

Minutes of Kettleburgh Parish Council Meeting held on Wednesday 18 March 2009

Present: Cllrs J Bater, T Chase, R Durbin, P Garland, D Harris (chair), V Neilson, G Weeks.

The Parish Clerk was in attendance. Three members of the public were present.

The Meeting began at 7:15pm in Open Session. The Chairman stated that due to family illness, Cllr Jessop was unable to be present. He welcomed the public, our Suffolk Coastal District Councillor Bob Snell and PCSO Christian Hassler.

Report from Cllr Bob Snell:

After apologising for his recent absences from our Council meetings due to illness and other commitments, Cllr Snell provided information on the following topics:

The Boundary Committee for England (BCE) has published a revised timetable and rules, following the East Devon and Norfolk judicial reviews. In response to correspondence from SCDC's Chief Executive the BCE confirmed that no additional information was required from Local Authorities and that there was no need to update the affordability information previously supplied. SCDC reserved the right to make further comment if new draft proposals appear on 19 March and the BCE has now announced that further consultation will be allowed until 14 May, so that the BCE recommendation can be made to the Sec. of State by 15 July. 26 August is therefore the earliest date that a decision can be announced, after which a further 4 weeks will be allowed for "direct representation" to the Sec. of State. The earliest date for "laying an order" before Parliament is 12 Oct 2009. Finally, The Sec. of State's office has acknowledged that timing for the launch of any unitary authorities on 1 April 2010 is now very tight and that it could be delayed until 1 April 2011. In a letter to the Chief Executive of SCDC this week, it has been advised that the BCE recommendation could be any combination of the submissions it has received, or the original Ipswich proposal, or any of them amended by the BCE, or none of them – and that the Sec. of State can in turn accept or amend any of them, or reject them, or devise her own. Parish Liaison meetings have been arranged to discuss the recommendations on Monday 30 March in Kesgrave at 16:30 and 19:00.

Sizewell: EDF has confirmed its intention to nominate Sizewell as a potential site for two new nuclear plants. SCDC is presently considering its further response to such a proposal, having previously commented on the strategic criteria for site selection and on the selection process, including highlighting the need for adequate local consultation. SCDC has been in discussion with EDF for some time over the need for adequate assessment and response to local concerns.

Elections: It is confirmed that County and European elections will take place on 4 June 2009.

SCDC's financial standing: The latest annual assessment by the Audit Commission of how local councils manage their finances rated Suffolk Coastal as one of only twelve to score top marks for its financial standing. The assessment evaluates the use of resources in terms of every council's financial, asset and risk management; it also takes account of the way it is linked to each organization's priorities and how it supports overall value for money. SCDC scored 3, which rates as "performing well", equal best in Suffolk and Norfolk and only four councils were marked better out of the 44 districts in the eastern region.

Local Development Framework: Public consultation on the Core Strategic Options and on Site Specific Allocations ended on 20 February 2009 and the LDF Task Group will now consider the many responses prior to publication of the recommended strategies as part of the next stage of the framework process. The Cabinet review is on 7 July.

Council Tax: Despite continued underfunding from the Government and falling income, Suffolk Coastal will keep its Council Tax increase in April to just eight pence a week on its average Band D bill, a 2.9% increase in Suffolk Coastal's share of the Council Tax bill. All services will be critically reviewed to see where savings are possible, to offset falling income. This is the 13th consecutive year that Suffolk Coastal has set a single figure increase in its Council Tax. The total Council Tax bill for the average Band D home in Suffolk Coastal will now be £1,440.85. This is made up of £1,100.16 for Suffolk County Council, £156.06 for Suffolk Police, £145.26 for Suffolk Coastal, and £39.37 is the average parish/town council precept. The percentage split of the average Council Tax bill is 76.4% to the County Council, 10.8% to the Police, 10.1% to Suffolk Coastal, and 2.7% to the town/parish council.

Local planning issues: the development of 150 houses on the former Bibbys site in Framlingham has been approved.

Almost £1,000,000 has been allocated to a project for the refurbishment of areas of Felixstowe – the seafront, the tourist area and the quay area. This will be a long-term project with one coordinating officer. SCDC has received a submission from BT to develop land at Adastral Park, Martlesham Heath. There are large-scale plans for housing on the site linked to a new technology centre. These fit well with the LDF proposals for housing targets, although the focus is on technology development.

