

REACH VILLAGE

DRAFT Minutes of Annual Reach Parish Meeting held on; Wednesday 11th May 2011

Attendance

Michael Aves	Vice Chairman	Present
Ross Clark	Chairman	Present
Rita Dunnett	Councillor	Present
Hilary Fielding	Councillor	Present
Joyce Harrison	Councillor	Present
Angela King	Councillor	Present
Helen Platt	Councillor	Present
David Parr	Clerk	Present
Allen Alderson	District Councillor	Present
David Brown	County Councillor	Present

plus members of the Reach public.

Chairman's Report

We have just had the relative novelty of a parish council election – one of only a handful of parishes in the district to do so and the first in a number of years in Reach. That is either because villagers believe the parish council has been doing such a bad job that it needed replacing, or because of greater community spirit. I would like to think the latter.

The parish council has had a very positive year, the highlight of which has been the opening of the new tennis court, as well as the inauguration of the cricket net. The tennis court is now complete, the spraying of the green surface having been applied yesterday.

Both facilities were provided without a penny having to be levied on the precept. We were able to tap into grants from the landfill tax, section 106 money – that is the contributions which housebuilders make to new infrastructure and in the case of the cricket net, Sport England. Both facilities were also partly paid-for from the amenity fund. A plan exists for ongoing maintenance of the tennis court to be covered from sponsorship and private donations. We are very grateful to the parish clerk, David Parr, for organising this.

Some tight cost control and a windfall from the sale of the old parish mower has enabled us to freeze the precept this year. In fact, with a couple of extra properties apparently liable for council tax this year, it has meant the parish council element of everyone's council tax bill has in fact fallen.

Some other highlights of the year: the parish council has been involved in negotiations with the National Trust over the possible purchase of a 24 acre field off Burwell Road currently owned by the County Council farms estate, part of which the Trust has said it will make available for community use. At a public meeting held here last year three potential uses were identified: an orchard, a horse ménage and an overflow ground for Burwell Cricket Club have been investigated. The National Trust has another month in which to find the money to undertake the purchase, but seems hopeful of doing so.

Another achievement this year was to secure future use of the field used for car parking at Reach Fair and without which the fair would struggle to operate. The availability of the field had been under question due to the renewal of

the tenancy. Following negotiations with the County Farms Estate this field has now been transformed into grazing and a one-day-a-year rental agreement signed direct with the estate.

Reach suffered or enjoyed - depending on your point of view – its coldest December in 100 years. I am pleased to say that the village was prepared for this. Following a cold weather plan implemented after cold weather the previous winter the council has deployed additional salt bins to cover problem bends.

The council continues to fight against fly-tipping, which is often a frustrating and unrewarding business. The council has been working with East Cambridgeshire's fly-tipping officer. I am not impressed by the failure to bring prosecutions of those responsible – even when there is clear evidence linking the material dumped to particular local addresses. However, East Cambs assures me that the incidence of reported tips in Reach and immediate area has fallen over the past two years

Finance Report

The following comments are based on our 2010-2011 unaudited accounts. These accounts are somewhat more complex because they include our two projects of the tennis court construction and the acquisition of the cricket net.

Income for the financial year was as per our forecast at £8,002.90 (excluding projects).

Cemetery costs were lower than expected since less mowing took place.

Our maintenance and repairs costs were on budget but with overspends on some items (notably the three salt bins that were budgeted for the prior year and emergency tree works) being offset by fewer grass cuttings than planned.

Other expenses were lower than expected with one major contribution being that the annual accounts are now being put together by Roger Smith of 19 Fair Green at no expense. Great thanks go to him for this.

Overall it was a financially successful year and the Parish Council increased its reserves by £1,561 to £4,567 which is around 55% of our normal spend – so our position is comfortable.

For year ending 2012, following no increase in precept, the Parish Council was forecasting a break-even situation; however unbudgeted Parish Council election costs of some £650 may mean a loss of this kind of size unless savings can be made.

County Council Report

Financial pressures and setting a balanced budget dominated time and work at Cambridgeshire County Council over the last year. Following the General Election we were faced with a financial settlement from the Coalition Government requiring savings of £160 million over 5 years. If that was not bad enough, the settlement meant that we had to find savings of £65 million in 2011/12, as well as significant in-year savings. Budget setting was a long process, culminating in a bad-tempered 10 hour meeting of the County Council in February, which was interrupted on numerous occasions and saw the Police being called to remove demonstrators.

