

# WALBERSWICK PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the **ANNUAL PARISH MEETING** held in the Village Hall at 7.30pm on 16<sup>th</sup> April, 2009

Mrs. Madeline Dabbs presided as Chairman of the Parish Council. 38 members of the public attended the meeting including County Councillor R H Leighton, representatives from local organisations, seven Parish Councillors and Mrs V J Hunt (Clerk).

Apologies for absence were received from Mr. and Mrs. A Walpole, Mr. and Mrs. E. Humphries, Mrs. R Bassett, Mr. P. Ford-Crush, Mr. and Mrs. P Avis, Mr. B Ungless, Mr. L Dabbs and Mrs. M King.

## 1. MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING HELD 17<sup>th</sup> APRIL 2008

The minutes had been made available for inspection and were taken as read. On the proposal of Mr K Webb and seconded by Mr D Webb they were **approved** and signed as a true record of the meeting.

## 2. MATTERS ARISING – None were raised

## 3. CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

The Chairman, Mrs. Madeline Dabbs, commenced her report by stating that it had been, surprisingly, a very busy year for the Council. The affordable housing project in Nightingale Close had been completed. The Parish Council had expressed concerns to The Housing Association that they had not taken into account the cost of housing in Walberswick when dismissing applications from local people, claiming their salaries were too high for such housing. However, there had now been a change of policy but it was vitally important that all people ensured they were on the waiting list and not just apply when they found out that a house was going to become vacant.

The Parish Council had been very concerned when it realised that very little constraint was put on home owners who wanted to erect a swimming pool in their garden. This Council successfully took to the Suffolk Association of Local Councils, who unanimously supported a motion to urge the National Association of Local Councils to push the Government for stricter controls on the proposed installation of a permanent pool at private properties.

The children's play area on the sports field had benefitted from more play equipment during the year but unfortunately the Council was being forced to fence off the area because of dog fouling. She stated that in future dogs could be banned from the playing field and the beach if owners did not become more responsible in clearing up after their animals.

The Chairman informed the meeting that all the Parish Councillors and the Clerk were members of the Sea Defence Group. This was not on the agenda as the village had recently been updated on this work.

The allotments, after some years of partial neglect, had now sprung back into life and all those on the waiting list had now been allocated allotments (or parts thereof).

As Chairman of the Parish Council, she had been invited to be part of a group which looked at where the new 'Healthy Living Centre' would be situated. She was pleased to report that this should be up and running within a couple of years on a much more accessible and suitable site.

The saga of the Post Office occupied a lot of the Council's time. Letters to Post Office Ltd. (frequently unanswered) and to our MP John Gummer, about the appalling level of service being received due to technical difficulties, were fast and furious. We now, at last, have a permanent computer connection which had made the service much more reliable.

In October the Parish Council called a public meeting to hear about and discuss a Parish Plan. After consultation with other parishes by a small group of volunteers, it was agreed that the village would develop a plan, although a considerable amount of work would be necessary to achieve this.

The arrival of 50 - 100 tons of wood on our beach brought interest from afar. The arrival of many visitors, not to enjoy the sea and sand but to collect the wood, was a spectacle. It was soon cleared from the beach and hopefully those who took it reported their actions to the Recorder of Wreck!

The Council had recently taken the decision to apply to become a Quality Council. Much of the criteria had already been met but one change required that time was allotted for parishioners to discuss problems with the Council. Therefore, in future time would be set aside between 7.15pm until 7.30pm before a council meeting (normally first Monday of every month) specifically for this. A further requirement was that the Clerk should obtain a Certificate in Local Council Administration (CILCA). As the present Clerk, Mrs. Vivien Hunt, was retiring from the position it was essential that the new Clerk was prepared to work for this qualification. At this point the Chairman introduced the new Clerk, Miss Mischi Verneti, who would be taking up the appointment on 1<sup>st</sup> June (Mischi had agreed to study for this qualification as part of her duties).

She stated that another requirement to becoming a Quality Council was to have a web-site and this was already up and

dates and times of meetings, agendas and minutes of the Parish Council could be found, along with many other interesting items.

The Walberswick Common Lands Charity Trust had consulted the Parish Council about the revision of their constitution. The proposal for the reduction of nominative trustees (from 4 to 3) was opposed by the majority of the Parish Council. The WCLCT have since withdrawn this change.