Report from Cllr Peter Bellfield (received after the meeting and included with these minutes):

Council Tax and Spending: this year's increase will be the lowest ever at 2.45%, in comparison with the Consumer Price Index of 3.1%. Council has made savings in last three years equal to £60m, with additional savings this year of a further £12m, enabling these additional funds to be made available: £3.8m into safeguarding children and £1.1m into vulnerable adults. To help in current circumstances support will be given to the Citizens Advice Bureau and the Credit Union. Charges will be held for non-residential care Home Day Care and Transport for Meals on Wheels.

Audit Commission: Government inspectors have said that the County Council is the top performing County Council in terms of efficiency savings, the most cost efficient council in England and the best performing council for quality of

service in the East of England with a 4 star rating and “improving well”. Reference libraries have been up graded from 2 to 4 stars.

Highways minor improvements. All County Councillors in Suffolk Coastal have £200,000 to share between them, with £21,000 for my Division.

Report from PCSO Christian Hassler:

One crime was reported from 13 January to the present date – the theft of domestic heating oil to the value of £150.

The speed gun was used in Kettleburgh on 27 February between 10:30 and 11:45a.m. No vehicles exceeded the 30m.p.h limit.

Current crime prevention advice: Monitor oil usage in oil tanks; if possible add a lock; contact the police if you see any suspicious activity.

Open Session continued with the following two items:

1. Hedge Cutting in the Pound

A statement (attached to these minutes) was read out by Mrs Katie Harris expressing her concern at the amount of cutting of the hedge in the Pound. In response, it was stated that the hedge does need regular trimming and that there has always been a difference of opinion over ways of maintaining the Pound. The maintenance plan for the Pound will be reviewed at the next Council meeting.

2. Gas Gun Bird Scarers

Cllr Durbin referred to emails and telephone calls from residents on the use of gas guns by local farmers. Several fields in the village area have been sown with oil seed rape and are attracting large flocks of pigeons. Gas guns are being used for a short period to scare birds from the seedlings, in order to allow the crop to establish. Following some complaints from villagers about the noise and the frequency of use of the gas guns, Cllr Garland contacted Mr Daniel Norman, who farms one of the fields. Cllr Garland reported that Mr Norman was sympathetic and whilst he was sorry for any inconvenience caused, he assured Cllr Garland that he was acting within the National Farmers’ Union guidelines and that hopefully a further three weeks of their use will be sufficient. It was agreed that those Councillors who have received comments and complaints from residents would communicate this information back to the complainants. The Clerk will produce a note for the website and the Parish noticeboard.

Open Session was closed and the meeting began.

ACTION

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST: Cllr Chase declared an interest in Item 4.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE: Cllr T Jessop, SCC Cllr Peter Bellfield

3. MINUTES of the meetings held on 14 January and 12 February were approved and signed.

4. PLANNING APPLICATION:

C09/0247: 1 Red Roofs – Construction of new dormer window.

This application was unanimously supported. The Clerk will inform SCDC of the decision.

JC

5. VILLAGE GREEN:

a) The Village Green report was provided by Robert Marzetti and read out by the Clerk.

Planting on The Green: In January, and following recommendations from the SCDC sponsored Parish Tree Scheme, the twenty-four mixed trees were planted in groups each side of the pond area.

Quiz Night fund raising event: In February there was yet another "sell out" event in the hall which was organised by the Gilbert and Todd families. They are to be congratulated on raising over £600 from the event towards helping cover maintenance costs of the Green.

Dog Show on The Green: Following on from the “Fun Dog Show” put on in 2007, Helen Kay and team have bravely agreed to again run the next show on 31st May. The format will be based on the highly successful 2007 format with lots of "Fun" classes and all the usual attractions.

Lottery: Another successful fund raising event has been the KGT Lottery Club which is about to enter its second year. The indicators are that a high percentage of those who bought tickets last year will be renewing their membership in readiness for the April 2009 draw.

