



Parish of Castle Hedingham

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MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING OF CASTLE HEDINGHAM PARISH COUNCIL AT THE MEMORIAL HALL ON THURSDAY 21ST MAY 2015 AT 8.00PM

Present: Cllrs Higgins, Philp, Pewter, Scrivens, Southgate, Toocaram, Worley
Cllr D Finch (ECC) Cllr J Beavis & Cllr H Johnson (BDC)

In the Chair: Cllr Worley

Clerk: Claire Waters

Also Present: 9 parishioners

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr T Hood & Cllr L Moffat

2. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting of 2nd May 2015 were approved as a correct record of events.

Proposed: Mr C Peel Seconded: Mrs S Southgate Signed by the Chairman

3. ANNUAL REPORT OF THE PARISH COUNCIL

The meeting began with a presentation of a retirement card, with flowers and a gift of a house name sign to Mrs Sonia Allfrey, who was thanked for her many years' service to the Parish Council as a member and Chairman for the last 12 years. Her service to the community and her expertise will be greatly missed, and Cllr Worley wished her a well-earned rest and a long and happy retirement.

Cllr Worley thanked the Clerk, the Parish Councillors and District and County Councillors for their continued support of the parish over the year. He welcomed our new Parish Council Chairman, Mr Garry Southgate, and 2 new Councillors – Mr Trevor Hood and Mrs Jill Toocaram.

The preservation of a Post Office in the village has been a significant achievement, as is the retention of our GP surgeries' ability to dispense to patients. A possible combined medical centre in Sible Hedingham is still under discussion. There is land available but there is difficulty in gaining commitment from the Health Authority.

Possible future development on the land occupied by the Colne Valley Railway will be opposed by the Parish Council. The contribution of the Colne Valley Railway to the community and local economy is greatly valued.

Thanks are due to Sible Hedingham Parish Council for improving public transport in the parish by starting the new Monday to Friday 333 bus service to Sudbury which launched on May 5th.

We are fortunate to still have a relatively low crime rate in the community, however it is still of concern that police services continue to be cut.

Work on the renovation of our War Memorial, with 75% of the cost being grant funded by the War Memorials Trust, has started and will be completed by 2016 in time for the 100th anniversary of the Battle of the Somme.

A wide range of activities and events are underway for the celebration of the 800th anniversary of Magna Carta in June this year. Support from villagers in both Castle and Sible Hedingham is very welcome. Events are publicised on noticeboards, in shops and on www.castlehedingham.org.

4. STATEMENT OF PARISH COUNCIL ACCOUNTS YEAR ENDING 31 MARCH 2013

The clerk reported that the Parish Council has continues to hold strong reserves, with ring-fenced funds for the renovation or relocation of the Recreation Field, repairs to the historic village infrastructure, renovation of the War Memorial and the ongoing maintenance of the public toilets.

Our village maintenance contractors, Mortimers, continue to provide an efficient service, and the village maintenance budget has been underspent for the last 2 years. Parishioners are encouraged to contact the clerk if there are any maintenance issues which need more attention.

The Parish Council precept was calculated this year to represent a 0% increase in our share of the Council Tax.

5. BRAINTREE DISTRICT COUNCIL REPORT

Cllr Beavis said she was pleased to be back representing the Hedinghams following the recent election. A re-shuffle of District Councillors and a reduction in numbers means that we will miss Cllr Wendy Scattergood, who is now representing the Stour Valley South ward.

Cabinet posts have been allocated, with Cllr Beavis having the Health and Communities portfolio which includes health improvement, older and young people's services, engagement of voluntary sector and rural communities. Her aim is to bring health very much closer to home.

The housing requirement in Braintree District has risen from 200 per year to between 700 and 950 per year. The Call for Sites has invited suggestions for land suitable for development. A consultation on these sites will take place before the proposed Local Plan for development is submitted to the Inspectorate in 2017. This will be a 15 year development plan.

Using the Sible Hedingham Premdor site as an example, Cllr Beavis was involved in gaining a good S106 funding agreement when the original plans for 350 homes were agreed. This included contribution of a business hub and land for a new medical centre, as well as affordable housing. The affordable housing element is now being challenged by the developer, and it is important that the additional infrastructure requirements of new development are delivered, such as education and health. Her role involves working in partnership with other authorities and organisations. Dealing with Health over the development of a new medical centre is frustrating and complex. The business hub will be built, triggered by the completion of 80 houses on the site.

The next 5 years will be very interesting. Cllr Beavis is pleased to be back with a big workload building the district for the next 5 to 10 years and the next generation.

Cllr H Johnson said he was delighted to be back and thanked all who voted in the May elections. From 6 villages previously he is now representing just the 2 Hedinghams. Cllr Johnson continues to feel very welcome in Castle Hedingham and offered a warm welcome to our two new Parish Councillors.

Cllr Johnson is involved with our village walks, which continue to be well supported. Cllr Johnson is pleased to be contacted on any local issues and outlined some of the work he has done in areas such as Planning and Licensing, as well his recent experiences specialising in sewage. Parishioners are most welcome to give him or Cllr Beavis a ring and they will do their best to assist on any issue.

