

Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting of Little Bealings Parish held at Bealings Village Hall on Monday, 15 May 2011 at 7.00pm

Present: Mrs F Evans Rogers, Mr P Carr, Mrs F Hopkins, Dr C Rowe, Miss D Williams, Mr D Wilson and Mrs M Wilson (all Parish Councillors), Mrs J Cook (Tree and Footpath Warden), Mrs J Shaw (Webmaster), Mr G Ball (Handyman), Mr P Bellfield (County Councillor), Mr T Fryatt (District Councillor), Mr P Holmes (Chairman, Joint Parish Plan Action Monitoring Group), PC Wright, and six parishioners/members of the public

In attendance: Mrs C Ramsden, Clerk to the Parish Council

Mrs Evans Rogers, as Chairman of the Parish Council, took the chair and welcomed those present.

Apologies: None

Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on 8 March 2010 were confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chairman of the meeting.

Matters Arising from the Minutes:

None.

Chairman's Report:

The Chairman welcomed local County Councillor, Mr Bellfield, and newly elected District Councillor, Mr Tony Fryatt and explained the purpose of the Annual Parish Meeting. She thanked Councillors, employees and volunteers for their work for the Council and the parish over the last year. She introduced Councillors and referred to the meetings they had attended on the Council's behalf over the last year: Mr P Carr (Vice Chairman, SCDC Planning Forums and Save Our Rural Roads representative – although there had not been any SORR meetings in the last year), Miss D Williams (representative on police matters), Mr Beaumont (SCDC Planning Forums) and Mrs Wilson (Village Hall). The Chairman and Mr Carr had attended Suffolk Association of Local Councils (SALC) meetings; SALC was a useful source of local governance information. The Chairman is the Council's representative on the Village Hall Management Committee. Mrs Hopkins is a member of the Bealings Road Safety Group.

There had been 12 Council meetings in the last year; five arranged to consider planning applications in view of SCDC's consultation deadline.

Planning Applications: The Council had considered 16 applications. SCDC has approved eight and refused two. Two applications were withdrawn and four were outstanding.

Bealings Road Safety Group: The work of this group last year resulted in a white line on the road between the churchyard and Village Hall, to prevent parking congestion along this section of the road. The Village Hall has also introduced a parking plan which has alleviated the problem. There is also new playing field signing.

Parish Plan: The JPPSG completed its work producing the Parish Plan last year, and was succeeded by an Action Monitoring Group (AMG). The AMG has now been wound up – see report from the AMG Chairman below.

Police: The parish is a part of the Kesgrave and District Safer Neighbourhood Team (SNT), which brings councils, community partners and volunteers together with police officers. Miss Williams has attended SNT meetings of the 12PT – a group of 12 local parishes - to consider the objectives and targets of the parishes. Fortunately Little Bealings is relatively crime-free.

Local Development Framework (LDF): Mr Beaumont and Mr Carr have attended SCDC Forums to update us on progress with the LDF, which will replace the Local Plan and provide guidance on the use of land and the criteria for the determination of planning applications. The LDF is a national indicator and will be revised according to national and local requirements.

Localism Bill: This bill has recently been published and advocates more power for communities. There are wide-ranging proposals for changes to the delivery of public services, at a time when SCC is facing cuts. We must endeavour to see services maintained and developed appropriately in Little Bealings.

Walks Leaflet: This has been so successful a third reprint is now in hand.

Welcome Leaflet: This is available from the Clerk to new residents and contains useful information about the village and services.

The Chairman thanked those attending the meeting and hoped they would find the other reports useful.

Other Reports:

Parish Plan

Mr Holmes, Chairman of the Action Monitoring Group (AMG) reported that the AMG had been set up in June 2009 as it was unusual for a Parish Plan to cover three parishes; there was a need to co-ordinate implementation of the Actions. There were two representatives from each parish: Carol Ramsden and Hilary Wilkinson for Little Bealings. Most of the excess funding from the creation of the Plan had now been handed back to the three Parish Councils and was to be used for security lighting at Bealings Village Hall and sand bins in Playford. Other achievements had seen a report to Ofcom on mobile phone coverage in the parishes, the establishment of a Bealings and Playford email newsgroup, a film club workshop in Bealings, a visit to RAF Wattisham to discuss helicopter noise and a regular information and 'Report a Problem' page in the Benefice Magazine. The Benefice Magazine was also now on-line. The AMG considered it had achieved what it could and had recommended to the Parish Councils that it was wound up.

The Parish Plan had taken from 2007 to 2009 to produce. Plans were due to be refreshed every 5 years, meaning that a new one should be in place by 2014. The AMG was therefore recommending that the Parish Councils start work on the next Plan in 2012.

County Councillor's Report

Mr Bellfield reported:

Local Government Review: It had been established that there would be no change to local government structure in Suffolk, making it possible to plan ahead after three years of uncertainty.

