

# WALBERSWICK PARISH COUNCIL

**Minutes** of the **ANNUAL PARISH MEETING** held in the Village Hall at 7.30pm,  
Thursday 19 April 2012

**Present:** The Chairman of the Parish Council, Councillor David Webb (who presided at the meeting), the Vice-Chairman of the Parish Council, Councillor Alvin Hunt, Councillors Aubrey Pearson, Brian Morton, Brian Tibbles, Rita Woodcraft, District Councillor Michael Gower, 55 electors including Jane Gomm (Clerk to the Parish Council)

**1. Apologies for absence:** Councillor Keith Webb, County Councillor Rae Leighton, PCSO Jamie Newsom (Suffolk Police), Adam Burrows (Natural England), Reverend Simon Pitcher, Pat Atherton and Madeline Dabbs

**2. Minutes:** of the meeting held on Thursday 14 April 2011 were available and were taken as read. On the proposal of Councillor Brian Tibbles and seconded by Michael Fisher they were approved and signed as a true record of the meeting.

### **3. Report from the Chairman of the Parish Council:**

The Chairman congratulated the Village Hall Management Committee on how smart the interior of the hall was looking.

He welcomed the two new Councillors, Brian Morton and Aubrey Pearson.

Like last year, he explained, it had been a difficult year for the Council with the Clerk having to work well in excess of her contracted hours dealing with requests for information and complaints made to the Information Commissioner's Office. This was one of the main factors in the undesirably large increase in the Council's precept.

It was hoped that a Post Office Outreach service would be operational in the village in due course, thanks to Mark and Sophie Dorber at the Anchor who had offered to host the service.

The original village sign had been returned by Mr and Mrs Newstead who had purchased it in a garage sale. It is being restored and will be formally unveiled on Saturday 2 June as part of the Jubilee celebrations.

The visitor centre is no longer to be run by the Suffolk Coast and Heaths Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The Parish Council owns the land and the proposal is that Suffolk County Council who owns the building will transfer it to the Council. The Council will then give a tenancy at will to the Walberswick Common Lands Charity who will enable it to be run as a village visitor centre.

A solar powered vehicle activated sign is to be erected at the entrance to the village, hopefully before the summer. The County Councillor through his location budget and the Walberswick Common Lands Charity are helping with its funding.

The Diamond Jubilee will be soon and the Chairman thanked all those who are putting together a series of events for the weekend.

Finally the Chairman thanked all those who make Walberswick such an enjoyable place to live and congratulations were extended to Councillor Keith Webb and to Pam Webb on the birth of their first grandson.

(For a fuller report please see appendix 1)

### **4. Presentation of the accounts of the Parish Council:**

The Clerk reported on the draft accounts for the year end 31.03.12. They would be audited by both an internal and external auditor and at the conclusion of audit the requisite information would be posted on the village hall notice board.

The balance carried forward at the year end looked healthy at approximately £6,500, but because the Council was required to work on a payments and receipts basis that did not show all the liabilities of the Council. When they were taken account of it left approximately £1,000.

She thanked those who had made anonymous donations which were gratefully received and much needed.

Salaries, administration and courses had all been more costly this year. There was a double salary payment in July when two clerks were employed. In the eight months from August just under £2,000 had

been spent on salary to deal with freedom of information requests and similar. The final £4-500 was accounted for by setting up the budgetary process, internal controls and governance issues. Additional administrative costs were caused by the May 2011 election, advertising for a new clerk and paper and ink used for freedom of information requests etc. Courses had cost more because the Clerk had been on CiLCA and book keeping courses.

The Clerk explained about some of the factors that had caused the increase in this year's precept including the provision of £1,000 for the vehicle activated sign, which had leveraged in more than twice as much money from other organisations.

She explained that the Councillors thought long and hard over three meetings before deciding to increase the precept and she praised the Councillors for doing such a hard job with determination, diligence and good grace.

(For a fuller report please see appendix 2)

Robin Buncombe proposed and Vic Popperwell seconded that the accounts be accepted and this was agreed.

