

MINUTES OF EARL SOHAM ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

Thursday 21st April 2016 at 7.30 pm in Earl Soham Village Hall

Present: Richard Tinkler (Chair), John Hulme, Chris Pratt, Lucy Murrell, Andrew Patterson

1. Apologies: Jane Page (Clerk), Cllr Celia Peacher, Neil Walden, Anne Pratt, Angela Wilcox, David Wybar

Public: Mrs L Tinkler, Dr R Rowell, Mr & Mrs Nigel Sheffield, Mr Brian Whittaker, Mr & Mrs Christopher Sharpe

The meeting opened at 7.30pm

The Chairman welcomed the members and apologised for the absence of the Parish Clerk, Jane Page, due to incapacity following recent surgery. The members expressed their wishes for a full and speedy recovery

2. There were no declarations of interest

3. The Minutes of the APM of 16th April 2015 were approved

4. Chairman's Report for the Earl Soham Parish Meeting 21st April 2016

- We have had no changes to the Parish Council in the last year
- Our thoughts are with Cllr. Peter Bellfield our County Councillor who is currently unwell. Cllr. Bob Snell our District Councillor has now been replaced by Cllr. Chris Hudson.
- There have been few major planning applications over the year.
- The continued erosion of the green and grass verges is still a major concern but efforts to achieve Grant funding failed.
- The Precept for 2016/17 has been set at £7200. £26 will come from a Government Grant.
- The Allotments continue to thrive and have become a great community asset.
- Our two new notice boards, made by Church and Gooderham, have been erected outside John Huttons and have received many compliments
- The Christmas Tree on the village green was once again a success though marred by damage to some of the lights. Special thanks go to Cllr. Mark Rutherford for installing the lights, charging and changing the batteries and to Cllr Andrew Patterson for erecting and dismantling the tree.
- A vote of thanks is due to the following people:
- Grass cutting and maintenance – Andrew Patterson and David Peacher
- The Village Hall Management Committee

- Head teacher (Peter Lambillion Jamieson) and shopkeeper (John Hutton).
- PCSO Hassler for his dedicated support
- Our Neighbourhood Watch Coordinators
- Our band of litter pickers led by Roger Sykes
- Marion Russell for maintaining the Events Page on the website
- Chris Hoare for taking over Management of the Village Web Site
- And our Councillors and Clerk who continue to serve this parish

5. No report County Council

6. District Councillor's report for 2015/16

This report is to provide a brief overview of Suffolk Coastal District Council key challenges and achievements 2015/16.

Some interesting Suffolk Coastal District statistics: figures: population of 124,600 (Children 16%, 16-64 59% over 65 25%, there are 58,600 dwellings – includes 6280 housing assoc, large rural district – 88,938 hectares, 76km of coastline, 5730 businesses – energy, telecoms, port, tourism, food, art, small business.

Council Tax 2016/17

We have agreed to put up Council Tax bill for this coming year (2016/17) by just under 2 per cent (1.99% to be exact).

This is disappointing, as we have kept Council Tax frozen at 2010 levels, but it needs to be put into context – the increase will be less the £3 (or about 25p a month) for a Band D property, with their Council Tax rising from £149.40 to £152.37 a year.

This is the first time we have done so since 2010 and it is important that we explain the reasons for this increase – and the fact we are investing in building a strong and vibrant economy.

The reality is that our funding from central Government has been cut by 40 per cent in the last five years. In the same period Suffolk Coastal also froze its portion of the Council Tax, leading to a reduction in our net budget of £3.7 million.

Now Government is removing the Revenue Support Grant, significantly reducing our core funding by over £2.5 million by the end of this Parliament. Another essential part of our funding, the New Homes Bonus is also likely to be cut. Taken together, funding from these sources reduce from over £3.6m in 2015/16 to around £500,000 in 2019/20.

We recognise that Government is doing this as part of the drive to reduce the national deficit, but on a local level we need to properly fund our services.

