

LITTLE BLAKENHAM PARISH COUNCIL

ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

**WEDNESDAY 13th MAY 2015 IN LITTLE BLAKENHAM VILLAGE
HALL**

Present : Wallace Binder (Chairman), Mary Whurr, Mike Tarbard, Janet Gobey (Clerk), two parishioners.

The meeting was opened by the Chairman at 7.30 pm, with a welcome to all those in attendance.

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE: Stephen Wright, Michael Blakenham, John Field.

1. INTRODUCTION

The Chairman introduced the new Parish Clerk, Janet Gobey. The post of Parish Clerk had been advertised in In Touch magazine and another application had been received. The Chairman has informed the applicant that the vacancy had been filled and has kept a record of their contact details.

2. MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

The minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on 7/5/14 were agreed as a true and correct record and signed by the Chairman.

3. MATTERS ARISING

Road markings on the B1113 have been altered. There was some discussion as to whether there had been any change in the amount of speeding and unsafe driving, and whether they provided value for money, but it was generally agreed that any measure that helped reduce accidents and road deaths should be welcomed.

4. COUNTY AND DISTRICT COUNCILLOR ANNUAL REPORT

John Field was not present, so the Chairman presented the “Annual Report to Gipping Valley Parishes: April 2015” and drew the meeting's attention to some key points (Full copy available on request from the Clerk)

Overview - local government remains a main target for cost reductions. As a result efficiency savings have been achieved, with significant reductions in senior management at Mid Suffolk and County. County has kept tax rises at zero again, and has put the resulting government grant into reserves. County reserves now stand at

some £121.6 M. Mid Suffolk has raised taxes by some 1.7% and has put some £7.5 M into a “transformation” reserve.

Transformation – County has been making changes in Adult and Community Services and in Children and Young People, both big budget areas. The Outsourcing Programme has moved forward. The outsourcing of libraries has been successful and has won national recognition. Outsourcing of the former Council care homes has resulted in new buildings, but there have been issues with care standards, resulting in the temporary closure of some homes to new admissions.

Education – all Gipping Valley schools are now rated as at least 'Good'. One has achieved “Outstanding”. This is a tribute to the hard work of teachers, leadership teams, governors, children and their parents/carers. Across Suffolk, the picture is less good and the results of some schools, particularly those in deprived areas, lower the County average. “Raising the Bar” is not praised by school staff and it's effect appears to be limited.

Gipping Valley - the year has been dominated by large controversial planning applications. Mid Suffolk has less than five year development land available. At this threshold, developers can propose what they think meets needs, rather than take note of local planning policies. There may be a significant application at Bramford and Claydon has areas that have been proposed in the land bid process.

Solar Farms – not acceptable on high quality agricultural land, but panels should be encouraged on houses, schools, village halls, factories and farm buildings.

Great Blakenham Incinerator - now fully operational, despite some early failures. It is much larger than people realised. It is saving landfill tax of £8M per year and burning 40,000 tonnes of Norfolk's waste is making a profit for the county. Pollution is fully controlled and is below European Directive Standards. Odours have been reported on many occasions. - some after outages or due to damaged doors, but there are other reports that are difficult to track down. They be due to other sources or the Gipping Valley Inversion layer pushing pollutants down to ground level.

The greenhouse project using waste heat from the incinerator is progressing, but timescales are proving a challenge. Archaeological evaluations have delayed the project and are putting the plan to get the heat in use under the Renewal Obligation Certificate regime at risk.

Blakenham Fields – the District Council has accepted a significant increase in housing numbers to get payment of something close to the original 106 monies. There are significant concerns about infrastructure, community facilities, education and early years provision, transport, medical facilities, access to shops and congested roads.

Fisons/Scotts Papermill Lane – the Papermill Lane application was approved with little opposition as the need to save the iconic, but decaying, buildings was

recognised. Developer contributions to local infrastructure are limited due to the cost of site clearance and restoration works. There is concern about traffic at the Bramford end of Papermill Lane where parking by Victorian housing is a major difficulty. Bramford Primary is the obvious choice for the children living on the development to attend, but the school is currently full.

Highways – The combination of the new highways contract, county reorganisation and austerity has made it difficult to deliver highways or transport improvements.

5. LOCAL BEAT OFFICER'S REPORT

The Clerk read the report from Mid Suffolk South Safer Neighbourhood Team (Full copy available on request from the Clerk).

Recorded crime figures for the Parish for the period 1/4/14 to 31/3/15 :
Vehicle related – 0 Burglary – 0 Criminal Damage – 0 Theft – 0 Other – 14.

The Mid Suffolk SNT is now led by Kieron Pederick. The PCs who cover Bramford are Amy Hutton and Colette Denny. The team's priorities for the next three months are Anti-Social Behaviour and Vehicle security. The next Priority Setting Meeting will be held at the Elmswell Fire Station at 7 pm on Thursday 2/7/15. Members of the public are welcome to come along and make suggestions about what they would like to be worked on in their area.

6. CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

The Chairman stated that all scheduled Parish Council meetings had been held. Attendance by Councillors had been fairly good, although it had tailed off towards the end of the period.

The Clerk had had to resign due to her husband's ill health. The Chairman expressed his appreciation that she had left things in excellent order. The Chairman has been acting as Clerk until the new Clerk was appointed. The vacancy for Clerk had been advertised through SALC, who had told him that there were a number of parishes trying to find new Clerks.

Village Website -There is a requirement for each parish to set up and maintain a Transparency website. The Clerk will be undertaking this and training has been arranged through SALC.

Village Hall - John Field has indicated that there may be a grant available to replace the windows. The Chairman felt that it would be best to finalise the replacement of the playground equipment before exploring this possibility.

There is no longer a Village Hall Committee and there are very few bookings. A parishioner questioned whether the grass cutting arrangements in the area around

the Village Hall provided value for money and the Chairman replied that he felt that they were satisfactory.

Playground – The Chairman gave an update on progress on obtaining funding to replace the equipment. The Chairman and the Clerk had recently attended an information session run by SITA UK Trust. Verbal agreement has been given by SITA that the application for funding can proceed to the next stage, once a signed 10 year lease and updated quotes have been submitted to them. The draft version of the lease had been checked by SITA and was found to be acceptable. The Clerk has emailed SITA to confirm this agreement. The Chairman has contacted Lord Blakenham to arrange for the signing of the new lease.

ACTION – Clerk to obtain updated quotes.

Cleaning – a new cleaner has been appointed to clean the Village Hall, the bus shelter and the telephone box. He has been unable to clean off the graffiti in the bus shelter, so is going to repaint it. The Chairman will provide the white paint.

Parish Council Membership – the Chairman expressed his view that it was a priority to fill the three vacancies on the Parish Council.

Audited Accounts - these were agreed. The Chairman stated he felt that the Parish had maintained a healthy balance again this year.

7. AOB

A parishioner asked how new Councillors were to be recruited. Various methods were discussed, including word of mouth and doorstep canvassing around the parish. It was agreed that adverts would be placed on the parish noticeboards and in the In Touch magazine.

ACTION - Clerk to draw up an advert and arrange for it to go in In Touch and on the notice boards.

The Chairman stated that it would be “first come, first served” if there were too many applicants for the number of vacancies.

A parishioner queried progress on the greenhouse project. There was discussion about the availability of backing for the project from other organisations. It was also felt that there could be problems being caused for the project by fluctuations in demand for tomatoes and increased large scale production in other parts of the world. The Chairman expressed the view that, as crops had now been sown on the land, there would be little or no progress before the autumn.

There being no other business, the Chairman closed the meeting at 8.05 pm.