### **5. Report and presentation of the accounts of Walberswick Common Lands Charity**

The Chairman of the Charity, James Darkins explained that the work of the charity is governed by its scheme and the Charities Act 2006.

For 2012 the Charity will receive £20,900 from Walberswick Car Parks Ltd. In 2011 the Charity's overall surplus was £6,275 and its unrestricted reserves were £90,544. In 2011 it provided over £30,000 in support.

In 2012 it will be involved in taking a transfer of the crabbing bridge from the Environment Agency and reopening the visitor centre.

The trustees are looking at ways the Charity can improve its transparency, with reports in the village news and an annual open day.

There have been a dramatic clearance of the Common last year led by David Webb and will continue once the nesting season is over.

Those who supported the Charity in the last year were thanked. David Webb who recently retired as a trustee was thanked especially for his specialist knowledge and hard work when the charity was faced with severe flooding in 2006 and his stewardship of the Common.

Barbara Priestman retired as chairman and a trustee in early 2012. Her leadership, dedication and integrity had brought clear policies and procedures, improved transparency and accountability to the Charity. She will take over as steward of the Common. A presentation by the Charity was made to her. Barbara Priestman said she was overwhelmed and appreciated what James Darkins has said about her. (For a fuller report please see appendix 3)

### **6. Report from the Police**

The Clerk read the report produced by PCSO Jamie Newsom.

A number of opportunistic thefts and burglaries highlight the need to take simple steps to secure homes and property. The Police direct service operated by Suffolk Police was still available to join. The mobile station visits the area on a monthly basis crewed by PCSO Kevin Mann. Anti social behaviour remains high on the agenda for Suffolk Police. Total crime in the parish for the year was reported.

(For a fuller report please see appendix 4)

### **7. Report from the Suffolk County Councillor**

The Clerk read Councillor Rae Leighton's report.

It was reported that it had been a difficult year in local government and the Government's determination to reduce public debt had led to unprecedented measures. Last year savings of £42 million were found, £26.5 million this year and £23.5million next year. New ways are having to be found for delivering public services. Changes are radical. Other organisations are being urged to take on responsibilities previously undertaken by the County Council.

Council Rae Leighton also recorded his appreciation for the way the Parish Council had conducted its affairs and the fortitude it had shown in very trying circumstances. This had not gone unnoticed in other parts of local government.

(For a fuller report please see appendix 5)

### **8. Report from the Suffolk Coastal District Councillor**

Michael Gower reported that the Council tax had been frozen for the second year running and lower government spending, lower interest rates and inflation were all detrimental to the interests of the District Council. The Council was managing savings by joint working with Waveney District Council. Tough decisions were being made and this was resulting in staff levels being reduced.

NO funding was to be given to Felixstowe Spa this year, the possibility of reducing the number of councillors was being considered, and recycling by the Council was in the top ten in the country. An investment of £10 million was being made in sea defences for Felixstowe. In the circumstances the Council was doing a good job.

He reported that he was personally involved as a councillor in the group that was monitoring issues at Sizewell and the possible new power station. He was also involved in the Northern Area Planning Committee and in the Halesworth Campus project.

### **9. Report from the Village Hall Management Committee**

Jenny Cardwell reported that the committee had had another busy year improving the hall, made possible by fund raising in 2011. Fund raisers were the Royal Wedding on the big screen, the Open Garden weekend and bingo sessions. The Walberswick Common Lands Charity provides support to permit hiring to local people to be kept at a reasonable level.

As a result of the ongoing Parish Plan planning permission has just been obtained to improve the outside west wall. The viability of solar panels is being investigated.

Laurie Dabbs who had been chairman of the committee for five years was thanked as were the members of the committee.

(For a fuller report please see appendix 6)

### **10. Report from the Parochial Church Council**

Christine Mitchell, as Church Warden, reported that St Andrew's is one of eight churches in the Sole Bay Team whose team rector is Simon Pitcher.