Trim Trail: It has been now finally agreed that the funding has been secured from Suffolk Coastal (Sports Space Scheme) and The Mills Charity in Framlingham with the difference being made up from KGT funds. Accordingly the order is about to be placed at a total cost of £7,435 with "Fawns" of Milton Keynes. This last purchase completes The Trusts plans for play equipment on The Green.

The following statement was provided by Cllr Weeks:

An appeal was made to Jennie Catling of SCDC Sports Play Scheme to look again at the refusal of Framlingham Town Council to allow the Trust to receive over £7,000 to pay for the Trim Trail. It was

agreed that Framlingham Town Council would reduce their application amount and allow Kettleburgh to receive £4699, which is the amount that Kettleburgh had in fact put into the scheme from local development.

b) Provision of Lease to KGT: the proposal is that Kettleburgh Parish Council will grant a 99 year lease to Kettleburgh Green Trust, on similar terms to a commercial lease. Cllr Jessop, with Marshall Hatchick (solicitors) represents the Parish Council and David Harris (Chairman of KGT) with Birketts (solicitors) represents KGT. Marshall Hatchick is producing a draft document.

c) Village Green Boundary: the Clerk and Cllr Harris met with Mr and Mrs Smith of Trevane to discuss the position of the boundary of the Village Green where it abuts the garden of Trevane. As a result of the conveyance of land by SCDC to the Parish Council, a longstanding dispute over the boundary line at this point has still to be settled. It was agreed with Mr and Mrs Smith that an independent surveyor would verify the correct position of the boundary. Once both parties were in agreement, any necessary repositioning of the fence would take place. Cllr Harris will contact Chris Clarke of Clarke and Simpson to request a survey.

DH

6. NOTICE BOARD:

As no progress has been made with regard to the gift to the Parish Council of the land on which the notice board stands, the Clerk will again contact Mr Payne to enquire on the progress of the transfer document.

JC

7. FINANCE:

a) The Financial Statement was received and approved.

b) Invoices for payment were approved and signed.

c) Review of Effectiveness of Internal Audit – the following areas were considered:

Independence – the internal auditor is independent of the financial management of the Council

Competence – the auditor is qualified and competent

Proportionality – the level of internal audit is proportionate to the size of the Council

Scope – the internal audit is fit for purpose.

It was agreed unanimously that Internal Audit procedures were effective and fit for purpose.

8. PARISH TREE SCHEME

A report was made by Cllr Weeks and is attached to these minutes.

Cllr Weeks submitted her research on the management of the Parish Tree Scheme. She asked Cllr. Chase to collate the records and produce a plan of trees planted since he became Tree Warden. She questioned the increased costs which were incurred in 2007, making reference to minutes from meetings held on 12 March, 2 July, 10 September and 12 November 2008. She queried the implementation of guidelines made specifically to prevent deadlines being missed in subsequent years, adding that funding was almost lost for the Village Green's application this year. Cllr Chase responded by stating that the Tree Warden was a voluntary post and that trees and hedging were planted to enhance the village. He offered to step down if someone would like to take over. It was agreed that Councillor Responsibilities would be reviewed at the Annual Parish Council meeting in May. Cllr Bater added that this year trees were paid for by individuals, not by the Parish Council and that the new wood created was in accordance with the wishes of the late Colonel Constable and was seen from footpaths on three sides.

9. COUNCILLOR RESPONSIBILITIES:

The Pound:

Cllr Bater reported that the hedge had recently been trimmed and thanked Mr Derek Neilson and Cllr Garland for their help. The Chairman wished it to be recorded that he and Mrs Harris were unhappy about the hedge cutting and that they had received comments to the same effect. He mentioned that the ancient willow would soon once again require pollarding. Cllr Bater requested that before the next meeting Councillors should go and look at the alder tree to give their opinion about its size and proximity to Bluebell Cottage. The Clerk queried whether an expert opinion should be sought. With regard to the poisonous nature of the yew hedge, which is growing alongside the boundary to the Pound, it was suggested that an electric fence could be installed so that sheep or cattle could graze in the Pound, but Cllr Bater replied that this was not practical, and that cattle had very long tongues. The Chairman produced a series of recent photos which he passed to Cllr Chase, to enlighten him with regard to the fact that the Pound did indeed flood. Cllr Chase stood corrected on this matter. With regard to the future maintenance of the Pound, it was agreed that the current maintenance plan should be reviewed at the next Council meeting.

