

WENHASTON WITH MELLS HAMLET PARISH COUNCIL

APM 2013


Clerk Richard Day

richard@daymilldown.fsnet.co.uk

Minutes of the Annual Parish meeting held in the village hall on Wednesday 24th April 2013.

Present; Cllr. L. Spindler (Chair), Cllr. D. Corbett, Cllr. M. Gasper, Cllr. A. Edwards, Cllr. R. Dillaway, Cllr. H. Phillips, Cllr. A. Alder, Cllr. Alan. Spindler, Cllr. Alastair Spindler, Cllr. D. Wilkinson, Cllr. J. Tate, District Cllr M. Gower, Mr. R. Day and 36 Parishioners.

1. The Chairman welcomed Councillors, District Councillor. M. Gower and Parishioners to the meeting. Apologies received from County Cllr. R. Leighton and Jill Davies.
2. The minutes of the meeting of 25th April 2012 were proposed by Cllr. A. Alder and seconded by Cllr. Alastair. Spindler as being accurate. There were no votes against the proposal and therefore they were accepted and signed.
3. Chairman of Parish Council gave the report on behalf of the Parish Council. A copy is available from Clerk.
4. County Councillor R. Leighton provided a written report. A copy is available from the Clerk. In Cllr. Leighton's absence the Chair acknowledged his work during the past 22 years for the Parish Council and thanked him.
5. District Cllr. M. Gower provided a report, copy available from Clerk.
6. Clerk provided the Parish Council Financial Report. A copy is available from Clerk.
7. Gus Jones provided a report on behalf of Wenhaston First Responders Group. Summary;
 - Activity and coverage levels outlined.
 - 24hr service provided by volunteers.
 - De fibrillator will be made available within Wenhaston - vote by ballot on preferred siting.
 - Volunteers always welcomed.
8. Charity Reports
 - (i) Pepyn and Lessey (Trevor Tate-copy available from Clerk)
 - (ii) Relief in Need (Cllr. H. Phillips) summary - basics of income stream explained £262.85 received last year. £200 paid away in help to village people suffering temporary financial difficulty.
9. Cllr. M. Gasper presented Parish Councils proposals in respect of 3 Wenhaston Commons. A display was also made available to


24.4.14

demonstrate the work of the Commons group. A copy of the presentation is available from the Clerk.

10. Cllr. A. Alder provided a report. Copy available from Clerk, covering current initiatives for the young within the village.

11. Matters raised in open forum;

- Grit Bins - poor service in re-filling by SCC continually experienced.

- Blackheath has problems with litter and dog waste.

- Disappointment expressed at timing to sewer work given impact on wildlife.

- Recent broadband/telephone problems highlighted and the work of Michael Gower and Liz Hills in moving the pace of remedial work forward was acknowledged.

- Level of Parish Precept increase challenged given the current level of reserves.

(All of these matters will be carried forward to next Parish meeting under an agenda item, - feedback from Annual Parish Meeting,)

Meeting closed at 9pm.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "D. Alder", is located in the bottom right corner of the page.

County Council Report Rae Leighton
Annual Parish Meeting
Wenhaston 24th April 2013

Madam Chairman thank you for inviting me to give an Annual Report on Suffolk County Council. I apologise for not being able to give it in person but I am away at this time. In fact this is my last report to you as after 22 years as an elected member I have decided to stand down from Local Government. 22 years ago the scene was wildly different from that now and I feel it is time to give way to younger person who hopefully will have innovative and contemporary ideas.

When I first became elected for this area a councillor's responsibilities towards the local electorate did not have anything like the involvement that they do now. Councils although providing much the same services as they do now operated under a committee system where councillors were members of a number of committees which debated policy and made recommendations to Full Council for approval and implementation. It meant that councillors did get an opportunity to speak and believe me some took advantage of that but there was very little consultation with the local people – councillors decided what they thought was best and what should be done. Round about 2001 or 2002 most councils moved to a Cabinet system of governance where a small group of councillors (9 or 10) became the executive and made the decisions having consulted the rest of the Council through scrutiny committees. All councillors in their turn went out to their wards and divisions to find out more closely what the electorate wanted. Consultation and transparency of decision making became the bywords and much of that was done through town and parish councils. That has developed over the years and we are now required to consult much more widely and seemingly sometimes over every decision that the council makes. Localism and strategies like Our Place have handed much responsibility to local communities to determine how things should be ordered in their areas.