A range of services are provided to enable the whole community to worship. In the last year there had been five baptisms, three weddings and seven funerals.

All who had made either regular or one off gifts were thanked as was the village for its financial support for the Village Fete, Suffolk Historic Churches Cycle Ride. Thanks were also given to the Walberswick Common Lands Charity for its financial support.

The costs of running the Church in 2011 had been £30,513, only just covered by income.

The Church gates were replaced and made by Clive Jackson who lives in the Village.

New initiatives were opening the tower to visitors and the sponsoring of floral arrangements.

All those who enhance the life of the Church were thanked, especially Rae Leighton who keeps it open and Philip Kett who looked after the Churchyard for over 30 years and has recently retired. He was given a presentation.

(For a fuller report please see appendix 7)

### **11. Reports from local organisations**

#### **Yoxford Primary School**

The Clerk read the report made by the Chair of the Governors.

42 children are on the roll. Building work has been completed. This is the first year there have been Year 5 pupils at the school. Teaching provision has been made with the help of outside partnerships. Various sporting fixtures and educational visits have been undertaken. The school was awarded its bronze "Food for Life" certification and is working towards its silver certification. After school clubs are popular and out of school activities are aimed at enriching learning opportunities.

Thanks were expressed to the Council and Walberswick Common Lands Charity for their support.

(For a fuller report please see appendix 8)

#### **Leiston High School**

The head teacher, Ian Flintoff thanked the Walberswick Common Lands Charity for its support. From September 2012 the school would cater for 11 to 18 year olds with approximately 900 pupils. It will become the Alde Valley School, the name reflecting the diverse geographical area of its pupil intake. The years 12 and 13 will move to the present middle school site which is undergoing investment to improve facilities. There will be open evenings and open days in October and all are welcome.

The last Ofsted inspection was in 2010 when it was determined the school was good and effective. In 2011 the school's GCSE results showed the highest level of progress in maths and English in Suffolk.

The school's motto is "achievement for all" and this is reflected in academic and vocational subjects taught. There are very high levels of leavers going on to university and apprenticeships. Links are emerging with other schools in the UK and abroad. It has been an exciting year and will be very exciting in the autumn with the first intake of year 6 pupils.

### **Walberswick Parish Plan**

The chairman of the Steering Committee, John Nichol's report was read by Councillor Alvin Hunt. Following the presentation of the survey results to the Village in May 2011 nine focus groups were set up to examine topics identified in the survey. Recommendations and supporting text was provided by those groups in the autumn. The steering committee was revising these to create a coherent and consistent document and it was intended this would be presented to the Village in June. The Plan summarises findings of the survey in each topic and makes recommendations for future action. Timescale and priority is indicated. Responsibility for implementation is generally assigned to the Parish Council, but it is hoped much of the work can be delegated to the focus groups. In some cases recommendations can be effected immediately, others will have a timescale of years. There are issues where the Council will be recommended to bring pressure to bear on other organisations. The Plan itself will be monitored to review progress, measure outcomes and redefine objectives. It is hoped it will be seen as a flexible and evolving instrument for the beneficial development of Walberswick. (For a fuller report please see appendix 9)

Councillor Alvin Hunt added to this report by stating that much of the work of organising the implementation of the Plan would fall on the Parish Clerk. He pleaded with the people who were writing repetitive and vexatious letters to her to stop so that she could get on with the work of the Council and this additional work.

### **Blyth Estuary Group**

Richard Steward reported that there were two flood relief projects at Blythburgh and Potters Bridge being monitored by the group at present. There was also work being carried out on the Southwold harbour north wall. The Wolsey Creek walls had been increased by the Environment Agency. The Environment Agency had stated that it was designing the Robinson's wall to be a consistent height. The Blois Estate had increased its walls, but not in accordance with the planning consent. In November 2010 Suffolk Coastal District Council and Waveney District Council had approved the Environment Agency's Shoreline Management Plan for this area. However the cost of retreat from the Blyth Estuary would be over £10 million whilst the cost of maintaining it would be only £1-2 million. Because about 75% of respondents to the Parish Plan survey had said they did not feel properly informed about the Shoreline Management Plan it was intended that David Webb and Richard Steward would do a presentation on the subject.