ALL

Community: Cllr Weeks reported that the Parish Magazine is circulated to 85% of the village, keeping the village informed, alongside the Parish Council newsletter.

Forthcoming events: An illustrated talk by Mark Sargeantson entitled "46 days on the GR10 Trail through the Pyrenees" at 7:00 pm on Saturday 4 April in the Village Hall; a Duck Race at Kettleburgh Bridge on 22nd May.

Thanks were expressed to the Clerk for maintaining the list of village events, available on the noticeboard and the website, helping to prevent clashes of dates for events run by the Church, the Village Hall and KGT.

Footpaths:

Cllr Neilson was happy to report that the gate on FP 13 (to the rear of the church) has been repaired.

Parish Views:

Cllr Garland thanked the Clerk and Cllr Neilson for their help with the questionnaire, which will be ready for distribution within the next two or three weeks. Councillors will be asked to deliver to their normal area of the village, and to collect the questionnaires placed in the sealed envelope provided. To ensure anonymity when producing a database of results, Cllr Neilson will collate the data from Cllr Garland's batch of questionnaires.

Police Liaison and Highways:

Cllr Durbin reported that he is waiting for a reply from Luke Barber at SCC Highways for progress on the extension of the 30mph limit and provision of more repeater signs.

To encourage a greater use of school bus services, letters were sent to Brandeston Hall and Framlingham College asking them if they would consider encouraging parents to make greater use of their school's bus services. Responses from both were positive, with a letter from Mr Myers-Allen, Head of Brandeston Hall and a phone call from Gwen Randall, Framlingham College Head. She was very sympathetic and indicated that she would ask for the subject to be included in the end of term newsletter sent out to parents.

Police speed checks were carried out at the end of February in The Street. As they were not SID, no data was recorded. PCSO Kevin Mann reported verbally that there were not many speeders – but some negative feedback from one resident saying that the exercise was a 'waste of time'.

The Clerk added that she was waiting for a report from Mr John Goodyear, Project Engineer at SCC for Rural Pavements, following the site meeting at the end of January which was also attended by Cllr Neilson, to investigate the possibility of reinstating a footpath along the Street, by the village sign.

At this point Cllr Chase announced that he would be leaving the meeting at 9:00p.m.

10. CLERKS REPORT:

a) Underground Power and Telephone cables: the possibility of placing power and telephone cables underground arose at the 2008 Annual Parish Meeting. Cllr Chase will identify whom to correspond with and the Clerk will then make enquiries.

TC, JC

Cllr Chase left the meeting.

b) Arrangements for the Annual Parish Meeting on 13 May will be similar to last year. Wine and soft drinks will be provided and invitations issued. The Clerk will request reports from the following: Cllr Peter Bellfield (SCC), Cllr Bob Snell (SCDC), PCSO Christian Hassler (Suffolk Police), Kettleburgh Green Trust, Kettleburgh Village Produce Association, Kettleburgh Parochial Church Council, the Village Hall, Neighbourhood Watch.

c) The overhanging hedge belonging to Mr & Mrs Toppin at the Hollies on Rectory Road has been trimmed.

d) Following correspondence with SCC Public Transport, the bus shelter at the end of Church Road will shortly be renamed 'Kettleburgh, The Street', replacing the erroneous wording 'Kettleburgh Village Stores'. The wording in the bus timetable, which had recently been changed from 'Kettleburgh Village Stores' to 'The Rectory', will be altered to the less confusing 'Street Farm'.

e) Pinewood Cottage verge: Mr Derek Hill has agreed with SCC Highways Maintenance that he will contribute to the cost of repairing his damaged verge.

11. CORRESPONDENCE

All correspondence was circulated amongst Councillors.

12. REVIEW OF ACTIONS REGISTER:

The Actions Register was reviewed to bring it up to date.

13. QUESTIONS TO CHAIRMAN

Cllr Durbin will compose a letter to Suffolk ACRE, questioning their unnecessary spending in the current economic climate.