Central Government Grant: SCC had been told that funding over three years would be reduced by 28%, meaning expenditure must be reduced. The New Strategic Direction was intended to make SCC a facilitator rather than a provider of services – with SCC looking to the voluntary and private sector to provide services at the existing high standard. Some services were already provided this way – for example road maintenance and adult care – and there was consultation on others. Savings would also be achieved by lower salaries and wages and some service cuts. Service cuts included transport subsidies, although the local 70, 70A, 118 and 119 bus services were almost unchanged. A change of leadership of the Conservative group was likely to mean some changes to policy in the future. The CEO was also on extended leave following complaints and the outcome of a preliminary investigation was expected shortly.

Bad Weather: SCC had performed well on the whole, clearing and gritting priority 1 and most priority 2 roads. The severe weather in November and December had led to over 110 gritting runs during the year; slightly less than last year. Potholes would be repaired over time.

Council Performance: The Audit Commission, which had said SCC was the second most financially efficient County Council last year, was to be wound up.

Pension Fund: Mr Bellfield was Chairman of the Pension Fund Committee. The pension deficit had not resulted in a rise in the employer contribution in the last year.

2011/12 Council Tax: This would be held at last year's level, without account being taken of the 2.5% government grant for doing so.

Mr Bellfield was pleased to provide funding from his Locality Budget for local matters – such as the white line to ease parking congestion – and reminded everyone that he was there to assist with a problem or help in respect of SCC services. In response to questions he agreed to look into changes in the bus timetable which meant that a return service between Bealings and Woodbridge was no longer available, and whether savings could be made by decreasing the frequency of buses leaving the Martlesham Park and Ride outside the rush hour.

District Councillor's Report

Designation of the Parish as a Local Service Centre (LSC): Mr Fryatt had agreed with Mr Bellfield that he would report on the LDF and the implication of the parish being designated a LSC. The LDF had not yet been approved by SCDC, due to challenges to proposed development at Martlesham and the ecological impact on the Sandlings area. SCDC was likely to approve the Core Strategy in July, meaning an Inspector's examination in 2012. In the meantime the policies in the LDF would be given more emphasis when planning decisions were made and those in the Local Plan less.

The Council's designation as an LSC was because the parish was considered 'sustainable' due to its services and facilities: public transport access (buses) to local towns, a meeting place and a pub. It could therefore be developed within the 'red line' or physical limits boundary of the village, but the scale and character must be appropriate to the area. Affordable Housing could also be approved, and the parish may wish to investigate the Community Right to Build proposed in the Localism Bill.

While the parish is within the Ipswich Policy Area development as a result relates to Martlesham, Kesgrave and Rushmere only and the parish is not identified for development. As a part of consultation on the LDF developers were invited to propose where development could take place. However, there are currently enough sites already identified to make it unlikely that any more would be approved during the next five years. SCDC will consult on the proposed sites later this year.

In summary the LDF will not mean a great deal of change in Little Bealings: development proposals are likely to be approved much as they are now. If the parish wishes, however, it can lead on development to benefit the local community.

In response to a question concerning the lack of a return bus service to Woodbridge, Mr Fryatt said that he thought it unlikely that there was a definition of what constituted a viable public transport service in the LDF. The parish could challenge SCDC about its definition as a LSC on the grounds that it did not have sufficient services to meet the criteria for this category if it wished.

Broadband: There would be high speed broadband in the Kesgrave area in the autumn but this would not include Little Bealings. The outcome of a bid to provide funding for improved rural broadband was due soon, and would have a big impact on rural businesses and those working from home.

Footpaths:

Mrs Cook reported that the early spring had meant that there was a great deal of growth to be cut on the paths. The parish was fortunate to have Mr Ball undertaking the cutting again, with funding provided by SCC.

Tree Warden:

Mrs Cook reported that SCDC would no longer be funding Parish Tree Schemes, although it was hoped that volunteers would enable the schemes to continue. She had attended a recent meeting concerning a proposed new wood project.

Women's Institute:

Mrs Cook reported that the group continued to enjoy a variety of activities including visits by speakers, coffee mornings, theatre trips, bowls and a visit to Mr Lofts' nature reserve in Playford.

Police: PC Wright reported that there had been 13 crimes in the last 12 months: four burglaries, three thefts, four thefts from cars, one fraud and one dangerous dog incident. Three of the crimes had been detected. He was currently looking into a report of damage to the Village Hall. Theft of heating fuel had increased and locks and level alarms could be installed and tanks disguised. Cars and houses should be secured and valuables kept out of view. He considered that school parking had improved as a result of the white lining. The Police Direct Scheme was available for those who wished to receive text notification of local crimes. A range of security devices would be on sale after the meeting.

Any Other Business: No matters were raised.

The Chairman thanked those present for attending and closed the meeting at 8.05pm.