She stated that all the aforementioned had not covered the many hours of extra work undertaken by members of this Parish council. She explained that the work of the Parish Councillors was not just about meeting monthly to make decisions. Responding to what can only be described as a deluge of correspondence and e-mails, sifting out what was urgent and what was relevant to us and acting accordingly was another part of the duties. Dealing 'hands on' with day to day problems and queries raised by parishioners when out in the village was yet another. She thanked the Parish Councillors for their work and support throughout the year.

#### **4. PRESENTATION OF THE ACCOUNTS OF THE PARISH COUNCIL**

Mrs. Hunt, as Clerk of the Parish Council, produced a copy of receipts and payments for the year.

The Clerk reported that £5,360.00 had been spent on village facilities which included new play equipment for the playing field (£4,460.00) and marram grass seedlings for the sea defences (£900). The remaining expenditure in this section was mainly for grass cutting. Grants to cover these projects had been received from SDCDC (£4,380.00) SCC (£900.00) and WCLCT (£82.00)

The Clerk explained that the final balance in hand of £9,423.00 did bring the Council in line with the amount that the auditors preferred the Council to hold in reserve. However, £2,300.00 of that is reserved for the Clerk's gratuity and there is also a separate fund of £2,200 for the Community Benefit which lessened the amount considerably and is why it had been necessary to increase the precept by 3% for 2009-2010

She thanked Tony Kohn for being the unpaid internal auditor and always being on hand with excellent advice. It was proposed by Mr K Webb and seconded by Mr M Fisher that the accounts were accepted. For the accounts see appendix 'a'

#### **5. REPORT AND PRESENTATION OF THE ACCOUNTS OF THE WALBERSWICK COMMON LANDS CHARITY**

Miss Barbara Priestman, the Chairman, gave a report. She stated that the year had been dominated by two projects (a) entry into the Environmental Stewardship Scheme and (b) the revision of the Trustees own Constitution or Scheme. The Environmental Stewardship Agreement commits the Trust to manage their land to environmentally sustainable principles in return for grants or subsidies from DEFRA. She stated that in his role as Joint Volunteer Warden, Trustee David Webb intended to provide regular updates in the Village News of the ever-changing happenings of this piece of heath land. The revision of the scheme is an exercise undertaken to ensure the Trust is being run according to current charities legislation and best practice. They were holding a drop-in session for residents to discuss the changes being considered. They had already been guided by feedback from the Parish Council. During this period of consultation the Charities Commission was scrutinizing the draft they had sent to them and would finally agree adjustments at the end of the process.

She reported that the Trust were in the process of developing a web site that will contain reports, the annual accounts, its Reserves Policy, Income Distribution Policy and information on how to obtain grants. She hoped this would inform and reassure people about the Charity's purpose and operations.

Planned expenditure for the coming year included: access path to moorings in the Blyth, work on East Point Bay and piling between the ferry and the slipway. For accounts see appendix 'b'.

#### **6. REPORT FROM THE POLICE**

PCSO Jamie Newson reported on behalf of the police. He stated that there had been thirteen recorded crimes throughout the year. These included one burglary to a dwelling, criminal damage to cars and thefts to cars. None of these cases had been resolved. He stated that there was now a messaging service called 'Police Direct' which allowed the recipient to receive information. This included crime in the local area, missing persons and major traffic disruptions. It could be accessed by text message or voice mail. There was no charge to join this system which complemented an already very effective Neighbourhood Watch Scheme. PCSO Newson reported that the mobile police station visited the village once a month.

#### **7. REPORT FROM COUNTY COUNCILLOR R H LEIGHTON**

County Councillor Leighton reported that the Council had made good progress in the process of making critical decisions on how to improve and raise the levels of achievements of Suffolk children. The Schools Organisation Review was fast moving towards providing an education system that would benefit children for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

They had great success in the area of financial management and the efficiencies that had followed an internal review of how they would provide services. Their part of the Council Tax had been limited to 2.45% which was the lowest ever increase. They were very proud of the fact that they had managed to make savings of £240,000 per week without cutting services. In March the Audit Commission had announced its review of the Council's performance and management, the Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) and had awarded Suffolk County Council four stars and graded them as 'Excellent', which is the highest grade possible. On top of that it had just been announced that Suffolk County Council was the most cost efficient county council in England.

