

**Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held in Acton Village Hall at 7:30pm on  
Wednesday 13 April 2016**

The Annual Parish Meeting was chaired by Mrs C Johnson, Chair of the Parish Council.

**Present:**

25 people including the Chairman C Johnson, Clerk L Edwards, Suffolk County Councillor C Spence, Babergh District Councillor M Maybury and PC 1380 S Bourne

Apologies for absence were received from W Shropshire, T Fisher and Janet Moss.

**Minutes:** The Minutes of the 2015 meeting were read, approved and signed.

**Police Report:** The last 12 months have seen Suffolk Constabulary face some significant challenges. It has been well publicised in the press, and through communications direct to Parishes, that the financial climate had resulted in the need to refocus how we deliver our service across the County. Whilst the economy gave us the push required to redefine the Constabulary, it also allowed every department to examine the work we do day to day and establish our core roles, taking into account the areas of work that cause us and our communities the most threat, risk and harm.

The Suffolk Local Policing Review has now been completed and introduced some fundamental changes that will impact our local communities. The nature of work handled by us, the Safer Neighbourhood Team, is becoming more focussed upon reducing demand to us and other agencies. In order to do this, PCSOs will now have additional specific responsibilities in key areas that will allow them to liaise directly with agencies who are best equipped in the problem area. For example, there will be an officer who concentrates on licensing issues while another will work closely with vulnerable communities and mental health. However, to get the most benefit from these roles, the PCSOs will now only work office based hours, albeit still spread across 7 days. This will of course mean that the monthly Parish meetings will no longer be attended by Police. PCSO Laura Mansell has been allocated as our Parish Council liaison officer, so in addition to her other tasks she will be building relationships with all Parishes within the Sudbury SNT boundary. Whilst we have seen a reduction in the number of PCSOs working on our SNT (10 down to 6), the remaining officers are all part of the former team, versed with great experience, knowledge and expertise on the geography. The 4 Constables that were previously allocated have been reduced, and replaced by 3 new officers, although all three have extensive local knowledge having policed the area at some point in their careers.

The other headlines from the review are that all front desks in the County, bar Ipswich, Bury and Lowestoft, have closed. As a consequence of this, we will no longer deal with lost and found property as there is no legal obligation on the Police to take on this task.

The review has encompassed every area of front line Policing. Whilst every effort has been made to ensure full public awareness, we do appreciate that some of you may not have received the full message. Therefore, if you would like further information, please contact me, Sgt. Matt Paisley by email [matthew.paisley@suffolk.pnn.police.uk](mailto:matthew.paisley@suffolk.pnn.police.uk)

Aside from the review, in the last quarter of 2015 we saw the introduction of a new crime recording computer system. This follows several years of planning and consultation with other Forces in order for a wider take up across the Country. There have been many positives coming out of this new system, not least cross border investigations and arrests. There is, however, one negative for Parishes, and that is the inability for the system to provide us with accurate crime figures for specific Parishes at specific times. It is due to this reason that we are unable to provide yearly crime statistics at this time. A new crime report for Parishes will soon be available and this will be populated with accurate, up to date data by our analytical department.

**Questions for PC Bourne:**

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Mr C Moss asked if there was still a telephone located at the unmanned police station in Sudbury - Reply yes there was but this now goes direct to head office. Residents are still asked to use 999 for an emergency and 101 for non emergency calls.

Mr Poulter raised concerns about there only being 3 PC and 6 PCSO in Sudbury, PC Bourne explained that these were the numbers for the safer neighbourhood team not the total of frontline PC for the area.

Mrs C Johnson asked if the 3 PC are used for frontline work or are they a dedicated team? PC Bourne replied that they are a dedicated team but , of course if the need arose then they would support frontline Police officers.

Mr R Wright and Mrs M Maybury raised concerns of speeding throughout the village and asked if this was still on the list of responsibility for the team. PC Bourne has asked the clerk to highlight this issue to Laura Mansell at a meeting on 26<sup>th</sup> April.

Mr R Wright also highlighted the dangerous situation when the bus stops in the high street at the bus shelter opposite the shop. Traffic often gets held up and some take a short cut and not wait in the queue but driving on the right hand side of the road / bollards. On a number of occasions pedestrians lives have been put at risk. This is another issue that needs to be highlight to Laura Mansell.

### **Chairman's Report.**

Parish councillors are elected for a term of four years and last April marked the end of a four year term. Three of the retiring councillors – Lynne Bloomfield, Sarah Chamberlin and Alan Sawyer - chose not to stand for re-election for a variety of personal reasons. All three of them had given excellent service to the village, Lynne Bloomfield in particular having served as chairman for four years.

