

REACH VILLAGE

Minutes of Annual Reach Parish Meeting held on; Wednesday 1st May 2013

Attendance

Michael Aves	Vice Chairman	Present
Ross Clark	Councillor	Not Present
Rita Dunnett	Councillor	Present
Hilary Fielding	Councillor	Present
Joyce Harrison	Councillor	Present
David Thomas	Councillor	Present
Diana Ward	Councillor	Present
David Parr	Clerk	Present
Allen Alderson	District Councillor	Present
David Brown	County Councillor	Present

plus members of the Reach public.

Police Report

PCSO Ian Hawkins reported on a reduction in crime in the area and discussed ways that villagers could take preventative action themselves.

The potential for CCTV cameras to be installed within the village was discussed and this will be further discussed at a subsequent Parish Council meeting.

The possibility of the Mobile Police Unit spending time in the village was explained and seen to be a good thing, providing some deterrent to potential criminals.

Chairman's Report

A highlight for the year has been the development of the 24Acres field. Plans went ahead to fundraise and develop a number of amenities, including a cricket field, community orchard, woodland and manege. The community orchard and cricket field are now fully funded, following successful applications to ECDC, Amey Cespa and the 'Big Tree Plant'. Requests for adoption of fruit trees and a village orchard planting day received an enthusiastic response. Work on the cricket pitch was delayed by the wet autumn weather but is now going ahead. A funding application for the manege has been submitted. A funding application for the woodland was sent to the Forestry Commission but a decision was delayed due to the problem of ash die-back and then by a requirement for an archaeological investigation before planting could commence. It is expected that the woodland will be planted at the end of this year.

In celebration of the Queen's Diamond Jubilee an avenue of lime trees was planted on the Swaffham Road on its approach to Reach. Nick Acklam and the Clerk worked together to make this project happen and planting took place in October 2012. Unfortunately it wasn't possible to plant 60 trees on the roadside as planned, due to restrictions on planting on some of the verges.

However, additional trees were planted on the boundary of the 24Acres field and will create an attractive boundary to this site in years to come.

Also as part of the Jubilee celebrations, the Parish Council took the opportunity to plant a Sweet Chestnut (*Castanea Sativa*) on the Fair Green. This will take over from the current horse chestnut upon its demise. Within Reach magazine covered the costs of the purchase and planting of the new tree.

The final and most enjoyable Jubilee celebration was the party which took place on Fair Green on the 4th of June.

Half-way through the year it became necessary to replace ex-Councillor Brearley since he moved from the village. The vacancy was advertised and three candidates came forward – another demonstration of the high-level of interest and engagement of our small community in local government. At the conclusion of this process the Parish Council co-opted Diana Ward, who was welcomed onto the Council.

Financially it was a very successful year for the village with the Parish Council having a surplus from its normal activities of over £1,250 (which goes into our reserves).

A budget for YE 2014 was approved which allowed the Parish Council to freeze the precept for the second year running at the level of £7,150. However, as a result of the way the County Council calculates the precept and makes allowances for potential non-payment, the contribution from the Council Tax to the Parish Council precept still increased by 5%.

The Parish Council, at the request of the Woodland Trust, has taken over the mowing responsibility of the meadow in Reach Wood. Some villagers were concerned about the method of mowing and its effect on the wildlife. As a result the meadow will now be ‘topped’ in order to prevent harm to small mammals.

Finance Report

The following comments are based on our 2012-2013 unaudited accounts.

1. Income from normal business (excluding therefore the 24Acres project, the Avenue of Limes and the Tennis court) was at £8,437 compared to a budget of £8,072.
2. Cemetery net costs (income minus expenditure) were (£357) against compared to a budget of (£540).
3. No hedgecutting took place resulting in a saving of £400 and total expenditure showed a total saving of £804.
4. Overall, a small surplus of £3 was originally planned with the actual amount being some £1,438 which is an excellent achievement.
5. “Normal” reserves are now around £6,000 and with the tennis court earmarked funds, £7,758 which is some 87% of normal annual spend.
6. Our budget for 2014 – with the precept held at the previous year’s level, shows a small surplus of £47.

County Council Report

For me personally, 2012-13 has been another challenging year at the County Council.