Further Transformation in East Suffolk

The Simultaneous Cabinet Meeting in mid-March attracted considerable public and media interest. It resulted in the Cabinets of both Councils agreeing that the officers should develop a Business Case to explore the possible benefits of Suffolk Coastal and Waveney formally merging.

We were the first councils in Suffolk – and among the first in the country – to go down the partnership working route, appointing a joint Chief Executive in 2008. The success of this partnership working has been central to our ability to make £16million efficiency savings since then.

Although we have a strong track record of partnership working with Waveney, it is important to stress that this is not a fait accompli and we are at the start of a long process. These proposals are still at a very early stage.

But, in the current economic climate, when Councils are being forced to put up Council tax for the first time in six years, we have a duty to continue to explore new and innovative ways of making savings.

As such, we need to look closely at the benefits of a merger, but we will only take this forward if we feel it will help us to deliver better services and value for money. However, before any merger could take place, it would have to be agreed by both Full Councils, as well as there being public consultation and the Boundary Commission being involved.

Any such proposal would be subject to a lengthy and full democratic process, which would be in the public domain over a period of years and would not be implemented before the 2019 elections.

Business Plan

At a time of great challenge for local authorities across the country, Suffolk Coastal and Waveney District Councils have published their vision for the delivery of services to communities across the two districts.

The **East Suffolk Business Plan** presents the Councils' key priorities and ambitions between now and 2023 and details how they will seek to improve the lives and opportunities of all local communities.

This is the first time the Councils' have ever produced a joint Business Plan and, as one of the most progressive local government partnerships in the country, it is a natural progression following many years of innovation.

To read our Business Plan, visit: www.suffolkcoastal.gov.uk/east-suffolk-means-business-business-plan

Devolution

Following the announcement by the Chancellor, George Osborne, about the Devolution proposals for East Anglia (Suffolk, Norfolk and Cambridgeshire), Suffolk's Leaders and Chief Executives met

on Wednesday, 23 March, to begin discussions on the detail which needs to be worked through before all councils vote on a proposed deal later in the year.

Ahead of any decisions being taken, we are all agreed that we must engage with communities and other key groups to make sure they both understand what is and isn't part of the proposed deal but also to hear what their views on it are.

We will keep you updated, as this engagement process develops but for the latest Devolution information see: www.suffolkcoastal.gov.uk/yourcouncil/a-devolution-proposal-for-suffolk/

Homes

We are investing £1.68million in creating more affordable homes to ensure people can stay within the communities where they are raised and work.

This money has come through Section 106 money we have built up over the years into unlocking the development potential in the District to provide more affordable homes.

We are now looking to bring in new specialist staff to help us decide the best ways of using this money, but it may be that Suffolk Coastal may effectively become a developer, buying land to build affordable homes on, getting them built and then selling them to the people that need them.

We will obviously have to work closely with colleagues on the Town and Parish Councils, as well as developers, to get this moving, but this is an exciting new innovation for Suffolk Coastal and shows our commitment to making things happen in this area.

Housing

A total of 175 affordable homes have been completed in the District since 2010/11. Of these 58 were completed in the last year, including 14 homes developed by demolishing existing homes no longer fit for occupation;

Sale of Melton Hill

At the end of January, we selected a preferred bidder for Melton Hill, subject to contract, ahead of our move to the new building in Melton.

The selected preferred bidder, Active Urban Property Group (AUPG), is also in the process of launching its Community Planning process. The group is holding a Community Planning Weekend on Friday and Saturday, 15 & 16 April (from 2pm-5pm on 15 and 11am-4pm on 16 April), to develop the vision for the new development, then stage a Report Back Presentation on Tuesday, 19 April (at 6:30pm). All these events will be held at Woodbridge Primary School in Wilkinson Way.