That is fine in theory and while there was sufficient funds it worked well but when financial restraints are imposed as we are required to exercise now, people's aspirations and ambitions are not so easily realised and that can lead to significant frustration – 'you asked us to tell you what we wanted and now you tell us we can't have it because there is no money!'

The struggle the County Council has had over the last two or three years is to try to maintain the level of service that people have come to expect with far less resources in staff and finance to do it. The one thing people tell us year on year is that they don't want Council Tax to increase so with 25% to 30% cuts in Central Government funding new innovative ways are having to be found to deliver the same hence the huge reorganisation of the County Council to make ourselves more efficient, less bureaucratic and altogether leaner, some 1,500 posts have been shed over the last two years. £24m is budgeted to be saved this year, £26m last year, There has been a radical change to the way Adult and Community Services is delivered; education is undergoing a massive overhaul in an effort to raise the levels of achievement and attainment of pupils; the maintenance of our roads has been rationalised under one main contractor. All these measures are designed to make ourselves more efficient and save costs.

As I said at the beginning I have decided to step down from representing the Blything Division. It has certainly been a challenge and for the most part satisfying if at times immensely frustrating. The time it seems to take for decisions to come to fruition really makes me wonder. Saxmundham town and the 12 parishes either side of the A12 are all very different; each has different concerns and my regret is that I have by no means been able to do all that I would have liked. On the District and County Council I have been Deputy Leader, Cabinet Member, Chairman of scrutiny committees and policy development panels as well as a member of the now abandoned Police Authority. I can't complain; I will be sad but not sorry to give it up after 22 years. But life moves on and as one door shuts another opens. I have been extremely fortunate and honoured to be appointed the first Armed forces Commissioner for Suffolk with the role of integrating the armed forces across the County more closely with the civil communities for cooperation and mutual support, each drawing on the strengths of the other.

Madam Chairman, thank you and the parish for your support and friendliness over the years. When I have been able it has always been a pleasure to attend Wenham Parish Council meetings and do what I could for Wenham

Pepyn and Lessey Trust

A report given at the Annual Parish Meeting 26th April 2013

A Short history of the Trust – In 1562 and 1563 W Pepyn and R Lessey left land, the income of which was to help with “ The education in learning and Godliness of the poor children of Wenhaston” In 1982 with the fore sight of the Trustees a house with land owned by the Trust was sold and the proceeds were invested –This now produces an income of approximately £5000 per annum

This gives the Trustees the funding to help with many projects

How the money has been spent – Individually we help with Scholarships, maintenance allowances, outfits, clothing, instruments, books, field courses, school trips and travel for educational purposes and helping towards the cost of the D of E award schemes

The trust gives grants to parents of children going from Primary school to the High School when extra expenses are incurred for new uniforms, sports equipment Etc This year the grant was £100 per child

We also offer help to children staying on in the VI form with specialist books and transport costs

The Trust also makes one off payments to help with school projects and this year we have helped Wenhaston Primary School with school trips – projects and Wenhaston Pre-School with equipment

We also offer a book to children going to The High School, this is in memory of Harold Hatcher who left a bequest to the Trust.

The Trustees would like all residents in Wenhaston with Mellis, especially those with School age children, to be aware of the work done by The Trust and the availability of financial assistance towards enjoying and achieving their potential during their time at school

If anyone would like to know more about the Trust or knows of anyone who may benefit from the Trusts activities do let us know.

We are intending during the next few weeks to send an information leaflet to all parents of guardians with children at Wenhaston Primary School

9. Proposals for Wenhaston Commons future management

We have 5 Commons in Wenhaston; Bickers Heath and Mill Heath are owned by the Hill Estate, the other three - Black Heath, Church Common and Blowers Common have no registered owner; Suffolk Coastal District Council takes responsibility for management 'in absentia' and has done for about 30 years. All of our commons are 'Registered' which means they are legally protected as commons ensuring their use for leisure in perpetuity.

The management of all 5 commons is overseen by Suffolk Coastal with Wenhaston Commons Group providing volunteers to cut gorse and heather, remove bracken and keep paths open for people to enjoy our special heathland. Capital works - for example - clearance of old gorse with machinery and construction of rabbit exclosures to enable young heather to grow, has been paid for from Countryside Stewardship grants which have now become 'HLS' - Higher Level Stewardship which is administered by English Nature on behalf of the government.