Many parishes struggle to find enough candidates to fill the seats on their councils and I think it is much to Acton's credit that not only were there enough people to complete the council but for the first time in many years we actually had a parish council election in 2015. Inevitably, with any election, there are winners and losers and those of us who had worked with him previously were sorry to see Mark Heselden lose his seat. However, four new people – Nick Antill, Paul Chaplin, Jon Matthews and Margaret Maybury – joined the five returning members – Peter Edwards, Lisa Franks, Trudy Fisher, Will Shropshire and myself to make up the full complement of nine councillors. We are fortunate to have a mix of councillors across a broad age range, and with a useful range of specialist knowledge.

There was also a change in our District Councillors with Jenny Antill, who had chosen not to seek re-election, being replaced by Margaret Maybury who serves alongside Frank Lawrenson at Babergh. It is very helpful to still have a district councillor who lives within the parish.

There was one other change at the beginning of the year. Having acted as the village's litter collector for 25 years, David Johnson had decided it was time to retire. This is not a job which many people would be willing to do and we were very fortunate that Mr Richard Fish agreed to take over from David. It is a sad fact of life that there is a great deal of litter of all kinds simply thrown down and left and we should all be grateful to Richard for his enthusiastic efforts to keep the village tidy.

Turning to what has been achieved during the year, four benches have been installed at the village hall playing field; three of these were purchased by the council and the fourth one was sponsored by a private individual in memory of a family member. This means that people can now sit down to watch cricket or football, or our new Acton sport of French Boules. The Boules season re-opened this morning.

At the Limetree Green play area we have installed a variety of new wooden play equipment which has proved to be very popular. There is rarely a day when there isn't someone playing on it.

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There are a number of other things which will be completed shortly:

- an order has been placed for all of our street lights (which are technically not street lighting but footway lighting) to be upgraded. This is a major job and we are waiting to hear from the contractors with a date for commencement but it is expected the work will be done this summer.
- new safety surfacing will be installed under the cradle swings at Limetree Green in the first week of May.
- a new bus shelter has been purchased and will be delivered in the week commencing 25<sup>th</sup> April. The installation work is being undertaken by one of our parish councillors, Peter Edwards, who is a qualified builder. Councils have to be careful about employing members of their own council but as a local builder Mr Edwards' company was invited to quote for the work in the normal way and the work was placed with him because his quote was £1,200 lower than the contractor recommended to us by Babergh District Council. It was not possible to refurbish the old shelter.
- in the interests of safety, hand rails are to be installed at the steps leading from Barrow Hill to the footpath which runs north of the playing field hedge towards the church. The handrails are currently being manufactured by CJ Ironworks and are expected to be delivered shortly. This is a very useful path but the section which runs between the houses is very uneven and we are in discussions with a contractor to see whether improvements can be made to the surface.
- following refurbishment of the village shop, we lost our official parish council noticeboard which used to be attached to the front wall. The shop no longer has a front wall. However, the new shop owners have agreed to let us install two new noticeboards beside the driveway leading to the shop. They will be wooden boards, one with a closed front and one open. The closed board will be solely for the use of the council and it is there you will find public notices and information. The second board will be for use by the public and will replace the very old board which is there at present. We are very grateful to the shop owner for his co-operation in this. In addition, noticeboards have been installed on the allotment gates. There will be no excuse for not knowing what is happening in Acton.
- you may know that last summer some of the trees in the avenue known as Jennens Way appeared to be dying. Advice was sought from Babergh District Council's Tree Preservation Officer and on his recommendation samples were sent to the Forestry Commission for analysis. The Forestry Commission were unable to identify any known disease from the samples and recommended that the trees should be monitored throughout the coming summer. They may correct themselves or they may get worse in which case some serious action will be needed. We can only wait and see. We have been assured there is no immediate danger from the trees but rest assured that they are being carefully monitored.
- speeding traffic is a constant concern to everyone (except, presumably, those who are driving too fast through the village) and we are grateful to our district councillor Colin Spence for offering to fund a vehicle activated speed sign through his Locality Budget. This will be installed at the Melford end of the village in the near future. Despite constant complaints about speeding it has proved impossible to get enough volunteers to run a Community Speedwatch team as is done in some of our neighbouring parishes. With the cutbacks we are seeing in local policing, I think the only way we shall see any improvement in the situation is if we are prepared to take action ourselves.
- Mr Spence is also helping to fund, jointly with the parish council, an upgraded surface on Bun Meadow Path (the path which leads from Waldingfield Road to Clay Hall Lane). Again this is a very useful path because it allows pedestrians and cyclists to avoid using Clay Hall Lane which can be a very dangerous place to walk.

