

Cockfield Parish Council Meeting Report

The Parish Council met on Thursday 23rd January 2014

To date the Council has been unable to identify a replacement for Councillor Kelly and the vacancy remains

PC Ruth Horton attended the meeting and informed us that, with the promotion of Sgt Horton to Inspector, the Babergh West villages team will be led by Sgt Kathy Ellis

5 crimes have been reported since 26th November 2013 – two assaults for which the offenders were arrested, with no further action in one case and the issue of a police caution in the other – two reports of criminal damage for which, again, the offenders were arrested with one case dealt with by means of a community resolution and no further action in the other – and, finally, one report of an unidentified offender sending abusive notes to the victim

The Police again drew our attention to the need for everyone to secure their property, inside and out, and consider security marking valuable items

The priorities agreed at the 14th January Babergh West Safer Neighbourhood Team meeting were crime prevention and high visibility patrols relating to rural burglaries and school parking and awareness in Boxford. The next SNT meeting will be at Alpheton Village Hall on Tuesday 18th March at 11.00 am

Our County Councillor, Jenny Antill, reported that, in spite of the County needing to save £146 million over the next 4 years (£38 million of this in 2014/5) their share of council tax will not be increased. Ways of achieving these savings are under consideration and include shared workings with neighbouring counties

The County has secured a grant of approximately £200,000 to support apprenticeships and internships in the creative and media industries – this will provide opportunities in areas such as production, printing, digital and social media, events management and arts administration. Any young, unemployed person who is interested in working in the creative industries can get more information from the local Job Centre Plus or online at www.suffolkartlink.org.uk

Transport issues – the improved A14 will now not be tolled, and a conference has been held to discuss rail improvements which could help connect business and make big differences to the local economy. These include more frequent services and the electrification of the direct line from Felixstowe to the Midlands. A new prospectus will be available for consultation in the spring

Mrs Antill drew our attention to Suffolk Info Link which is an online directory of community information – local clubs, societies, community and voluntary organisations and services. It is designed as a search tool for people which provides information on what activities are on offer and how services can be accessed. It also gives organisers of local activities and services an easy and effective means of promotion. Registering is free and more information is available on www.infolink.suffolk.gov.uk

Mrs Antill completed her report by noting that she recently had an enjoyable visit to Cockfield School and held a successful meeting with the Head Teacher and the Chairman of Governors. She has taken on board concerns regarding the boiler, which is nearly 50 years old, and has urged council officers to discuss replacement with both the School and Village Hall Committee

Our District Councillor, Clive Arthey, reported that the District Core Strategy has been reviewed by the Government Inspector and, with a few small changes, will be go to Committee during February. He noted that whilst 40% of growth is planned in villages, consideration will be taken of locally identified needs and that applications for development which do not meet community needs may be refused

It is unlikely that, despite a reduction in the Government grant, the District council tax will be increased

He agreed to continue to pursue the question of the willow trees in Dukes Meadow and asked the Parish Council to obtain the views of the residents regarding their removal

The Parish Council then discussed the precept for 2014/2015. In establishing this, we considered, in addition to everyday expenses, other once off expenditure which will be required in the coming year. A contribution will be required to the Pavilion improvement project and funding will be required for road safety enhancements, such as speed reduction measures. As in previous years, the Parish Council believes that it is essential that we face up to the responsibility of protecting the village's assets which have been built up over time, and the precept has been set taking this into account

The Suffolk Association of Local Councils (SALC) meeting was addressed by the County's Head of Strategic Finance and the Cabinet Member for Finance and Property. The general financial position is as reported by Mrs Antill, but it was additionally noted that savings of £8 million would arise from the waste plant and Blakenham and that other areas of Council activity are being required to make cuts

It was reported that 100 Silver Birch trees have been donated to the Earl's Meadow project. Planting will begin immediately in the new meadow

With regard to parish paths, no progress is evident on the part of Suffolk County Council on the Howe Lane footpath

The cemetery has had its final winter clear up

The specification for the final phase of the pavilion improvement project is now complete and will go out to tender, with work planned in June/July this year. It was noted that the Community Council has obtained a grant towards replacement doors and windows

The Parish Council agreed that the most preferred method of speed reduction would be the use of movable flashing speed indicators. It was agreed that we would proceed with investigating the costs and practicalities of this approach and Mrs Antill agreed to assist in establishing if neighbouring parishes would be interested in sharing this resource and also to look into help with funding

With regard to emergency planning it was noted following the St Judes power failure that the main concern was the welfare of vulnerable neighbours within the community. It was agreed that this had worked well under the circumstances that had prevailed, but it is always necessary that everyone is aware of the needs of their neighbours when an emergency occurs. On a more practical note, it was suggested that the purchase of a generator for the Village Hall would be a useful asset – the Council agreed to investigate costs and hold this over for future consideration

The reframed certificates have now been hung in the Village Hall – thanks to Mrs Ruffell and Mr Turner

The annual litter pick will be on 22nd and 23rd March – Mr Hodge agreed that bags will be distributed from Cockfield Hall Farm

The Annual Parish Meeting will take place on April 24th at 7.30 pm

The next Parish Council meeting will take place on Thursday 27th March at 7.30 pm

The Council may be contacted through the Clerk, Alan Morgan on 01284 828072

RJP