He reported that the Local Government review was still not resolved and was now consulting on two proposals of equal status: (a) One Suffolk to be responsible for all services throughout Suffolk or (b) North Haven (Ipswich-Felixstowe) Authority with the remainder of Suffolk becoming the Rural Suffolk Authority.

He finally thanked the Parish Council for its support and co-operation over the last year.

In response to questions, he informed the meeting that there would be a by-election in May, to elect a replacement for Kevin Keable, who had resigned as District Councillor. He also reported that all recycling bins for Walberswick should be in place in 2010

## **8. REPORT FROM THE VILLAGE HALL MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE**

Mr. Mark Aldridge, Chairman, gave a report. He stated that this year had been a relatively quiet one for the village hall. Their main improvement had been to the kitchen in the annex. It had been completely refitted with a new sink, cupboard, lighting and water heater. Volunteers had painted the kitchen and the annex and new covering for the floor in the annex was at present being discussed. New tables and chairs had also been purchased.

He thanked the WCLCT for their continuing support of an annual donation of £2,000 and this year £1,000 towards the annex alterations. Proceeds from the fete were divided between the village hall and the church. He expressed thanks to Stephanie Anderson and her helpers who had organised the fete which had resulted in the village hall receiving a record £3,500.00 as their share.

Other major events had included a Sanderlings play and a Big Birthday Breakfast which was a great success. The hall committee had raised £2,231.00 in fund raising events. He thanked the Hall Manager, Wayne Hazelgrave; Louise Kadan, Bookings Manager; Yash Kadan, Treasurer and all the committee members for their hard work throughout the year.

## **9. PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL**

Mrs Amorelle Hughes reported that the Church had seen some changes over the past year including the departure of the Reverend Simon Ward who was Team Vicar of Reydon. In spite of a lengthy period of uncertainty about the future of the team it had continued to function and a new Pastoral Scheme was being developed. It was expected to comprise eight parishes: Walberswick, Blythburgh, Reydon, Southwold, Wangford, Uggeshall, South Cove and Sotherton with three full time stipendiary clergy. Since Jane Wilson's departure, Brian Fisher as 'Priest on the spot' has assumed pastoral responsibility for Walberswick taking a significant number of the services.

She thanked the Parish Council, Walberswick Common Lands Trust and the village for their continued support of St Andrew's both practically and financially. She also thanked Stephanie Anderson for organising the fete on behalf of the church last year, Maurice and Margot Godbold who organise sponsored historic churches cycle rides and Piers Ford Crush and Bill Ungless for their generous donations as a result of the sale of the Frank Jennings video. These events raised invaluable finances which contributed to the huge cost of running and maintaining the church.

## **10. LOCAL ORGANISATIONS**

- a. Neighbourhood Watch – Ms Annie Kiff-Wood, as the Neighbourhood Watch Coordinator, gave a report. She stated that the whole village was now covered by a team of helpers. It had been a calmer year. There had been three main causes of concerns, as last year, door to door salesmen, speeding through the village and vandalism of the car parks by youths doing wheelies. She also voiced concern over visitors' children cycling in the road and it was suggested that the village should run cycling proficiency courses specifically for visiting children. She thanked her team of helpers and also the police for their support.
- b. Village News – Mr. Brian Payne reported. He stated that with the reliable assistance of a band of distributors, under the guidance of Graham Godsmark, every dwelling in the village had received a free copy of the monthly newsletter, over 300 copies. He thanked Julia Reisz, the Editor, for her efficiency and all the support from the board members. He also stated that the newsletter would soon be available on the Walberswick web site.
- c. Walberswick Horticultural Show – Mrs. Hunt, the Clerk, read a report received from the Chairman, Ms Jodie Ellis. She stated that there had been four retirements from the committee; she had taken over as Chairman and Betsy Lemmon as Secretary. Although the committee members were reduced, the number of volunteers providing backup had

flexibility in some of the categories to allow for a wider range of entries and a more exciting end display. A suggestion to make a box available on the day for any leftover or surplus goods to be taken to a homeless charity in Lowestoft had been implemented.

