

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING HELD ON FRIDAY 19 MAY 2006 AT 8PM IN THE VILLAGE HALL

There was an attendance of 30 including all the members of the Parish Council and County Councillor Simon Walsh.

Apologies for absence were received from District Councillor Mrs S Schneider, Sally Rowden and Margaret Grimster.

1. MINUTES OF ANNUAL PARISH MEETING HELD ON 22 APRIL 2005

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting and invited them to read the minutes from the previous Annual Parish Meeting. There being no objections, the minutes were signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

2. FINANCE

The unaudited accounts for the Parish Council for the year ended 31 March 2006 were reviewed by those present and the Clerk reported that the total balance in the Parish Council's accounts was £14,999.60, which included £8,267 in the new Community Project Account and £2,775 in the Building Society Account. Questions were requested from the floor and were dealt with by the Clerk.

3. ANNUAL REPORT TO THE COUNCIL

The Chairman reported on yet another busy year. Twelve full council meetings during the year, many with key visitors from Essex County Council, Uttlesford District Council, the Police and P3 (Parish Path Partnership). Computerisation of the council's administrative affairs has continued during the year.

The send off party marking Margaret Grimster's retirement was well attended and sure to be a memorable day for her. The presents from the Parish Council and the village are sure to bring her constant enjoyment.

We continued to pursue the footway project on the B1054 between Mill House Cottages and Harvey Way. We made presentations at two County Council budget allocation meetings in Saffron Walden and Great Dunmow to request allocation of special funds from the 2006-2011 Local Transport Plan. Persistent lobbying was also undertaken. However, to date a decision is still to be made by Government.

Paul Hardy, West Area Highways Manager for Essex County Council attended a parish council meeting to discuss various highways matters. Mr Hardy later responded that speed restriction facilities for Hempstead were included in the 2006/07 budget. We will ensure that this allocation is not diverted and the best solution is obtained at the time when the work is undertaken.

It is with regret that the Road Safety Committee was disbanded during the year and we will monitor any replacement committee if and when it is created.

A sub-committee was set up to work on the Realignment of the Rights of Way comprising Sean McCarthy, David Haylock, Diana Frost and Margaret Grimster. Considerable consultation with landowners, Uttlesford District Council and the Ramblers' Association was carried out and then a huge amount of work in compiling the revisions needed and putting them in packages for efficient processing by the district council. However, just before submission to UDC, Saffron Walden Footpaths Association raised a number of objections. Submission was therefore put on hold and a meeting has been arranged with SWFA representatives.

Lisa Cross, P3 officer, gave a presentation to the Council during the year and the decision was subsequently taken to join the scheme with effect from April 2006.

Continued maintenance of the village appearance by way of clear up days has continued and a presentation by the parish council to the judges of the Best Kept Village competition resulted in Hempstead winning Class 4 of this prestigious competition. The Ruggles Brise trophy and £150 prize money were awarded together with a further £100 prize money for coming third in the Essex Village of the Year competition. This money will be used to purchase chain and posts for the Ring of Trees and displaying the trophy. Thanks were offered to all who helped this great achievement for our small community, in particular Diana Frost.

The path in front of the pond at the bottom of Church Hill was refurbished and David Haylock has gained approval for the pollarding of the Ring of Trees and removal of the dangerous dead elms. This together with the small working party led by John Sladen who cleared the stream in the autumn to alleviate the flooding potential are further examples of the commitment to village appearance.

The purchase of improved software for the village website has created a slicker, more user-friendly site. Thanks going to Helen Philip (Editor) and Brian Kitchen (Technician) for their hard work in maintaining a fantastic site.

The main planning problem dealt with this year was an application from Orange Telecommunications for erection of a mast and equipment base box in the centre of the village. With legal assistance from a resident, a strong letter of objection was sent to UDC Planning Committee and personal lobbying of John Mitchell, Head of Planning by Mr McCarthy resulted in refusal of the application as it was considered harmful to the character and appearance of the conservation area.

In connection with the ongoing issue of whether a Village Appraisal or Parish Plan was needed, Mr McCarthy and Mr Haylock attended an interesting course entitled "Raising the Profile". Mr McCarthy and Mr Sladen attended a Parish Liaison Meeting where it was noted that UDC are in favour of Parish Plans. A base document has been created from the considerable information gathered by Miss Frost - specific documents will be produced from this in future. The first of these is an enhanced Newcomers Pack, which is now presented in a folder for a "swish" impression.

The recently appointed Neighbourhood Watch co-ordinator, Jim Rennie, has attended many liaison meetings and continues to be supported by the Parish Council.

The Parish Council continue to support the Stop Stansted Expansion campaign and respond to consultation papers accordingly.

Liaison with the local police has increased and a recent problem at the back of the village hall has been dealt with. Thanks to Pc Ryan McNamara for his continued persistence.

Councillors have attended a number of new committees during the year including the North Area panel (Sean McCarthy), West Essex Area Forum (Diana Frost and David Haylock).

Finally the Chairman thanked his fellow councillors for their support during the year. He felt they all worked well as a team, as was demonstrated at the retirement reception for Margaret Grimster in April.

4. REPORT BY THE DISTRICT COUNCILLOR

Mrs Sue Schneider, Uttlesford District Councillor, was unable to attend the meeting but sent a report that was read by the Clerk. This covered the new Constitution at Uttlesford, formation of Area Panels and the continuation of Parish Liaison Meetings. The work of the Constitutional Task Group and the demise of the Road Safety Advisory Group were also covered.

Saffron Walden Museum continue to fundraise for their Heritage Centre and the Saffron Walden Project Officer has been working with UDC to open a public cinema (to be known as Saffron Screen) at Saffron Walden County High School.

Mrs Schneider then thanked the Members of the Parish Council for the time and hard work they put in on behalf of the residents.

5. REPORT BY THE COUNTY COUNCILLOR

Simon Walsh, Essex County Councillor for Thaxted division, introduced himself and presented his report for the year. He explained the make up of Essex County Council and his role therein. Cllr Walsh gave a brief resume of the key issues facing the County Council since the last election. Improvements in various services have moved the authority from a good performing one to excellent, despite financial constraints. Consultations on the reorganisation of the police force and primary care trusts have been significant features of the year. The government's decision that the eastern region be asked to accept nearly half a million extra houses without additional contributions towards infrastructure has also received a lot of attention. Comment was also made regarding the new Fire Chief, David Johnson, who is committed to meeting the changing needs and demands of the fire service within the county. LTP2 is a long-winded process but continues to take high priority and Cllr Walsh confirmed his commitment to following this issue.

6. GENERAL DISCUSSION

Prior to the start of the general discussion, the Chairman invited PC Ryan McNamara to give a brief report. PC McNamara was pleased to be able to report no violent crime within the parish and emphasised the constant need for everyone to be vigilant. The need to report all incidents was stressed to ensure the police could build a picture of activity in the village. Support of the mobile police van was appreciated. Mr Haylock asked for speed checks to be carried out as none had been performed for a long time.

The unhealthy state of the water in the pond at the bottom of Church Hill was discussed. More oxygenating plants and tench were needed to rectify this problem. There may also be a leak that will need to be investigated.

Mr McCarthy closed the meeting by thanking everyone for attending.

The meeting closed at 9.35pm.

Date:

Chairman: