

**Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held at the Village Hall, Lakenheath on
Friday 11th April 2014 at 7.00pm.**

Present:- Cllr Gathercole (Chairman), 4 members of the Parish Council, 12 members of the public; County Councillor Colin Noble & PCSOs Keith Chittock & Tara Keogh-Morgan were present.

The Chairman, David Gathercole, welcomed all to the meeting.

Emergency procedures were read out.

Apologies – Cllrs Smith; Gentle and Durrant and Mrs Davis, the local reporter.

MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 15th April 2013 were available to all present. The Chairman allowed, those present, time to read the minutes which were confirmed as correct and signed by the Chairman.

MATTERS ARISING

Mr Donald had asked what was happening at both the former “Half Moon” Public House and Sharpes Corner “derelict” bungalows.

The Clerk reported that the “Half Moon” site is now occupied housing and Forest Heath District Council had advised that, although there had been a planning application for new housing (following demolition of derelict bungalows) at Sharpes Corner, no S106 agreement had been signed by the developer; therefore, the application did not proceed. It is now of out time and, as it is privately owned, there is little FHDC can do.

POLICE MATTERS

PCSO Chittock said that there had been some changes at Brandon SNT and Lakenheath will now be covered by himself and PCSO Tara Keogh- Morgan.

During the year there had been a closure order on residential premises following two years of anti social behaviour by the tenants. There were two “cannabis” raids and, unfortunately, drink driving is still an issue.

Crime for the year had gone up slightly – 185 recorded crimes compared with 177 in the previous year.

The theft of motor vehicles has decreased but there is an increase in garage crimes (theft from).

PCSO Chittock is happy here and hopes to remain for some time yet.

Mr Donald said that he had recently left the doctors’ surgery car park and nearly collided with an oncoming vehicle. He had not seen it due to a white van, parked permanently on the pavement, which advertises the services at the garage nearby.

PCSO Chittock will take a look.

Mrs Chambers wondered if PCSO Chittock had been successful in obtaining a bicycle with which to patrol the village (Coop understood to have made such an offer).

PCSO said that the Coop are still working on it.

Mrs Brown said that A boards on the Village Green cause visibility problems for drivers coming out of Mill Road.

PCSO Chittock was surprised that the boards had reappeared – he had spoken to the owners/businesses concerned.

Mr Brooks is of the opinion that the 30MPH flashing sign near the children's play area on Eriswell Road is pretty useless – rarely works.

PCSO Chittock said that it is a Highways matter and he added that speeding is a problem in the village.

The meeting was advised that a public meeting with the Police and Crime Commissioner is to be held on 19th June 2014 at 6.30pm at Brandon Leisure Centre. There being no further questions, PCSOs Chittock and Keogh-Morgan were thanked for their attendance – they stayed for the remainder of the meeting.

PAROCHIAL CHARITIES

In the absence of the Clerk to the Parochial Charities, Mrs Rissen, the report for the year was read out by the Clerk to the Parish Council.

“Following Suffolk Wildlife’s decision to vacate the land at Pashford Poors Fen, Natural England had expressed an interest in funding a wild flower meadow on that piece of land which will maintain an income for the Charity for the coming years. 291 applications had been received, 25 of whom were over 90 years of age and 1 of whom was over 100 years of age. Each applicant received £35.00 with those over 90 receiving £40.00 and the applicant over 100 receiving £45.00 making a total of £10,320.00 distributed. It was agreed that every effort would be made to contact the applications from former residents of the Village Home which was then in the process of closing.

It was also agreed that following the closure of the Village Home, it would be appropriate, in future, to consider applications from residents who had become too infirm to live alone and had no choice but to leave the village, as long as those residents met with the criteria of being over the age of eligibility and had previously lived in the village for over 10 years.

The Trustees decided that the age of eligibility for the 2014 distribution would be 68 years of age”

SUFFOLK COUNTY COUNCIL

Councillor Colin Noble said that he is now the Cabinet Member for Finance and, as promised, Suffolk County Council have delivered a 0% increase in Council Tax. Government has cut funding by £95 million and if such cuts continue it would be tantamount to a 20% cut in Council Tax, not just a freeze.

Next week he has a meeting with Flagship Housing to discuss care provision. It is estimated that there will be a twofold increase in the number of people over 70 years of age by 2030.

Picking up on the 30MPH speed sign raised by Mr Brooks, Cllr Noble said that mobile systems seem to be much more effective. They can be used on a rotational basis and the intermittent nature seems to be more effective in dealing with speeding. SCC continues to support development of Sizewell C and off shore energy.

He has had meetings with Lakenheath County Primary School Governors and SCC Schools Team regarding potential residential development in the village. There needs to be a long term solution and he is keen to have a public meeting on this issue in the future.

Mr Brooks asked how speeding issues can be dealt with.

Cllr Noble said that request would have to come via Parish Council albeit they may not be involved.