- d. Walberswick WI – Mrs. Jenny Cardwell, President, reported that the WI had celebrated its 90<sup>th</sup> birthday on Tuesday 9<sup>th</sup> September, 2008. The Group had enjoyed a wonderful evening. The buzz in the hall only quietened when they ate an excellent meal cooked by one of their members. Enjoyable entertainment was provided by Norwich Harmony, a group of ladies singing in barbershop harmony, songs from each of the decades of existence of Walberswick WI. Pam George, the South Eastern Federation Chairman, unveiled a pictorial wall hanging designed and stitched by the members. (hanging in Village Hall). Once again throughout the year the Group was entertained by some very interesting speakers.
- e. History Group – Philip Kett, as Chairman, gave a report. He stated that it had been another successful year for the Group with a membership of 144 but they had also had sadly lost three stalwart members from the committee, namely Don Thompson who had sadly passed away, Pat Wythe, also a founder member, through bad health and Tony Rees who had moved to be nearer his relatives.
- In April the Group were shown the in-house efforts of Bill Ungless and Piers Ford-Crush with the recorded DVD of the Jennings houses that he had built in Walberswick. In October, Richard Scott gave an illustrated lecture on Walberswick Artists 1880 to 1940 which was well received with lots of pictures that had not been seen before. At Christmas Neil Lanham and Andrew Stannard brought the show 'Ruby and her Horses' to the meeting with 110 people attending and enjoying food and wine afterwards. This year the group was mounting a small exhibition at Southwold Museum.
- f. Carpet Bowls Club – Mr. Philip Kett also reported that the Carpet Bowls Club had been in existence for twenty years, had twenty members and met on Wednesday evenings in the winter. They also enjoyed friendly matches with Blythburgh and Reydon. This year the members enjoyed a visit to a singing and dancing show at the Spa Pavilion, Felixstowe and also a day trip to Thursford to the Xmas spectacular.
- g. R.N.L.I. – Mr. Michael Fisher gave a report. He informed the meeting that he had now taken over as coordinator as Toby and Kate Robinson were putting their energies into raising money for cystic fibrosis having served for 20 years. Pat Kett had also retired after the same amount of time and Jill Whittenbury would longer be doing the teas at the mini fete. They had, amazingly, had a record year for fund raising despite the poor weather for their mini fete, in all raising £3,440.06 which did include a £1,463.00 donation. He informed the meeting that a 50-50 auction was planned for the summer and a comedy night at the Village hall was planned for the autumn.
- h. Fireworks, British Crabbing Association and Easter Egg Hunt - Councillor Robin Buncombe reported that all three events had been very successful with record attendances. He thanked all those involved in organising these events. He reminded people to donate to the firework fund if they were placing combustible items on the bonfire.
- i. Pantomime and Sanderlings Group – Mrs. Julia Sowerbutts reported that drama was flourishing in the village and going from strength to strength. Sanderlings produced its fourth play 'What Shall We Do About Henry' which was directed by Mrs. Val Anderson. The time had arrived to start thinking about the pantomime. This year it would be more of a family show and auditions would take place in September. She asked people for continuing support of drama in the village, in these uncertain economical times, as it did not just involve actors but all the people behind the scenes. For many it was a way of making new friends and for some a lifeline.
- j. Yoxford Primary School - A report had been received and was read by the Clerk. Ms Jan Williams, the Head Teacher, reported that this year the school had been working with an organization called 'Eastfeast' which involved the children growing vegetables in their raised beds and polytunnels. This food was used in their community feast for 90 people. The children not only grew the vegetables but also prepared it for the table. For the second year running the school had gained the Active Mark award which showed that 90% of their children were doing at least two hours quality PE a week. The school's ICT network was being extended and although in its infancy they had now obtained 10 laptop computers so that they can be used anywhere in the school. This would give parents the opportunity to play a greater part in their child's learning. She thanked the WCLCT for their donation to assist in upgrading their swimming pool and also County Councillor Rae Leighton for £1,000 from his Locality Budget. In the Local Schools Organisation Review if all went to plan children in Year 2 will stay at the school until the age of 11.

## 11. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The Chairman thanked the Clerk, Mrs. Vivien Hunt, for all the work she had put in over the past twelve years as Clerk. Finally she presented her with a bouquet of flowers and wished her well in her retirement.