

Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting of Little Bealings Parish held at The Angela Cobbold Memorial Hall on Monday, 5 March 2012 at 7.00pm

Present: Mrs F Rogers, Mr P Carr, Dr C Rowe, Mr B Rufford, Miss D Williams, Mr D Wilson and Mrs M Wilson (all Parish Councillors), Mrs J Cook (Tree and Footpath Warden), Mrs J Shaw (Webmaster and Village Hall Management Committee Chairman), Mr G Ball (Handyman), Mr P Bellfield (County Councillor), Mr T Fryatt (District Councillor) and four parishioners, and Mr S Jennings (Strutt and Parker) for a part of the meeting

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

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

Apologies: None

Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on 15 May 2011 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 introduced the Councillors, including Mr Rufford who had been co-opted during the last year in place of Mrs Hopkins who had resigned due to pressure of work. Mrs Hopkins was thanked for her contribution to the Council. The Chairman also introduced Mr Bellfield, Mr Tony Fryatt, Mrs Shaw, Mrs Cook and Mr Ball 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.

During the year the Council had considered various planning applications. A proposal to extend operating hours at Sinks Pit had been withdrawn and the Council was currently considering the proposed cabling route for the East Anglian Offshore Windfarm. Mr Jennings from Strutt and Parker had been invited to attend to explain the project and advise residents and the Council.

The Council had also considered the need for a Neighbourhood Plan, but, as the Council did not wish to promote any development, it had been advised by Suffolk ACRE that adequate protection was provided the policies contained in the LDF being prepared by SCDC. It had therefore been decided to update the Parish Plan by means of a Village Review instead.

The Council's Walks Leaflet and a Welcome Leaflet for new residents were both still available.

Dr Rowe commented that a Neighbourhood Plan could give the parish protection against future development and that producing one may be advantageous. It was noted that it would be expensive and involve a large amount of work.

Mr Fryatt advised that many parishes were to produce a Neighbourhood Plan, although SCDC was concerned that it would have to meet the cost of having Plans reviewed by Inspectors and of local referendums. The cost of collecting the data and preparing the Plan, including perhaps an Environmental Impact Assessment, needed to be considered by the parish. However, a Plan could not only set out future housing development, it could also include design and use of space policies.

Mr Fryatt also advised that a Parish Plan and Village Review were not relevant planning policy guidance which could be used to supplement policies in the LDF by SCDC when determining applications. A Neighbourhood Plan would produce planning guidance which would need to be taken into account and so provide more protection.

County Councillor's Report

Mr Bellfield reported:

Leaders of the Council: Both the political and the executive leadership of the Council had changed in the last year: Jeremy Pembroke had stood down as leader of the Conservative Group and Mark Bee had been elected to replace him. The Chief Executive, Andrea Hill, had left and had been replaced by Deborah Cadman.

Budget: SCC was on target to achieve £42.5m of savings for the year, with only minor impact on front line services. Some staff had left the Council and more would be transferred to new organisations taking over services, such as libraries, catering and cleaning. A further £26m savings in each of the next two years was planned. There would be further staff savings from reduced management and back office costs and more staff would transfer to other organisations.

Council Tax: For the second year running this would remain unchanged.

Libraries: All libraries were to remain open, managed by an Industrial and Provident Society supported by the Council to reduce costs. The future of mobile libraries had not been decided, but visits may reduce from two to four weekly.

Broadband: SCC was contributing £10m to deliver better broadband in Suffolk, securing a £11m grant from central government. A company to deliver the coverage would be chosen soon and everyone was encouraged to show their support for super-fast broadband at www.suffolk.gov.uk/broadband.

Property Rationalisation: SCC was rationalising its property portfolio and would soon move to Landmark House in Ipswich, sharing the building with the police. The police would also use four fire stations in Suffolk, and Woodbridge community support officers would move to SCDC offices when Woodbridge Police Station closed.

Country Parks: Arrangements were being made for management to be transferred to local community groups.

Quality of Life and Locality Budgets: Mr Bellfield was pleased to have assisted with several local projects, including road improvements although the total funding available was only £17,000 to serve 26 parishes. Mr Bellfield was also busy as Chairman of the Pension Fund Committee and a member of the Audit Committee.

District Councillor's Report

Mr Fryatt reported that the two major issues were the development of Neighbourhood Plans and the route of the East Anglian Offshore Windfarm Cabling, both of which the Council was considering. Council tax had been held at the same level, which had secured a grant from central government. SCDC was entering into more joint working with Waveney District Council and a joint head of planning had been appointed. The two districts would form three areas for planning purposes.