Mr Shimmon bemoaned the state of the roads.

Cllr Noble said that the winter was considered to have been mild (therefore, not damaging) but the unusually wet winter had been very damaging. SCC have signed a contract (for road repairs) with Kier May Gurney. However, he suspects that all is not going well. SCC have said that the service MUST improve.

Regarding capacity, Cllr Noble said he is aware that residents think local roads are at full stretch but Highway's engineers have said there is sufficient capacity to deal with all planned development for the village. The sad reality is that there is not the money to build new roads.

Mr Donald asked for confirmation that SCC will only see £3 million of government money to mend potholes.

Cllr Noble confirmed the figure. He added that the work could take up to ten years. He said that he is keen to get a phone "app" for potholes – easier way to report them.

Mr Brooks said that potholes are not the only problem – heavy trucks on the High St/Eriswell Rd/Station Rd are the cause of abysmal road condition.

Cllr Noble said that this was something that had been discussed with Tescos pending their development of the former Matthews site (S106).

PCSO Chittock said that he too had been involved in discussions to improve the road layout at Quayside Court pending Tescos arrival in the village (S106).

Cllr Noble said that he would briefly give a report on Forest Heath District Council. Joint arrangements with St Edmundsbury have produced admin. savings of £1million. Plans for a new "hub" in Mildenhall are progressing – much needed since the Dome and the Swimming Pool are approaching the end of their life

He is aware that many residents have been taken aback by recent planning proposals for the village but there was an article in Lakenheath Times and, subsequently, a public meeting in the Village Hall at which Marie Smith, FHDC, spoke.

The long and short of it is that demand is outstripping supply.

Mrs Brown said that FHDC appear to be considering each planning application as it is received, why, do they not consider all applications at the same time?

Cllr Noble said that there is an argument that if a Parish has a Neighbourhood Plan it could influence future development.

Mrs Brown said that there is now no time for that.

Cllr Noble said that David Gathercole had put out a survey regarding sites for development in the village but only 117 responses had been received.

He acknowledged that even if a Parish has a Plan in place it may not stop unwanted development.

He is not quite so concerned about a lack of infrastructure as S106 agreements could address that.

He added that the current system is not great, it creates some cohesion but in existing settlements it does not happen, it may be wrong but those are the rules.

Mrs Chambers said that the government wants local people to have a voice – in fact, they now have less of a voice.

Cllr Noble said that he was about to be quite harsh but Councillors are elected democratically and as Councillors we have our say, the Parish Council does not have more say than that. FHDC is the Planning Authority.

He said that he knew there are PCs who now do not respond to planning applications but is that the way forward?

If a decision does not accord with policy, the Planning Authority could be landed with costs at an Appeal.

Mr Donald said he could see where Mrs Chambers was coming from but the situation causes confusion. He believed that Marie Smith and her colleagues at FHDC have more control than anyone else.

Cllr Noble said that, unless one is familiar with its workings, planning matters are very complicated.

Councillor Noble was thanked for his attendance and contribution to the meeting.

ANNUAL REPORT

Copies of the Annual Report were available to all present. There were no matters arising.

PARISHIONERS' ISSUES

Mr Donald wondered if anyone could update him with regards to the sale of the former Royal British Legion site.

Mrs Brown said that the embargo on bids for the site had been lifted on 7th April 2014 and that further bids could be submitted until 30th April 2014. After that date, Royal British Legion Headquarters will decide to whom they will sell the site, although it is understood that the Charity Commission will advise that RBL should go with the highest bid.

Mr Morley asked what is happening with the “festering eyesore” that was Lakenheath Hall.

The Chairman read an e-mail he had received from David Beighton, FHDC. FHDC have instructed external planning solicitors to manage escalation of the site now and discussions are taking place on a daily basis. It is likely that within the next week a final opportunity for work to begin (under supervision and at the developer's expense) on the driveway and landscaping, will be given. These works are expected to take two weeks. Work on the wall and gate pier is expected to start the week after Easter. These are very much the final opportunities to rectify matters, otherwise solicitors will proceed with obtaining an injunction in the High Court – the consequence of which will be to restrict any further occupation and will compel compliance with outstanding issues.

Mr Brooks wondered why an Extraordinary Parish Council Meeting advertised for 17th March 2014 had been cancelled.

The Chairman said that the necessary information was not available.

In closing, the Chairman thanked all who had taken the time to attend the meeting.

He added that it would be the last time that Mrs Banks would attend the meeting as Clerk. She is due to take retirement towards the end of the year. He expressed his and the Parish Council's thanks for her hard work over the seven years she has been Clerk. She was presented with a lovely potted hydrangea for which she expressed her most sincere thanks.

The Chairman said that he, too, would be stepping down before the next Annual Parish Meeting. Having received successful treatment for cancer, he realises he must now take time to enjoy life at a more leisurely pace.

The meeting closed at 8.10pm