RD

14. DATE OF ANNUAL PARISH COUNCIL MEETING:

Wednesday 20 May (*Agenda items by 10 May please*)

15. The meeting closed at 9:10p.m.

Statement by Mrs Katie Harris:

"I would like to start by saying that I was at the meeting when it was decided that more courtesy would be shown to parishioners. I was therefore very distressed when I saw what was done to the hedge on the boundary of the Pound on the road to Hoo. This was planted by David and me about 10 years ago with the consent and encouragement of the Parish Council and Suffolk Wildlife Trust. We have tended, watered and trimmed the hedge during the past 10 years with advice from both Suffolk Wildlife and Mr Berry (the well-known tree surgeon).

We were also advised by the Highways Agency that, by encouraging a strong wide hedge, it *could* help save our country lanes and would certainly help to slow traffic as most people slow up on narrowing lanes.

I was devastated when I saw what had happened to the hedge. When I spoke to the person helping John Bater, he said that they had "hacked away" for 3 hours – you only have to see the hedge to understand what he meant.

I think most people would agree that it would have been polite and courteous to have telephoned before the "hacking" was done. Having spoken to Trevor and Jackie we were told that John Bater was just going to trim the hedge – "some trimming" or so he said. I would also like to know why the ivy was removed from the bridge – this is not owned by the Parish Council and the bridge was given a survey last year. In fact, David and I trimmed some of our shrubs on the other side of the bridge. The surveyors deliberately left the ivy for "wildlife habitat". Does Mr Bater know something the Highways and David and I don't know? This is such a sad thing to have happened – years of work and care hacked away in just 3 hours – as Mr Berry said, it will take another 5 – 7 years to repair the damage. Finally, I would like to say that I hope that, by speaking tonight, this kind of behaviour will not happen again - either to us or other parishioners. The Pound is for the benefit and use of all the villagers and in its current state it is of no benefit to anyone."

Comments made in response were:

- It was felt that as a small community we need to ensure communication to appreciate the point of view of others
- The lower hedge line does make the Pound visible
- The hedge was at an unmanageable height – it will now be able to be maintained
- The hedge will grow strongly as a result of the cut
- The hedge needs trimming to keep it in shape
- There has always been disagreement over the ways of maintaining the Pound
- The maintenance plan should be updated

Report by Cllr Weeks – Parish Tree Scheme:

"I have been looking through some of the history of the Parish Tree Scheme from papers which were originally retrieved by the Parish Clerk and passed to Cllr. Chase and some I retrieved from SCDC. This historical information is very interesting and holds valuable information about the planting in Kettleburgh. I would ask that Cllr. Chase accept responsibility for collating these records and producing a plan, otherwise valuable information will be lost.

As you are probably aware, until 2007 the Parish Tree Scheme was managed by the Tree Warden without any particular referral to the Parish Council as the costs were very low. However, in 2007 this changed as the Parish Council was faced with a bill of £240. Guidelines were therefore agreed to prevent mistakes being repeated from the 2007 scheme, where costs were high and deadlines were unclear. (*minutes of 12 March 2008, 2nd July 2008, 10 September 2008 and 12 November 2008*).

In 2007, 700 hedgerow plants were ordered. Surely Cllr. Chase should have considered the cost implications of such a large order and sought approval from the PC, particularly when there was no budget to cover it.

Without referral to the PC, Cllr. Chase also agreed a 3-year plan with SCDC to re-wood an area owned by John Bater along a footpath past Church Farm and to gap up hedgerows. The PC subsequently asked Cllr. Chase to cancel this 3-year plan as it was thought best to look at schemes each year.

And yet, for the 2008/2009 Scheme Cllr. Chase completely disregarded this request and proceeded to implement his 3 year plan by applying for further planting to re-wood the same area and, in addition, without the knowledge of the PC, requested more planting for his own land.

Both these applications were put forward in time to meet the deadline. However the Trust's application, which had received a very damning report from Cllr. Chase, failed to meet the deadline.

I was subsequently able to secure funding for our scheme with SCDC

As I said before, it is true that the Parish Tree Scheme was run by Tree Wardens in the past without much referral to the Parish Council, but, it is obvious that we are now in a situation where, if we are to continue to facilitate this scheme, we need to know that our Tree Warden is acting in the Parish Council's best interests. Finally I would like to add that I am not looking for a job."