Wenhaston Commons Group has been playing an increasing role in the management of our commons - we now produce the '10 year Management Plan' with help and advice from Suffolk Wildlife Trust, Natural England and Suffolk Coastal; the plan was agreed by Wenhaston Parish Council before being implemented. This Plan is the key to our commons and for the necessary funding for capital works. Without it our valuable Sandlings Heathland would disappear into woodland and species such as the silver studded blue butterfly would not survive.

Current financial constraints have led Suffolk Coastal staff to warn us that cutbacks may make it necessary for them to relinquish the overall management role with regard to our commons. In response Wenhaston Parish Council has announced its intention to take on the 'Adverse Possession' of Black Heath, Church Common and Blowers Common; in other words Wenhaston will become the owner of these three commons.

Ownership of the commons would put the Parish Council in a good position to apply for and administer Higher Level Stewardship; however we are not in a position to consider undertaking the extra work involved.

This is where Suffolk Wildlife Trust has offered to help. The village has a long association with the Trust - from the early days of the Commons Group its staff have always given us practical help and advice on areas of the village including our commons, churchyard, Merton Wood and the planting of its orchard, and Vicarage Grove.

We intend to hand the management of Black Heath, Church Common and Blowers Common to the Trust by means of a renewable lease to enable it to administer the Higher Level Stewardship scheme on behalf of Wenhaston. Commons Group volunteers will still carry out the same work and we will all work to the Management Plan in the same way, all within the constraints of the Commons Acts. Suffolk Wildlife Trust has already been successful with Wenhaston's Stewardship application; we now look forward to managing our commons together.

Michael Gasper
24 April 2013

Clerk's Financial Report to Annual Parish Meeting 24/4/13.

Parish Council expenditure during 2012/13 was broadly in line with budget. A very small underspend was achieved amounting to £9.00. During the course of the year and in addition to precept income £1000.00 was received from Suffolk County Council as a grant towards funding the Playbus initiative within the village and a bequest of £4000.00 was received from the relatives of the late Ken Roberts with the proviso that the funds would be used to benefit the young people of the village.

As a result the Parish Council's funds currently amount to £23648.00. Specific reserves mentioned earlier amount to £5000.00 and therefore £18648.00 is held between current and deposit accounts as unallocated funds. 2013/14 is however likely to present a significant challenge to Parish Council Finances as substantial expenditure is anticipated in respect of repairs and maintenance of fixed assets, tree lopping/pollarding, expenditure associated with the change in ownership of the Wenhaston Commons and also the ownership of the land currently leased as allotments. These costs, if approved, will be met partially from the reserves currently held and partially from precept. Estimated total additional costs will be in the region of £7-10k.

Precept for 2013/14 was requested to cover expenditure of £17100 (£14,600 in 2012/13)

Accounts for 2012/13 are awaiting Audit following approval by the Parish Council. Notices will be posted on 20/5/13 confirming exactly when books and records are available for inspection by Parishioners and final audit will be completed by BDO LLP no later than 30/9/13.

Richard Day

Clerk to Wenhaston with Mells Hamlet Parish Council.

Youth Issues

Several initiatives have been tried this year, with varying degrees of success.

1. Funding for Youth Activities

Attempts to apply for money to finance visits from the Youth Bus from the "Activities For All" fund last summer were unsuccessful, meaning the bus was unable to continue its visits to the village, despite these being popular with our young people. Funding of £1000 has now been secured from Cllr Leighton's Locality Budget. However, the future of the bus is now in doubt because of cut backs. The money from the Locality Budget is being held by the Parish Council and could be used for developing sports facilities if the bus is no longer available.

2. Developing Sport and Play Facilities in the Village

A group has been formed to look at ways of developing sports and play equipment in the village. Organisations such as the sports club, youth club, football and bowls club and the school have been contacted to ask for their ideas on how Section 106 money (which comes from building work in the village) could be used. The money from the Locality Budget could be added to this sum. Ideas so far included:

- New play equipment, such as mini climbing rocks
- Outdoor gym equipment, similar to that installed at Halesworth
- Developing some athletics facilities on the playing field to support school sport following the Olympics

It is hoped to hold an information morning on Saturday June 15th to share different plans with the village.

3. Youth Council

We are trying to establish a youth council which can feed in to the main Parish Council. Unfortunately the first meeting fell during February half term and was not well supported. Further meetings are planned after making direct approaches to the youth club and young people. The parish council were impressed by the group of boys who presented their ideas for developing the bike track on Blackheath. We feel it is important to encourage young people to be consulted and involved in community planning and decision making.

St Peter's Church has made a donation to youth funds in Wenhaston. Some of the young people have indicated they would like outings rather than a club for older teenagers, such as going bowling. The logistics of this are being explored.