### **The Village News**

The editor, Julia Reisz gave the report. She paid tribute to Brian Payne who had been chairman of the board from its inception until recently. Ben Cardwell will be the new chairman. She thanked Grahame Godsmark and his helpers for distribution to every house each month. (For a fuller report please see appendix 10)

### **The Pantomime and Sanderlings Group**

Julia Sowerbutts reported than many neighbouring villages envied Walberswick because of this wonderful society. The events were well run and fun, but also gave much to the community. She thought that we wished more of our village societies were like this. She reported that some in the Village don't welcome the society and that it is charged £1,400 for the use of the hall. She thanked those who contributed to the performance of "The Wind in the Willows" and those who came to watch. (For a fuller report please see appendix 11)

### **Walberswick Amateur Theatrical Society**

Judith Morton, chairman of the society, reported that treasured members who had formed and nurtured the society had passed away. Membership numbers are lower than usual, but there is a limited membership because the society generally meets in members' homes.

Great plays had been read this year by 30 members. A party in January took place with the performance of a play by Mary Nuttall.

She thanked all those who contributed to the success of the society from readers to hosts to chair movers and committee members.

(For a fuller report please see appendix 12)

### **Walberswick Film Club**

Piers Ford-Crush reported that six varied films had been shown in the season. However, they had falling attendances, lower numbers of subscriptions and failed to cover their costs for the 2011-2012 season. In the summer the committee will discuss options to ensure the club can continue and will circulate a questionnaire to help with those discussions.

The club always has a great community feel and is a delight.

(For a fuller report please see appendix 13)

### **Walberswick W. I.**

Margaret Adkinson reported on a very active year. Membership stands at 33 and new members would be welcome.

The W.I. had a programme of excellent and varied speakers and a number of outside activities. A bursary was given to a member to visit the W. I. Denman College in Oxfordshire for a cooking course. The accommodation and tuition were excellent. A further bursary will be awarded this year.

The W. I. was pleased that following the village hall refurbishment that the collage made by members of the W. I. had been replaced.

The committee was thanked for all its work during the year.

(For a fuller report please see appendix 14)

### **The Royal National Lifeboat Institution**

Michael Fisher reported that the Walberswick fund raising committee had raised, with the help of the village, over £3,000. There would not be a mini fete this year because of the clash with the Diamond Jubilee, something would be arranged for later in the year. New ideas and help are always welcomed and thank you to everyone for their support.

### **Walberswick Local History Group**

Philip Kett reported that the 1841 - 1911 censuses and the 2001 census had been printed for the use of members. A solid state sound recorder had been purchased to enable the collection of recordings for the sound archive from the elder generation.

There had been a number of speakers during the year. In October there would be a lecture accompanied by pictures of Walberswick which would be open to non members. In December the lecture will enable the group to travel to the Antarctic on 1912 as seen through the eyes of Scott's expedition surgeon.

(For a fuller report please see appendix 15)

### **Allotments**

Philip Kett reported that 2011 was a dry growing season, but the allotments continue to produce good produce. The conservation of water supplies is vital so the taps should be turned off after use. 34 allotment plots are rented and there are two ¼ section plots available.

(For a fuller report please see appendix 16/17)

### **Walberswick Carpet Bowls Club**

Philip Kett reported that at least two more members were required to make the club viable. The club used to play friendly matches with other teams, but at present there are not enough players. The club will start again in September.

(For a fuller report please see appendix 16/17)

### **Horticulture Show**

Betsy Lemmon explained that despite a year of challenging growing conditions there had been a good turnout at the 2011 show with 42 exhibitors and 271 exhibits. There would be new and updated categories in horticulture and the culinary sections in 2012.

The committee would like to encourage more participants including allotments holders and children. Anyone with an interest in gardening and ideas for future projects were encouraged to join the committee.

