

# Letheringham

**Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting  
held at 7.45pm on Monday 30<sup>th</sup> March 2015  
at Easton and Letheringham Village Hall**

## **In Attendance**

Terry Carlin (Chair)  
Paul Clarke  
Maurice Finch  
Jean Barker  
Matthew Bickerton

Andrew Maskery  
Richard Gooding  
David Allan  
Paula Latimer

## **1. Apologies**

SCC Peter Bellfield, SCDC Bob Snell, PCSO Christian Hassler

## **2. Minutes of Annual Parish Meeting Monday 31<sup>st</sup> March 2014**

Approved and signed.

## **3. Reports for the 12 months ending March 2015**

### **i) Chairman of Letheringham Parish Council:**

#### **Council Structure and Administration**

There have been a number of changes to our Council Structure / Administration over the past 12 months.

Councillor Simon Ratcliffe left the Council in September after serving as a Parish Councillor for over 10 years. We would like to record our thanks to Simon for his contribution and service to the Parish Council and village over his time in office.

Matthew Bickerton of Letheringham Lodge has been co-opted onto the Council to fill the vacancy left by Simon and we hope that Matthew will bring his business experience and energy to help drive the Council forward over the coming years.

Councillor Paul Clarke has continued to take on the bulk of the Clerks responsibilities over the period however, Paul will not be standing for Office in the coming elections and is currently handing over his " Clerks" responsibilities to David Allen of The Old Vicarage who has volunteered to take over from Paul.

Our appreciation goes to Claire Owen ( Shelly Secretarial) who finished as our minute secretary in September. Clare proved herself invaluable and her contribution to the smooth running of the council will be missed greatly.

Our thanks also to David Holborrow who has undertaken the role of internal auditor since the 2012/2013 audit and has agreed to continue in this role for the 2014/2015 audit. Our thanks also to Andrew Maskery who has taken on the role of Letheringham Village representative on the Letheringham and Easton Village Hall Committee.

The Boundary Commission proposed early in the year that Letheringham be moved to the Wickham Market ward from the Earl Soham ward. LPC made the case that this would not serve the interests of the community and that Letheringham given the close links between Letheringham and Easton would be best served by being co-located with Easton in the Hatcheston ward. The Boundary commission having considered our submission agreed that Letheringham should be incorporated into the Hatcheston Ward.

The Council's auditors BDO completed their audit of our accounts for 2013/14 and our finances received a clean bill of health .

The Parish Council made a minor adjustment to the annual precept for 2014/15 from £1033 to £1050 to meet SCDC's processes. The precept will be held at £1050 for the coming year 2015/16

The precept results in a charge of £26.93 for each band D equivalent property per annum in Letheringham which compares favourably with our neighbours in Easton with a charge of £47.34.

The consultation that we held on the future of Letheringham Parish Council resulted in 34% voting to increase the precept ( to £51 ) if we need to employ a Parish Clerk . 32% voted to combine with Easton which would also have increased the precept to £42 and 12% opted for a bi annual Parish Meeting which would have reduced the precept to £0-£15. In the event David Allan volunteered to take over the Clerks responsibilities from Paul Clarke after the elections and as a result we have been able to continue without increasing the Precept.

### **Community development**

The Annual Village BBQ and Garden Party continues to be a success despite the torrential down pour this year . We would like to thank all those that contributed to making the BBQ a success this year but must single out Jean Barker for allowing us to use her riverside garden (and House) and Simon Ratcliffe for donating the excellent local sirloin steaks which were greatly appreciated. Our thanks also to everyone that contributed with salads and desserts and to the Parish Councillors that share the cost of everything else between them.

Sadly On the 23 August 2014 a fatal accident occurred at Park Corner close to the spot where a meeting between residents and our County Councillors took place eight months earlier. At that meeting our request for a speed limit to be introduced was rejected however, SCC Highways department did propose implementing some additional improved safety measures yet, some 15months later, these measures have still not been implemented .

The Parish Council have sent a detailed report to the Coroner conducting the inquest into Dominic Davis's death giving the history of our concerns and warning regarding the safety of the B1078. In our report to the Coroner Dr Dean we asked, that he consider producing a narrative verdict highlighting weaknesses in both Suffolk County Council's and the DfT's policies on speed limits on rural roads, we do not however, anticipate the inquest being held before end of June 2015.

We have proposed that vehicle activated speed warning signs are implemented in the absence of a speed restriction at Park Corner on the B1078 and Councillor Bob Snell has provided a grant to the Parish Council of £1100 from the Enabling Communities Budget to support the project. Our County Councillor Peter Bellfield

has agreed to earmark £3000 towards the project and we are currently trying to overcome some issues with Highways to enable this project to proceed.

### **Planning**

Stage one of the Sizewell C consultation has been completed , we along with a number of other villages have expressed our concerns regarding traffic on the B1078 and also the proposed lorry park / park and ride located at Wickham Market . We anticipate that stage 2 of the consultation will be announced shortly in 2015.