At the local level considerable disquiet was caused when East Cambridgeshire District Council suggested County Council-owned land at Heath Road, Swaffham Prior as a suitable site for gypsies and travellers. Following a campaign led by local residents, East Cambs Strategic Development Committee ruled out the suggestion and also said that Swaffham Prior should no longer be considered as a suitable locality for a gypsy and traveller site.

As well as attending meetings of the Full Council I took part in a number of other committees over the year including the Environment and Sustainability Scrutiny Committee and the Safer and Stronger Communities Committee. I sat on several home to school transport appeals and also the East Cambs South Neighbourhood Panel. The Neighbourhood Panel this year seemed to be dominated with problems associated with cars at Bottisham Village College as well as speeding cars across the patch.

I also sat on a small group looking at highways policies in general. The final report of this group has now been published and it is hoped this will give much greater flexibility to allow, for example, parishes to change local speed limits.

Numerous potholes in our local area were repaired following reports, although thankfully this winter did not go on as long as last year so there were fewer reports.

I also supported Burwell residents in presenting a petition regarding dropped kerbs in the village to the County Council Cabinet. This has resulted in some improvements already.

On the less formal side, the Cambridgeshire Schools Carol Service, held at King's College was a pleasure to attend, as was the official opening of the new bridge across Reach Lode.

Finally, the year ended with the personal honour (and challenge) of being asked to join the new Cabinet as Lead Member for Children and Young People Services.

District Council Report

East Cambs Budget 2011/12

Once again we are having to set a very tough budget with a cut in the Government Revenue Support Grants, plus a drop in income from business rates due to the recession. There has been no increase in council tax.

Black Sack Collections

We have maintained the weekly black sack collections despite a call from Liberal councillors to change to fortnightly collections as a way of encouraging more recycling.

Leisure

The council now has planning permission for a new leisure centre on the Ely bypass. This will incorporate a six lane swimming pool, a sports hall and a fitness centre.

Tourism

Ely's Tourist Information Centre has seen yet another successful year. Having once again scooped the accolade of Regional TIC of the year. Visitor numbers have increased by over 500. The tourist website attracted 100,000 visits last year, up from 60,000 the previous year. We have already had over 12,000 visits in April.

Housing (Affordable)

There are currently over 30 being built in Fordham and 5 four bedroom houses in Isleham. The council has bids in for a total of 100 houses at Isleham, Bottisham and Haddenham.

Fly Tipping

Fly tipping has decreased this last year due in no small part to Mark Mahaffy, our enforcement officer who works closely with the local police.

Travellers

By working together with the local action committee representing local residents and also Parish Councils we were able to stop the proposal for an extended families traveller's site at Brooke Farm in Swaffham Prior.

Newmarket Waste Recycling Centre

The site is to remain open until July 31st 2011 to give time to explore alternative funding options. At present the site costs £214,000 per year to run. The Newmarket site has approximately 50,000 visits per year and a customer survey gave 43% of respondents from Cambridgeshire.

Swaffham Prior Parochial Charities Report

Fifty four people were each given £70-00 at Christmas. The Clerk stated that only one of these persons had expressed their thanks!

There have been no applications from students this year but the sum of £500-00 had been given to The Prospect Trust - they are changing their small vehicle to a larger one so that carers can be accommodated as well.

Reach Parish have been awarded £200-00 towards the Jubilee party.

As interest in investments is falling, grants may not be as generous next year.

Village Centre Committee Report

The Village Centre had another successful year with income from Reach Fair being satisfactory at a forecast £4,500.

Amenity Fund Committee

Opening funding as at 01/04/2010 was **£4,434.28**

Activity was as follows:

Donations of:

Sports Day	£191.63
Cricket Nets	£872.42
Football Nets	£85.10
Bus Shelter at Snakehall Farm	£500.00
Tennis Court	£1,000.00
TOTAL	£2,649.15

Income from Reach Fair: £1,626.78

Closing funding as at 01/04/2011 was **£3,411.91**

There followed discussions regarding the 24 Acres Project with one villager concerned about the way the land was sold and another expressing concern about the number of cars to be parked during any cricket match.

Report collated by David Parr

24th March 2012