Mr Fryatt urged residents to attend an Out of Hours Service Patient Forum being held on 13 March hosted by Harmoni, which provides out of hours NHS care for Suffolk.

Footpaths:

Mrs Cook reported that the footpaths were well used, especially the Fynn Valley walk, and in very good condition. Mr Ball was a mainstay in cutting the routes, with some of routes requiring cutting equipment to be carried a considerable distance from the road. SCC provided funding for the cutting programme.

Tree Warden:

Mrs Cook reported that the village benefited from many old trees and some new planting. The trees at the Playing Field were now established, despite the difficult weather conditions since planting. Planting over many years had been supported by SCDC and there was the benefit of a 'blanket' TPO protecting trees in the southern part of the parish.

Women's Institute:

Mrs Cook reported that the group was celebrating its 90th year, having been founded in 1922. Members enjoyed visits by speakers, rambles, a book group, quizzes and boules and had visited Norwich, Colchester and Luxembourg Christmas Market. They knitted squares and blankets for charity. The next event was the County Federation Meeting. There were 34 members.

Webmaster: Mrs Shaw reported that work had resulted in a new website for the Council, with a much improved format.

Bealings Village Hall: Mrs Shaw reported that the Hall and Playing Field were used by both Great and Little Bealings and were in regular use by classes and groups. Bealings School and a youth theatre group also used the facilities and there was ad hoc hiring for private events, including of the Committee Room and Snooker Room. The car park was used by the School and by walkers using the Council's Walks Leaflet. Thirty eight households currently subscribed to the sports facilities and there was tennis coaching and use by Melton Exiles Boules Team. A Tri-Village Challenge had been hosted last year.

There was an ongoing need for upgrades and maintenance, and recent work had included decorating and internal and external electric work for lighting and heating. Additional fire safety measures were needed

and the roof continued to need attention. The Parish Plan had seen the installation of a security light in the car park, and SCC had installed warning safety signs for the playing field as required by RoPSA. Safety at the playing field had also been improved by SCC's work on a footpath barrier, but the grass plateau was in need of some attention.

Finances were independently audited, with a reserve of one year's base operating costs maintained. It had been necessary to increase hire rates in the last year. The Hall was in profit but there was a need for funds to deal with the flat roof and to maintain the playing field facilities. The Parish Council was thanked for its annual funding contributions and Mr Ball and Mr Beaumont were thanked for their maintenance work.

Any Other Business:

East Anglian Offshore Windfarm Cabling

The Chairman welcomed Mr Jennings, who advised that the latest route for the Windfarm cabling published by Scottish Power passed between Great and Little Bealings. He was happy to advise on the implications for landowners and the parish. The cable corridor would be about 35 metres wide, into which three cable bundles would be buried at a depth of about one metre. Installing the cable would result in extra traffic and congestion and there would be a need for access for ongoing maintenance. It was anticipated that a pit would be installed every 100 metres to allow for the cables to be joined together and permit future access, but the design was not known. Some may see the cabling as a good thing as development would not be possible along the corridor, while others may see that it restricted future use. Trees could not be planted along the corridor which could affect the future character of the area.

In response to questions from residents he advised that the project funding was £11b and using existing cabling or pylons was not seen to be an option. The future use of the land for agriculture would not be affected, subject to topsoil being adequately replaced. Drainage was also a matter to be addressed and access to existing private water supplies needed to be considered.

Mr Jennings was unable to advise on health implications, but Mr Fryatt considered that heat from the cabling would not be an issue as it would carry Direct Current. Mr Fryatt was also concerned that the current corridor permitted three cables and that there may be a need to return and install a fourth in due course. As the disruption would be significant it would be preferable if government funding was available for all the cabling to be installed at the outset. SCDC's response to the consultation would include this and the Council was advised to work with the project officer, Mr Chamberlain, when it submitted its response.

It was considered that a case could be made for re-routing the cabling further north to avoid coming between the two communities, but if this was not successful, the parish, as well as individual landowners, could seek compensation. The installation for each section was estimated to take 6 – 8 weeks, with considerable traffic congestion and disturbance, especially if equipment was moved at night as proposed. It was noted that a part of the route was within a Special Landscape Area. It was well used for public access and had high environmental value.

There were no other matters raised.

The Chairman thanked those present for attending and closed the meeting at 8.20pm.