. Planning Matters

7(1) Suffolk Preservation Society held a meeting at Eye Town Hall on 12th February concerning the proposed Residual Waste Facility at Eye Airfield. Mr Hull had attended and gave the following information to Councillors: -

The site will deal with approximately 100,000 tonnes of waste, most of which is from commercial and industrial sources. The land requirements had risen from 32 hectares to 80 hectares and there was a possibility of a 90m high chimney being constructed. Eye Town Council were opposed to the proposal primarily on the grounds of the increased road transport. The proposed site at Stanton had been dropped because of concerns about the suitability of the A143 so it was not clear why the A140 was considered any better. Cllr Stringer suggested that it might be because 600 objections had been received regarding the Stanton site and only 13 about the proposed site at Eye. He confirmed the amounts of rubbish to be dealt with, explaining that 95% of the waste stream is generated by commercial and industrial sources. He also pointed out that there would be multiple sites, not a single facility as one plant alone could not cope with the volume of waste to be treated

7(2) Planning Application 0096/10 Erection and Operation of 3 Wind Turbine Generators, etc at Eye Airfield

The proposal was considered, but the huge volume of paperwork accompanying the application was too much to take into account sensibly. The technical summary was placed in the bundle for circulation, but the Parish Council did not consider itself technically qualified to comment on the application

8. Meetings and Training

8(1) Mr Hewitson and Mr Cripps had attended the Village Forum meeting on 17th February. Other organisations present had included ORAC, Pre-School, WI and the Football Club. Mr Hewitson had been able to explain the role of the Footpaths Warden but no volunteers were forthcoming. The situation regarding grit for the village was explained, also an update on the bus stop

8(2) Reminder that Mr Chittock to attend MSDC Parish Liaison meeting 24th March 2010

8(3) The Clerk had the latest details of courses from SALC for any that were interested

9. Finance

9(1) The risk assessment document was reviewed as required by the audit regulations and was found to be satisfactory. Items to be checked up on were the Clerk's self-employed status and the undertaking of a quarterly budget review

The effectiveness of the internal audit was also reviewed. The Parish Council was satisfied with the scope of the internal audit carried out by Mrs Crisp, her competence, her independence and objectivity in carrying out the internal audit and the responsibilities of members, the Clerk as RFO and Mrs Crisp as internal auditor. Reports are given to the Council after the end of each financial year so that improvements can be made in the following financial year

9(2) An invoice had still not been received from the police for the two Neighbourhood Watch signs. Clerk to contact Phil Kemp and ask him to chase this up

9(3) Submitted for payment Clerk's salary for 6 months to 31st March 2010 of £894. Mr Hubner declared a personal interest. Payment approved

9(4) A request from Andy Andrews to underwrite cost of £70 for hall hire for a village event A Medieval Michaelmas to be held on 2nd October was considered. The Parish Council would only need to pay if insufficient tickets were sold to cover the cost of hiring the hall. Approved

9(5) Donations to be made to Church and Chapel fabric funds were considered. Mr Hubner declared a personal interest. It was agreed to donate £700 to St Michael's Church and £300 to the Baptist Chapel

9(6) It was noted that acknowledgements for donations had been received from Macmillan Cancer Support, East Anglian Air Ambulance, Mid Suffolk Citizen's Advice Bureau

10. Matters to be advised (at the Chairman's discretion)

10(1) Councillors were informed that Suffolk ACRE's Rural Housing Enabler would attend the next meeting in April to talk about possibility of carrying out a housing needs survey

10(2) It was reported that a buyer was believed to have been found for the pub

10(3) It was reported that 22 rabbits had recently been eliminated from the cemetery

11. Date of next meeting is Monday 12th April 2010 at 8pm in the Village Hall.

Meeting closed 9.20pm