5. ESSEX COUNTY COUNCIL REPORT

Cllr David Finch reported that he will not be up for election for another 2 years. His report was on the themes of looking back and looking forward. Essex County Council has delivered another 0% increase in Council Tax this year, and has made the following issues a priority:

- Roads and infrastructure, with the primary routes being done first. It is recognised that rural roads are not as good as they could be, and improvements are needed in this respect

- Flood management and alleviation
- Education, with 20,000 new pupils in Primary Schools. The level of achievement in Essex is above the England average for the first time.
- Broadband, extending Superfast fibre. 95% coverage is planned by the end of 2016, although rural communities such as Castle Hedingham and Cllr Finch's own village will be at the end of the queue.
- Vulnerable adults and children, including children in care
- Economy including skills training and the creation of 3000 apprenticeships. Essex is proud of having the lowest percentage of NEETs (not in employment, education or training) in the country at 4.4%. There is still work to be done in areas of deprivation such as Jaywick which is the 3rd most deprived area in the UK.

Looking forward, there are three main challenges ahead

1. Devolution is a key issue, with the aim of devolving more power to County, District and Parish level. Cllr Finch believes this an opportunity not to be missed
2. Social care, and the integration of public health and the health service
3. The austerity programme which will continue, with a challenging time ahead in financing in some areas with the aim of saving £170 million over the next 3 years.

7. POLICE REPORT

None

8. PUBLIC FORUM

The following matters of interest were raised by residents:

Medical Centre at Premdor site: What are the obstacles?

Cllr Beavis: The NHS are just very secretive, with no real democratic accountability which is a real blockage. A local stakeholders group was established last year, and a project initiation document has now been produced by the NHS. The next step is getting our local MP to lobby the NHS.

Cllr Finch: The NHS is very autocratic, coupled with the problems of Mid Essex Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) which has no money and is busy trying to work out how to balance their books. Cllr Finch will try to get an answer to the question "Is it going to be done or isn't it, and by when?"

Disconnect between top message and bottom line delivery i.e. 7 day GP service and inability to deliver a local medical centre when land is available.

Cllr Finch: That is an over simplistic view which does not take into account the lack of democratic accountability in the NHS.

Cllr Beavis: I was proud to get 1001 signatures from local people to trigger the debate in full council 5 years ago, because there was originally no health provision on the Premdor site plans at all.

Cllr Toocaram: Speaking as an ex-nurse in the area, similar problems were encountered with Halstead Community Hospital. The NHS will be considering whether this medical centre can save money. We will get there in the end if we keep pushing, and more local services will save money.

Cllr Worley: We would welcome some clarity about whether or not this is likely to happen.

Is it not up to the GPs to fund the new medical centre?

Cllr Beavis: The GPs are all signed up to the project, we will keep making a noise to move it forwards.

Cllr Pewter: The land is secured for the purpose so we won't lose it.

Some of the graves on the northern side of the Cemetery have sunk, is it possible for them to be levelled? Could we have a new sign to show when the water is turned on and off each year?

Cllr Scrivens: We will arrange a meeting at the cemetery with the Burial Board and look into this.

Parking in the village is a problem, particularly a blind spot created by parked cars at the corner of Bayley Street as you turn right coming down Sudbury Hill.

Cutting back the trees on the side by the Recreation Field may help?

Cllr Worley: This is a problem but we try to avoid lots of yellow lines in the village

Cllr Finch: Cars shouldn't park within 30 yards of the junction

Cllr Southgate: We will write a letter to local residents, and the Tennis Club.

What is happening with the timberyard at Station Road?

Clerk: The land has been bought by a car dealer/developer from Sawbridgeworth. No further information is available.

The recycling banks by the railway are very unsightly.

Clerk: Will report to Braintree District Council

Looking on the NALCO website and Parish Council guidance papers, it is seen as good practice to survey parishioners. What are the Parish Council's plans to do this?

Cllr Worley: We have done this in the past with a village appraisal, the village design statement and most recently about high speed broadband.

Clerk: Have researched this through my clerk training over the last 2 years, the most recent initiatives for surveying parishioners are neighbourhood plans but we do not need one as our village design statement stands as a material consideration in planning and development issues. Councillors and the clerk are approachable and meetings are open to all. Whatever anyone's political views, we are fortunate to have excellent support from our District Councillors and County Councillor if issues need to be taken further. Surveys are time-consuming and expensive and it would not be an efficient use of public money for the Parish Council to conduct one unless there is a specific issue which needs to be addressed.

If you do not wish to do a survey, you should put it in the minutes that the Parish Council does not want a democratic process. Has the Parish Council ever had a 4 year plan?

Cllr Worley: Yes, ours was a 5 year plan. This is something we could re-visit during the coming term of the Parish Council.

There were no further questions and all parishioners were thanked for attending.

The meeting closed at 9.15pm.