Cambridgeshire is the fastest growing county in the country, having a population growth of 12.4% over the last census period. Whilst growth does bring advantages it also brings immense strain on resources at a time when central Government is reducing the money allocated to local authorities.

For example, over the next 4 years Cambridgeshire County Council is planning to spend £350 million on building new schools, including 3 new Special Schools, simply to meet the rising demand for places.

As a member of Cabinet, wrestling with the Business Plan for the next 4 years has taken up considerable time. Cabinet remains committed to ensure that Cambridgeshire is able to take best advantage once the economy improves. This means investing in areas such as superfast broadband across the County, increasing spending by £90 million on improving roads and footpaths and the Ely southern by-pass. We are also addressing pressures for rising demand on services for vulnerable adults and children in the County and have announced our intention to build a care home for the elderly to help competition in the market. All this at a time of severe pressure on public finances which means we need to continue to deliver savings across the Council – savings amounting to over £40 million in the coming year. This necessitated a rise in Council Tax of 1.95% but as a Cabinet we believe our budget will deliver for the benefit of the people of Cambridgeshire.

Locally I have been involved in a number of issues on behalf of residents, both as a group and as individuals. One issue which I was very pleased to be able to help with was securing a 21 year extension to the lease for Burwell and District Day Centre at a rent of £1 per annum – well below the market value. This involved numerous meetings including arranging for the Cabinet members for finance and adult social care to visit the Day Centre to witness firsthand the value of the work done there.

The Burwell Masterplan, where I represented the County Council on the Working Party, has been adopted by ECDC following 2 years of work. We have seen numerous improvements to roads, footpaths and drop kerbs in the area and work is scheduled to start on more soon. I have also offered support to a number of applications for grant aid and external funding for a range of groups.

I have also intervened on behalf of a number of individuals experiencing problems; I will long remember some of the problems experienced by individuals over the programme to replace street lights in Burwell!

On the less formal side I had the pleasure of presenting awards to many of the children and young people in the care of the Council and to foster carers.

District Council Report

This is included as supplied on the following pages.

District Councillors Annual Report - May 2013

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Council Tax.

The District Council is in the third year of a medium term financial strategy which should deliver savings of over £2 million pounds by 2015. As part of this and to ensure a balanced budget we increased the council tax by 2% this year. This equates to an increase of 5p per week for the average band D property, or £2.79 per year.

New waste & recycling collection service

The new service will be rolled out between September and November this year.

The weekly black sack for refuse will remain unchanged. The fortnightly recycling collection will be by a Green wheeled bin for food and garden waste, and a Blue wheeled bin for paper, glass, cans, plastic (bottles and hard plastic food and drinks containers) tetra paks and card board.

Car parking charges in Ely

Following the latest consultations results, the Council has decided not to introduce car parking charges.

Car parking charges remains a divisive issue with the public which is distracting us from achieving our ambitious priorities for the next two years.

New cinema for Ely.

We are presently negotiating for a six screen cinema which will be on a site we own at the junction of the Downham road and the western by-pass. This will include a 500 car carpark and restaurant facilities. We already have planning permission to build a swimming pool on the site.

Tourism and Ely Markets

Ely markets has had yet another successful year with occupancy across all markets showing a slight increase on last year. The Flower, Food and Craft Markets which are held on the last Sunday of each month and Bank Holiday Mondays has increased from 16 stalls to 20 per market.

Oliver Cromwells House has had another good year and has exceeded target on its bed bookings and function room bookings. Admissions hit target with retail only being slightly down on last year.

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Homelessness

Due to the recession and the consequent breakdown in marriages ECDC has had to deal with an increase in homelessness.

The number of households in Bed & Breakfast accommodation for the quarter ending 31/3/12 was 18. By targeted help we were able to reduce this to 9 for the quarter ending 31/3/13 resulting in a large financial saving for the council.

Housing (Affordable)

There were only 14 completions for the year 2012/13 through exception sites and section 106 agreements. We will not have the figures for shared equity housing till June. There were also between 15 to 20 through the government scheme that is now called 'Help to Buy'.

The anticipated figures for this year are - exception sites and section 106 (council) 50 plus plus a number through shared equity 'Help to Buy' 15 to 20.