And then there are the things which are ongoing:

- although a defibrillator has been donated to the village, the siting of it is still under discussion.

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- we have made little progress with our concerns about the flood park between Marsh Walk and Sudbury Road. Despite promises from Suffolk County Council that they would be carrying out work on it, looking at the possibility of putting warning signs, etc., nothing appears to have been done. In fact, the situation is worse than it was before because SCC's safety barriers have been left floating in the water. This is not satisfactory and perhaps Mr Spence can help us to make some progress on this.
- a village review meeting was organised in September by Community Action Suffolk and although 88 people attended we were told that the number of people attending and the age range covered were both insufficient for any progress to be made. Discussions with Community Action Suffolk have continued and one further effort is to be made to get a Parish Plan off the ground. However, the plan will not go ahead if people do not show an interest in it.

Turning to planning matters, the council has made recommendations to the District Council on over 20 planning applications in the past year, many of them fairly minor alterations or extensions but three were new builds although one was subsequently withdrawn. Permission has been granted, with the parish council's approval, for the erection of two houses in Waldingfield Road and three in Melford Road at the western edge of the village.

Following a meeting at which the public were able to give their views on the proposed Chilton Woods development on the edge of Sudbury, a response to the outline planning application was sent to Babergh District Council detailing Acton's concerns over the traffic implications for the village, the possible detrimental effect upon education provision in the village, and the concern that there was still no evidence that the overall proposal was a viable proposition in the first place. Lisa and I have spent many hours in meetings discussing Chilton Woods with representatives of other parish councils, Babergh District Council, Suffolk County Council and their planning consultants AMEC. We were therefore as surprised and disappointed as everyone else when we found that the Masterplan which was submitted with the outline planning application was described as an indicative layout only. In other words, nothing about Chilton Woods is certain apart from the road junctions at Springlands Way. It is still all in the melting pot.

Also in connection with planning, some of you will remember a very well attended council meeting last July when Innominate Trust came to us to outline their proposals for developing the field between the High Street and the allotments. In September they were informed that the parish council had passed a resolution to the effect that if a planning application were received from the Trust it would be objected to and the council would not be willing to sell any part of the allotments to allow access to the site. Interestingly, we have heard nothing further from them whatsoever.

That concludes my report apart from the thank yous.

I have already thanked Mr Fish for taking on the litter collection but I would also like to thank Mr Ray Wright for volunteering to be the council's odd-job man. It has been an enormous help to the council to have someone willing and capable to take on all the little jobs which crop up from time to time – mending a post here, clearing some weeds there - jobs which need to be done but which it is difficult to get a tradesman to quote for. We reimburse him for any expenses but his time he gives voluntarily, which I am sure you will agree is most generous of him.

Thank you to my fellow councillors for their support and the hard work they have put in over the year – between them they have a wide range of interests and expertise which has often proved very useful.

And finally, a big thank you to our clerk Lisa Edwards. There is a great deal of the clerk's work which is done behind the scenes and often unnoticed and as with every area of life nowadays the rules and regulations to be observed seem endless. Lisa has dealt with it all efficiently and, above all, cheerfully. I am most grateful to her and I am very sorry that she has decided to

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leave us. The Council's Annual Meeting in May will be her last appearance and I am sure you will all wish her well in her new job. I know I shall miss her.

However, we look forward to welcoming a new Clerk in May, Mr Paul MacLachlan. Although he does not live in Acton, Paul is only just over the border in Lavenham. He is a keen cyclist and regularly pedals through the village so he will be well aware of what is going on. I feel we have been very fortunate to find a fully qualified replacement clerk right on our doorstep. Full details of how to contact him will be displayed on our notice boards and the council's website in due course.

There were no matters arising from the Chairman's Report.

### **Questions to the chair:**

Mrs S Chaplin Asked why the defibrillator was still ongoing as she thought the site for its location had already been decided.

Chair responded that the council are in discussions with the head of the local primary school, who hold the equipment at the moment, East Anglian Ambulance Service, who donated the equipment to the village, and the council to site the defibrillator. This will be on the agenda for the next Parish Council meeting.