The Community Planning Weekend gives local people the opportunity to contribute to the planning through workshops and hands-on planning groups. Attendance is on a 'drop-in' basis, with people welcome to pop in to see the exhibition and chat for a few minutes or stay for the entire event.

New Offices

The work to build Suffolk Coastal's new headquarters, opposite Melton Railway Station, is progressing well.

The move will reduce our running costs, saving £8million of tax payers' money over 20 years.

We will be taking over the building to fit it out to our requirements with the intention of moving into it during the autumn.

The building will officially be named 'East Suffolk House' after Councillors and members of staff came up with suggestions.

Customer Services in local libraries

Work to develop and upgrade Suffolk Coastal District Council's Customer Services in Woodbridge Library is due to be completed in March.

The development is part of the Council's plan to provide more services in the heart of the community at our current shared facility within Woodbridge Library and supports our move to new council offices.

The development is part of our work to take services out into the heart of communities, working in partnership with Suffolk Libraries in Woodbridge and Felixstowe offering customer services, tourist information and benefits advice in central locations.

Enabling Communities

We've had another successful year supporting our communities through our councillors Community Enabling Budgets. This year, each councillor had £5,500 to spend on supporting community projects, local organisations and initiatives. In total they have spent over £200,000 on over _ projects across the district.

Projects this year have included supporting a number of charities, activities for young people, helping care for older people and helping to support local events.

Brown bins

Brown bins will continue to be collected for free in Suffolk Coastal following a decision in November.

The issue was prompted in response to Suffolk County Council's decision to reduce funding of recycling credits in this area.

This is an important issue for Suffolk Coastal. We have an excellent track record on recycling. In 2013/14 we were in the top 10% of local authorities in the country (coming 19th out of 352 authorities) with a recycling rate of 57.44%.

Although we recognise that there will be financial implications for this Council, the decision to not charge for this service was taken to allow us to build on this good recycling performance.

Developments in Felixstowe

A lot of progress has been made in Felixstowe over the last year. The Seafront Gardens were officially completed in December last year. Work to Martello Tower P has also been finished making the Martello Park area more complete.

Work to create an outdoor events area at the boating lake and Go-Kart site has now started and is due to be completed during the summer. The new area will feature a grassed open space and hard standing car park. The area will serve as a multi-use events space which will function as a car park and picnic area when not required for events. It is anticipated that the events area could attract fairs, markets and exhibitions to support the local Felixstowe economy.

This regeneration will bring this site in line with the other successful projects which are boosting the economy of Felixstowe and attracting extra tourists into the town.

New website

Our website is currently being updated – look out for a new look and feel later in the spring.

The www.eastsuffolk.gov.uk website will incorporate both Suffolk Coastal and Waveney websites onto one platform and aims to be clearer and more accessible through smartphone devices and tablets.

Part Night Street and Footway Lighting

Work to install an 'intelligent lighting system' to all our street and footpath lights has now been completed.

This allows us to move to part night lighting (effectively switching off the majority of street and footpath lighting between midnight and 5.30am), in line with the current Suffolk County Council and other District and Boroughs in the county.

The Town and Parish Councils, among others, were informed of this work and consulted about the plan to introduce part night lighting in 2014. However, we intend to send round further detailed information about the plans ahead of any move to implement part night lighting during the summer months (after the clocks go forward), as well as issuing a press release and putting information on the website.

Local Economy

Suffolk Coastal has the strongest economy in the County with 5730 businesses and our unemployment rate is a very low .7%.

7. No report School

8. Friends of St Mary's report - Dr R Rowell/David Wybar

1. No major works planned
2. We held a quiz evening in March and Lizzie Hyde ran a bridge afternoon in September - both were fully subscribed, great fun and raised awareness as well as funds
3. The Golf Day was cancelled due to lack of support - it may be that this event which helped us enormously in previous years has run its course (no pun intended!)

9. Townlands Trust Report - Dr R Rowell

There is very little to report about the Townlands Trust.