Fly Tipping

Fly Tipping has decreased this last year due to the councils pro active measures.

B.T. Phone Book

In 2007 B.T. changed the residents of the Swaffham Ward from the Cambridge to the Bury St. Edmunds phone book. As this was not suitable for many people within our ward I arranged for B.T. to supply a Cambridge area phone book free of charge to any of their subscribers free of charge who are in the CB25 area. I have recently established that this arrangement is still in place. Any B.T. customers in the CB25 area can ring 0800 833420 to obtain their free books.

Bus Services

Your County and District Councillors continue to press for improvements in the 10 + 10A bus service

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As well as dealing with many local issues this past year, I have served on the following committees.

Licensing, Community and Environment

Vice chairman of Development and Transport.

I am also on a working party looking into ways to improve the functions of the Neighbourhood Panels.

Swaffham Prior Parochial Charities Report

The charity has been able to maintain its income for the year and therefore all requests for Christmas donations were met.

Sadly, one of our members, John Norris, died during the year. Plans are underway to put a seat on Town Close in his memory. A contribution, together with one from Reach and one from Swaffham Prior will pay for this. John was actively concerned with the wellbeing of both villages.

Town Close has a Horse Chestnut tree inside the play area and concern was expressed about its safety. The committee hoped to replace the tree but this was not to be. The Tree Officer would not allow this preferred option stating that up to a 30% pruning would suffice. The cost was £240.

Swaffham Prior School Foundation Fund received £300 during the year.

The charity has had fewer requests for help this past year. This may well reflect the change in financial circumstances within the two villages.

Amenity Fund Committee

During the past year the fund has made the following awards:

Jubilee Garden Party	£387.20
Sports Day	£265.36

A further £1,750 has been allocated to the following 24Acres projects:

Avenue of Limes	£250
Cricket Pitch	£500
Manege	£500
Orchard	£250
Woodland	£250

The fund was boosted by £849.10 from last year's Reach Fair which was below average due to the unfortunate weather.

The fund currently stands at £3,735.62 but after the 24Acres commitments this leaves £1,985.62 available.

Village Centre Committee Report

Background

Reach Village Centre has official charity status and has been managed by a committee of volunteers since the mid 1970's. The committee is elected each year and is governed by its own constitution. The committee's principle role is to manage the running and maintenance of the Centre for the benefit of the village. The building is leased from the Diocese of Ely for a peppercorn annual rent. The Committee's other principle role is to organise and run the annual Reach Fair.

Meetings are held each month (apart from August) with an AGM in July where the committee for the forthcoming year is elected from those wishing to stand. Reach Village Centre Committee numbers 12 members for the year 2012-2013 (down by 2 from year 2011-2012).

Running, Maintenance and Building Work Expenditure

As in the past, the costs of running and maintaining the Centre are met from net profits generated from the annual Fair, from letting the building on a regular and casual basis, from hiring out marquees and village games as well as occasionally applying for external community grants for high capital expenditure projects. There is no precept on the Parish Council Rates.

No major expenditure is expected in the short to medium term with only minimal building maintenance costs and replacement of dated kitchen crockery expected during year 2013-2014.

In summary:

- Small Meeting Room – interior redecoration, new flooring and furniture. This proposed project, which was reported last year, had to be put back due to financial constraints and other expenditure priorities in the past year caused in the main by reduced profits from Reach Fair 2012 (reduced attendance due to poor weather). Depending on level of profit made from Reach Fair 2013, we would be looking to carry out this work in the latter part of 2013.
- Completion of internal and external redecoration and maintenance work . Planned late spring.

Amenity Fund

The Amenity Fund receives all its funds from a share of net profits from the annual Fair. The Amenity Fund Committee is a separately elected group of volunteers made up from members of the Village Centre Committee, the Parish Council and non-committee Reach residents.

Acknowledgements

As Chairman, I would like to once again thank all present and past committee members for their hard work and dedication in maintaining this valuable asset for the benefit of Reach residents and the local community and the organisation and running of Reach Fair year on year.

Even with busy lives themselves, they freely give up their time for the benefit of the wider community.

Report collated by David Parr

May 2013