(For a fuller report please see appendix 18)

### **The British Open Crabbing Championship**

Robin Buncombe reported there was no championship in 2011; its enormous popularity required it to be thoroughly reviewed. There will also not be a championship in 2012 due to the numerous other events this year. Future championships may be possible.

(For a fuller report please see appendix 19/20)

### **The Bonfire Committee**

Robin Buncombe said a bonfire had been lit on 5<sup>th</sup> November. It attracted huge support and increased bucket collection. He thanked all the organisers and caterers.

(For a fuller report please see appendix 19/20)

### **The Easter Egg Hunt**

Robin Buncombe thanked all those who had organised and prepared the ground for this year's Easter egg hunt.

### **First Responders**

Vic Popperwell explained that the group had been active for approximately 18 months with the Walberswick Common Lands Charity funding much of the equipment. Approximately 15 -18 999 calls had been attended in the Village.

The training was excellent, containing much practice in the most serious issues and all those trained felt confident after the training.

Recruitment is the group's biggest problem, but he felt confident that after the training anyone who volunteered to be a responder would be able to cope. Because some of the existing responders are being required to retire, the group desperately needed new volunteers.

### **Prescription collectors and surgery openers**

Mary King represented the volunteers who open the village hall annexe on Wednesdays for the doctors' surgery and collect the prescriptions from Southwold on Fridays. Additional members of the group were needed who would need access to a car as the amount of prescriptions could be large.

(For a fuller report please see appendix 21)

### **The M.P.'s report**

Dr Therese Coffey's report was read by the Chairman.

The report covered a number of issues including neighbourhood plans, healthcare reform, fuel poverty, broadband, potential drought and the Diamond Jubilee and the Olympic Paralympic Games. She had also undertaken a constituency tour of 31 villages and would do so again in 2013.

Councillor David Webb added a footnote to her report – the creation of a neighbourhood plan would cost at least £20,000 or more realistically £30,000.

(For a fuller report please see appendix 22)

### **Natural England**

Adam Burrow's report was read by the Chairman.

Wildlife on the reserve has thrived. In the last 12 months it had been very dry and freshwater marshes such as Tinkers drying out very early and only recently filling again. The dry enabled machinery to be brought onto the marsh and the river wall at Tinkers and Delacroix was intermediately repaired jointly

with the owner. The soke dyke has been migrated back and the wall raised by 40cm as well as being wider and more robust. The November tides lapped over, but without the works the walls may have been lost in a similar manner to 2007. There is now a greater degree of control over water levels and an increased capacity to store winter rainfall.

The heaths have been encouraged by limiting the spread of bracken and the continuation of grazing by ponies and sheep. Highland cows will be grazing shortly.

The bird breeding season has begun. The main activities for the coming year are fence repair and the possibility of the migration of the Dunwich River by the Environment Agency. The mill project should commence in the next few weeks.

Natural England is looking to improve the amount of wildlife on the reserve and also access for people. Any suggestions would be welcomed.

(For a fuller report please see appendix 23)

## **12. Auditor and website administrator**

Many of the Village groups singled out Tony Kohn for thanks as their internal auditor or independent examiner. Groups also thanked Kay Ungless for her work in improving and updating the village website.

## **13. Public Forum**

Irene Prince asked Michael Gower as District Councillor about the development of the road between Wickham Market and Leiston. He was unable to help.

Councillor Brian Morton thanked electors who had voted for him or Aubrey Pearson in the recent election. He said that he had been trying to discover whether the Parish Council or those attacking it were at fault. He had spoken to three of the four main objectors. Two of them had said their objections were connected with planning issues. The third objector, he felt, was personal and was an attack on the Council. He talked about the new neighbourhood plan process and said the Council could win on planning applications, citing a case he was involved in during 1989. He hoped existing Councillors would support his views and oppose planning applications.

The meeting closed at 9.56pm.

Signed.....  
Chairman Walberswick Parish Council for 2012 – 2013

Dated.....