The Townlands Field is, as before, shared by the tennis club, the allotment holding commune and Paul Whatling.

All participants are, I believe, content with their arrangements.

Paul Whatling, who is a thatcher, took on the farming of the majority of the field rather more than a year ago for growing thatching straw.

This suited everyone very well as the acreage is only small but is exactly what he needed, with the bonus that the wheat is harvested using an old fashioned clicketty-clack harvester, and the sheaves are set in stooks.

Judging by the number of passers-by who stopped to take photographs, this was very popular as I suppose many of us like to be reminded of yesteryear.

While the Trust does not have a lot of funds we are mindful that it was set up for the benefit of the poor in the Parish, and so if anyone is aware of any specific need we would be glad to hear from them.

Robin Rowell

21/04/2016

10. Jubilee Wood 2012 Report

We should like to thank the many parishioners who have supported the Jubilee Wood 2012 over the past year. Whether that was by taking advantage of walking the footpath, helping to maintain and keep the area tidy or just making a positive remark.

The two oak trees that have been formally planted are becoming established. The first was to mark the opening of the Jubilee Wood and the second to mark the centenary of the First World War.

To date our community barn owl box has not been inhabited. We have seen barn owls hunting in the area and hopefully our box will be discovered this year.

We have entered a competition for grant funding for a footbridge across the river to enable the possibility of a new circular walk to be created from the Jubilee Wood. Kingfishers can be seen in the river and the footbridge would provide a good vantage point. However, there is a long way to go and even if successful with the grant much planning and discussion would be required to realise the project.

Jed Bultitude Head of Management Team

Bruce Hinton Trustee and Chair

Nick Ashwell Trustee and Treasurer

David Taylor Trustee and Secretary

11. The Henchman & Clubbe Educational Trust Report

Last year there was about £100 available for distribution. As the grants are only available to those living in the village aged 21 years undertaking further education, publicity was restricted accordingly. No applications were received and so the money was held over until 2016. The grants will shortly be advertised again.

Mrs Jo Rothery

12. The Queens 90th Birthday Celebrations

Earl Soham

Queens 90th Birthday Party

Sunday June 12th 2.00 till 4.30 p.m.

Bring & Share Picnic on the Village Green

Bring your own food & drink and something to sit on

Children's Sports

Children's "Best A4 picture of the Queen competition – Under 8's & Over 8s

More features planned

13. Kerbing the Village Green

It was agreed that the problem is caused by the parked cars. Kerbing would improve the situation by reducing the amount of damage but would not eliminate it. No one was prepared to propose raising the precept to fund kerbing. Mr Sharpe suggested that if the development of the site opposite Street Farm was to go ahead that the developers be asked to fund the kerbing. The possibility of double yellow lines was discussed but was not popular. Dr Rowell suggested that the County Council be asked if yellow lines are possible. Making the road one way was deemed to be impractical. The Parish Council are asked to enquire about yellow lines and pursue donation from developers if the opportunity arises.

14. Neighbourhood Plan

Mr Sharpe explained the basic details of a Neighbourhood Plan as he is involved in the preparation of the Framlingham Neighbourhood Plan. The principal advantage being better control of development of green spaces. General opinion was that it would be too expensive for Earl Soham, in the region of £15k but with grants available and that it was inappropriate as development is not of interest to the village and no one was prepared to take it on.

15. Matters of information by the Chairman or Members

1. Mr Neil Walden. The Public Footpath alongside Bridge House to Little Green is in a bad state of repair and raised manhole covers are a potential danger. Could the Parish Council either get it repaired or set up a working party to repair it?
2. Cllr Pratt. Dog Fouling is a problem all around the village, particularly by the School. Cllr Tinkler said that it was also a problem in Church Lane, Cllr Murrell asked The Parish Council to consider more Dog bins. Cllr Tinkler asked to put another notice in the Parish Magazine.

The Meeting closed at 8.20pm