4. *Reporting Youth Events and Achievements using the "Wenhaston Warbler."*
Alison Alder

24.4.13.

CHAIRMANS REPORT

PLANNING

The major planning application for this year was from Southwold Railway Trust for a station, buildings and ½ mile of track.

This was turned down by the PC and SCDC.

We also had a draft proposal from Hopkins Homes to erect 25 houses on part of the field off St Michaels Way.

No definite application has been made yet

Public meetings were held for both of these to get the reaction of the villagers.

COMMONS

The PC has been asked to take over the ownership of three Wenhaston Commons. Several sub committee meetings have been held to discuss this to make sure we make the right decisions for the village.

Although we will not pay anything for the land we will incur legal fees.

Cllr Michael Gasper will give a detailed report later.

NEW VENTURES

The Good Neighbours group was formed by Cllr Denise Corbett and is doing well. They have 30 volunteers and have completed 50 tasks, they also have a healthy bank balance which is excellent.

Cllr Alison Alder has taken on the Youth work in the village and will give a report later.

The Wenhaston Warbler is up and running and is paying it,s way.

Cllr David Wilkinson has kindly set up a web site for the PC.

I would like to give a big thank you to all these volunteers for all the good work they do for the village.

IMPROVEMENTS

The new oak post for the Village Sign has been installed. Thanks to Crispin Chalker for donating the post free of charge.

The driveway to the Playing field has been repaired thanks to the promise of donations to help with the cost from the FootballC,Bowls Club and Sports Club.

Permission was given to cut down two Cedar tree on the Playing Field as their roots were damaging the surface of the Play area

A new hedge has kindly been planted by Blythe Wood and also a donation of £50 given towards the cost.

We are still waiting for Suffolk Coastal Services to do repairs to the Play Area.

1 new grit bin has been installed and two more will be installed later in the year.

The PC is negotiating to try to take over the ownership of the Allotment land from SCDC for the village. There would only be a nominal fee for the land, if it is agreed, but once again we will have to pay solicitors fees.

There is a problem with the drains at the Village Hall which is going to cost quite a substantial amount to put right.

A sub committee has been formed to work with the Village Hall representatives to sort out this matter.

POST OFFICE

Jane Peters has taken over the remainder of the lease for the Post Office and has settled in well. I would ask that you use the PO as much as possible because it is a fact, Use it or Loose it.

Many thanks to June and Trevor Tate for serving us so well for many years. I hope they are enjoying their retirement.

THANKS

A big thank you must also go once again to Arthur Musk and David Cox and all their helpers for making the Jubilee celebrations such a success.

The PC donated £300 towards the mugs.

I cannot finish without giving a big thank you to the Clerk Richard Day, who has been such a help to me and to the whole Council. The paperwork seems to grow and grow.

As you can see it has been a busy year but I think a successful one.

District Councillor Report April 2013

General

Another busy year at Suffolk Coastal DC.

Four key issues.

Finances

A dominant theme. The Coalition is struggling to regain control of the public finances. Expenditure is being squeezed with an increased demand for the services required by the public and a reluctance by people to transfer more of their money – in the form of taxes to the state to spend on their behalf.

The coalition has managed to significantly reduce the level of grant made to Local Authorities

At SCDC we have frozen Council tax for a third year and we are trying to maintain the full range of services that we provide to the taxpayer. On the whole we have been successful and have set a balanced budget for 2013/14.

Savings have been achieved by joining up functions with Waveney District Council and reducing the number of employees.

But severe financial pressures remain in place.

Planning

Key service provided by SCDC

Local Development framework (LDF) nearly there. 10 years late. An up to date plan to control what developments can and should take place locally is essential.

This plan has to mesh with the new National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) with its pro development agenda

Current position. We are vulnerable to speculative developments. No LDF in place (but very close) and no 5 year housing stock.

Sizewell

The need for new sources of energy is urgently required to decrease our dependence on fossil fuels.

The first stage of local consultation has now taken place.

Issues. The key issue is what price the government is prepared to pay for the energy.

Negotiations are currently focused on the proposed new build in Somerset. Delays in the negotiation show how difficult it is to establish a “strike price” that is affordable to for the country.

Boundary review

Currently 55 Councillors in SCDC

A debate is currently underway on how many are needed?

The figures been proposed range from 43 to 48.

Less councillors will save a small amount of money but may not be sensible as responsibility is increasingly devolved from Woodbridge to parishes and more local organisations.