

MINUTES

of the Meeting of Occold Parish Council held at 8pm on Monday 8th December 2008 in the Village Hall.

Present: Mr K Chittock, Mr R Burnett, Mr C Cripps, Mr B Dyla, Mr J Hewitson, Mr S Hubner (part of meeting), Mr B Hull, Mr A Miller, Mr R Owen

Also to give the police report PC Chris Beales

1. Apologies and Declarations of Interest

Apologies from County Councillor Clover and District Councillor Tilbury were noted

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

2(1) Although unable to attend the meeting Councillor Tilbury had sent the following report which the Clerk read out: -

Rural post offices

The Post Office has finally won its long-running battle with the Government to continue to distribute pension and social security payments. On November 13 the Government announced that the Post Office would continue to operate the Post Office Card Account, which is seen as vital in securing a future for 3000 Post Offices which were threatened with closure. This is particularly important for rural residents and those without bank accounts, who would otherwise have to travel further afield to access benefits, state pensions and tax credit payments.

A new contract will run for 5 years from 2010, with the possibility of extension beyond that.

Brome recycling centre

Despite rumours, not only are there no plans to close the Brome recycling centre, but in fact Suffolk County Council is in the process of appointing a company to take on the new contract to run all the household waste recycling centres (HWRCs) in the county from next May, when the current contract with Viridor expires.

There are two front-runners to take over the contract, and both have advanced innovative plans to improve recycling rates and improve and expand existing sites.

The only case for an existing site to close would be where existing sites are both too small and lack sufficient land for expansion, but in that case they would only be closed after replacement sites had been created and opened

2(2) PC Chris Beales gave the following police report: -

Reported Crimes

No crimes have been reported since the last meeting.

Some seasonal crime prevention advice for everyone;

Do not leave your Christmas shopping on show in your cars. Put it in the boot out of sight. When you put your presents under the tree, make sure it cannot be seen from the window. Leave a light on in the house when you are out attending your Christmas functions.

BE VISIBLE: Most of our villages do not have any street lighting or pavements, so make sure that if you are cycling or walking after dark that motorists can see you. Always wear reflective clothing, have lights on your bike and carry a torch if you're on foot.

FUEL POVERTY: Cold homes contribute to in excess of 100 winter deaths of elderly West Suffolk residents each winter. If you do visit an elderly person and you notice that they are not using their heating system, staying in bed, or are complaining of money or health problems, encourage them to ring the free phone number 0800 0288 938, to see if they are eligible for free heating or insulation.

PC Beales also warned drivers to be careful in the early mornings during the present cold weather as there had been numerous minor accidents on the untreated roads recently

Crime rates in the Mid Suffolk Safer Neighbourhood Team area were reported to be down by 8% in the last quarter, and this is thought to be due at least in part to the new SNT arrangements which have resulted in a more effective flow of information between the police and the public

3. Minutes of the previous Meeting held on 10th November 2008, which had previously been circulated to Councillors, were unanimously approved

4. Matters Arising

4(1) Item 4(1) 10.11.08: Streetlights

The three lights with outstanding repairs had now been attended to and all lights appear to be working at present.

The Clerk's request for a site meeting with a representative from SCC had been passed on to Bernie Rushbrook who had telephoned the Clerk to explain the situation. As the poles on which the Parish Council lights are mounted belong to EDF they could, in effect, ask for them to be removed at any time. Currently lights which are not G39 compliant are being repaired by a four-man team from EDF and Carillion working together, but this is costing SCC £1000 a day and cannot go on indefinitely. The Clerk had explained that due to the estimated cost of replacement of each unit the Parish Council could not realistically expect to budget to replace more than one unit per year, which would mean a 7 year period before all lights in Occold were G39 compliant. Mr Rushbrooke indicated that he thought that this would be an acceptable approach as it signalled the Parish Council's intention to try to resolve the G39 problem.

Another relevant factor is that the County Council may soon be replaced by the new unitary authority which would then own all streetlights previously belonging to the Council and District authorities. Presumably then all supply and maintenance contracts would be up for re-negotiation and the situation may change

Mr Hull reported that Morgan Est, EDF's contractors, had been back in the village recently doing further work to the overhead cabling. In this case the survey that had been provided of non-compliant lights may be out of date

Clerk was asked to chase SALC for more advice. Further discussion was deferred until the January meeting when the budget will be set

Mr Hubner arrived

4(2) Item 4(2) 10.11.08: Bus stop

An informal meeting had been held between ORAC and the Parish Council to discuss various village concerns, including the position of a new bus stop. The outcome was that the Parish Council is to request an independent survey by SCC to establish all possible locations for a bus stop in the village. Clerk to arrange this and ask for both ORAC and the Parish Council to be sent a copy of the result. Clerk also to write to ORAC explaining that this was being done. There was some uncertainty amongst Parish Councillors as to whether ORAC would consider a bus stop on the green if this did turn out to be the only suitable site – this will need to be clarified, perhaps after the survey results.