**County Council Report:** County Councillor Colin Spence gave a comprehensive report from Suffolk County Council. The report highlighted the following issues dealt with over the past year at Suffolk County Council:

- Suffolk County Council continues to face deficit reduction
- Continue to push for better broadband for Suffolk
- County's rural transport set to improve existing services for residents
- Suffolk County Council's children's services praised by Ofsted as Good
- Developing Suffolk workforce of tomorrow
- Suffolk fire and rescue service – integrated risk management plan
- Chilton Woods Mixed use development
- Devolution

County Councillor Spence reported that he had financed the provision of a Petanque Pitch which officially opened earlier today and that a grant was made to the Theatre Royal to support the Theatre's Festival for Children in West Suffolk 2016 by sponsoring Acton VCP School.

### **Questions to County Councillor:**

Mr M Poutler stated that there should not be water in the flood ditch and that Anglian Water are not responsible for this. County Councillor Spence replied that Suffolk County Council are responsible for the flood ditch as confirmed at last year's meeting, and they are continuing to monitor the situation. As this concern has been raised, County Councillor Spence, a team for SCC and the chair will meet to discuss options.

**District Council Report:** District Councillor Margaret Maybury gave a comprehensive report from Babergh District Council. The report included highlights of issues dealt with over the past year at Babergh District Council:

Financial/Organisational - Devolution 2016/17; Council budgets see small Council Tax rises; Elections; Joint Strategic Plan; Capital Investment Strategy.

Housing - New Homes; A revised tenancy agreement; Decent Homes Standard; Empty Homes; New Housing Allocations Policy adopted; Trusted Partner Pilot; Help to Buy; Right to Buy; Houses in Multiple Occupation; Sheltered Housing Review.

Growth/Business - Community Infrastructure Levy; Neighbourhood Plan; Tourism Strategy;

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Business Awards; Food Enterprise Zones; Enterprise Zone; Food Enterprise Zone; Joint Local Plan; Planning.

Communities - Community Caretaker Scheme; Joint Community Achievement Awards; Capital Grants; Health and Housing Pilot

Environment & Environmental Health- Improved Joint Working; New waste contracts; The Open for Business project; Open for Business - Better Business Event; Photovoltaic Panels; Energy Efficiency; Healthier Catering Award

### **Questions to District Councillor:**

Mr A Manning objected to the relocation of Sudbury Bus station and expressed a concern of why it is going to be moved. District Councillor Maybury replied that this was development work under Sudbury town Council, not Acton Parish. County Councillor Spence confirmed that there is a steering group made of many local people, including those in business, who are looking at the development in Sudbury.

**Acton Village Hall Report:** The report was read by Paul Chaplin, the Parish council representative at the Village Hall and Playfields trustee meeting.

The hall usage has once again been good this year and it continues to receive positive feedback from all users who feel it is a real benefit to the local community. This regular income has allowed the trustees to keep the books in a healthy state.

Until the last few months, faults have thankfully been minimal. There have been some significant heating repairs which are now resolved but the cost of these is within what our budget can handle. We have also had local help with some keen volunteers taking on some minor repairs for us...much appreciated.

The village fete was a success again last summer raising about £1500 for the Playing Field and Village Hall funds. Thanks to all those who helped out, many raising money for their own chosen charities as well.

This year we are not currently planning to have an event due to a lack of organisers. If you did feel the urge to run an event please feel free to contact the committee.

The petanque pitch has been built and the new season is just about to start. Thanks to Colin Spence for funding this. A user group are looking to meet Monday and/or Wednesday mornings for a game and cup of tea and cake. Boule sets are available from the hall.

Our little Massey Ferguson tractor continues to slave away and allows us to carry out the majority of the maintenance to the field. The Parish Council have just kindly agreed to fund the purchase of a small container which will be inconspicuously placed behind the hall. This will allow convenient storage of the grounds maintenance equipment amongst other things.

As I seem to say every year, the committee has shrunk once again, but we are still able to successfully manage the hall and playing field affairs. I would as I do each year still like to take this opportunity to appeal to anyone out there who may have some spare time, no matter how small and would like to help out, please do contact us.

### **Any Other Business:**

Mr Poulter had investigated the ownership of the trees located along the footpath known as 'Edna's Drift'. The footpath runs from the school to the High Street. Suffolk County Council are responsible for the tarmac, land on the right as you are looking to the school, are responsibility of Babergh District council.

The chair thanked Mr Poulter for his very kind sweeping of the footpath.

The meeting closed at 9.20 pm.

The Council's accounts were available for inspection throughout the meeting.

Signed:.....

Date: .....

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