Mr Hull reported that it was possible for parishes to build their own bus stops – he had a photograph of a brick and timber shelter in Coddendam. It was also possible to borrow money from the Public Loans Board and pay it back over a period of 10 years or even longer

4(3) Item 4(2) 10.11.08: Other issues arising from the meeting with ORAC

The history of trying to obtain a footway along The Street had been explained to ORAC, hopefully this information exchange had been helpful to them

The closure of the Beaconsfield Arms had also been discussed. It had been suggested that a press release to go on the website and in the local press might help in the sale of the business as a viable concern. Mr Hubner volunteered to draft something and look into the question of the current ownership, as it was rumoured that the landlord may have declared himself bankrupt

4(4) Item 4(3) 10.11.08: 20mph speed limit

It was noted that the speed gun had recently been deployed in the village around school pick-up time. Two cautions and one ticket had been issued. The Clerk was asked to request monthly figures for the use of the speed gun from the SNT team

4(5) Item 4(4) 10.11.08: Brome Waste Facility

A response had been received from SCC with news that there were no plans to close the site at present and that the contract for running the sites was currently being renewed with a new supplier (see also Item 2(1) above District Councillor's report)

4(6) Item 4(5) 10.11.08: Freedom of Information Act

The Parish Council approved adoption of the new model Publication Scheme and the guide to available information

4(7) Item 10(2) 10.11.08: 30/20mph sign Mill Road

It was noted that this sign had been repaired

4(8) Item 10(3) 10.11.08: Perfitts had advised Daniel Hull that the cost of cleaning the war memorial, which is made of carrara marble, and treating it with algicide would be £560. Apparently grants may be available and he is going to look into this further

5. Correspondence

5(1) Correspondence for circulation – Copy of SALC report to Area Meetings;
Action: Drugs and Alcohol Summer 2008; copies of recent planning application decisions; consultation document on Hartismere High School Foundation Status (for discussion at January meeting)

6. Parish Paths Partnership

6(1) Report from Footpaths Warden, Mr Hewitson
Footpath 24

The Clerk had notified the auctioneers about the problem with the footpath on the land to be sold as decided at the last meeting. As a result the vendor, Mr Starke, had agreed to accept the diverted footpath onto the land he was retaining. Mr Owen had subsequently purchased the land, and therefore declared a personal interest in this matter.

Footpath 17

This is the footpath from Mill Road to Barrack Lane. There is apparently no pipe under the road, and as the highway is not affected the County Council is not prepared to do anything about the flooding of the path other than provide some hardcore. It is possible that this might make the problem worse. Several councillors agreed to have a look at the site before the next meeting

7. Planning Matters

7(1) Planning application 3474/08: Agricultural worker's dwelling and garage at Poplar Hall Farm, Benningham Green, Occold
Councillors had previously seen this proposed development at the pre-application stage. The plans were circulated. It was unanimously decided to support the application and recommend its approval

7(2) Planning application 1738/08: Two storey dwelling and garage adjacent The Nest, The Causeway, Occold - it was noted that permission has been refused after a site meeting by the planning committee

7(3) Planning application 3186/08: Single storey rear extension at 1 Old Rectory Gardens, Occold – it was noted that permission has been granted

8. Meetings and Training

8(1) Councillors agreed that the training sessions run by SALC had been very useful. The Clerk had drawn up a list of some of the suggested changes that the Council might make and those that were agreed on are as follows: -

- Some minor changes to the wording and layout of the Agenda
- Election of a vice chair – at January meeting
- Notice for the Annual Parish Meeting must be signed by Chairman (not Clerk)
- Introduce a quarterly Finance Report – simple bank reconciliation sufficient
- Consider setting a figure for training in the budget (January)
- Consider introducing a Chairman’s Allowance (January)
- Consider purchasing “Local Council Finance” by Chris Richards (cost £15.95)
- Consider introducing an annual appraisal for the Clerk
- Display plans for planning applications prior to a meeting and invite public to view
- Colin interested in attending planning training – Clerk to find out dates of next sessions, and also to become second contact for receiving planning list from MSDC
- Encourage planning officers to make site visits
- Circulate the decisions made in planning applications so that policy reasons for approval or refusal can be understood
- Local Development Framework is available from the Clerk for anyone who wishes to look at it

8(2) An exhibition of the plans for the regeneration of Hartismere Hospital would be taking place on Tuesday 9th December from 2.30pm until 6pm at Eye Town Hall

9. Finance

9(1) It was noted that S137 expenditure limit for 2009/10 has been increased to £6.15 per elector, giving Occold a total of £2509.20 (based on 2008 electorate of 408) to spend

9(2) It was noted that revised pay scales for **2008/9** have been agreed between NALC and the National Joint Council for Local Government Services pending arbitration. This means that the Clerk’s salary will have a shortfall of £40 this year, which can be made up at the end of the year

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

10(1) Consultation on Hartismere High School Foundation Status – placed in bundle for discussion at next meeting

10(2) The Traffic Regulation Order for Barrack Lane has been implemented and yellow double- lining has been scheduled to start in the week of January 19th 2009

11. Date of next meeting is Monday 12th January 2008 at 8pm in the Village Hall

Meeting closed 10pm