Six planning applications have been considered by the Parish Council over the past year some more controversial than others with the majority of issues having been resolved amicably.

Finally, I would like to thank on behalf of residents both Councillors Bellfield and Snell for their support over the past year. Also our thanks to our Community Police Officer Christian Hassler for his work

Terence Carlin

### **ii) Letheringham Representative on the Village Hall Committee:**

Since my last report things have progressed well, information seems to be improving. We are celebrating 50 years in 2015 that the hall was passed to both villages and so far have had two excellent evenings, the Casino Night with Cocktails and the Quiz. The Casino Night raised an impressive £500, which half of that money will go to our chosen charity of the First Response. I have no details of the Quiz evening but overall the Village Hall committee had a great feedback from many who attended. We will follow on with the Rhinos Evening of Music and a fancy dress and a 60's Disco Evening, later on in the year. We are always looking forward for people to help out at events or to do certain jobs on the committee for example I.T. website improvements and regular updates to improve the up to date information but this will not include a diary of events or bookings as it has covered other problems in the past. Comments on the hall and improvements made have been very well received. Many thanks.

Andrew Maskery

### **iii) SCC Councillor Peter Belfield: (Report read by TC in PB's absence)**

#### **A personal comment**

From a personal point of view this is a year which I would rather forget. However I am now making good progress and it will be nice to be able to drive again. I have nothing but praise for the NHS, Ipswich hospital and all those who work in the three specialist areas that have treated me in the last twelve months, not forgetting my own GP. My gratitude to them all is immense.

Unfortunately this has meant that I have not been able to provide the service to you all which I would like, particularly in being unable to attend meetings which help me to appreciate the problems and concerns in the 26 parishes I represent. My apologies , but I hope that from this summer "normal service will resume"

#### **Council Tax**

I am sure that you all know that for the fifth year in a row the County Council has frozen council tax. This means that Suffolk residents will not pay any more than they

did in 2010/11. We have delivered savings of £130m over the last four years. However, if central government polices remain unchanged, we estimate that we will have to make further savings of £120 over the next three years, having started with £38.2 for the forthcoming year. A significant proportion on the savings have been achieved by a reduction in the workforce of 47% across all council services.

### **Two major operational changes**

As far as what has happened at the County Council, two significant service changed responsibility in order to reduce costs just before or in the early part of the year. The CSD services which were in partnership with BT, were brought back in house after ten years, and the Highways maintenance contract was put out Kier MG.

#### **CSD contract**

The transfer of the CSD contract, which included the financial, IT and HR activities of the council, came back into our direct responsibility seamlessly. Even the few adverse comments which we were getting towards the end of the contract seem to have dried up. It is also saving us money.

#### **Highways contract**

The transfer of all highways maintenance to Kier MG has proved a very different matter. To start with we negotiated the contract with May Gurney with whom we had had a good relationship, but at the last minute they were acquired by Kier. The idea was that the council staff would transfer to Kier MG under the normal arrangements, but some of the more important staff decided to take redundancy where it was offered, thus resulting in a shortage in the workforce. It seems that the council did not insist in adequate corrective action being taken soon enough, although us Councillors were complaining to the highways department and the Cabinet member because of the frustration you and we were having in getting anything done. I am glad to say that it all came to a head in the second half of last year when meetings at the highest level within Kier MG produced action on their part. A list of all outstanding work was drawn up and given priority and most has been undertaken. However we discovered subsequently that a number of tasks which councillors and parishes thought were outstanding had never got on to the outstanding list, that is the reason why we still have work outstanding for more than a year but it is now being scheduled.

#### **Highways fault reporting tool**

A very important new highways fault reporting tool was introduced earlier this year and any member of the public can use this system by going to [www.suffolk.gov.uk/report-a-highways-problem](http://www.suffolk.gov.uk/report-a-highways-problem). The new highways reporting tool which allows photographs to be up loaded can be accessed by tablets and mobiles. This means that people can access the map on the go and these will be recorded and actioned straight away. The tool also allows anyone to follow up the report to see the progress being made to complete the work. This means that if any member of the public sees a highways maintenance problem they can report it there and then.

#### **Energy from waste**

Towards the end of last year our new energy from waste plant at Great Blackenham was commissioned. This was a major success for the staff responsible because we had relatively little opposition to the development, unlike Norfolk where the cancelation of the contract has cost the council over £30m. On top of that the plant was opened on time and on budget, again quite an achievement for a Government body.

### **High speed broadband**

During the year we put in a second tranche of £10m towards high speed broadband for Suffolk which should mean that 95% of the County will have improved speeds by the end of 2017. The latest news is that 75,000 premises are now connected to high-speed fibre broadband thanks to the Better Broadband for Suffolk programme.

### **Young people's employment centre**

Last November we, in collaboration with other organisations, opened in Ipswich the very first young people's employment centre in the country for 16 to 24 year olds. What is notable about this project is that it is not just an employment centre but they are trained how to write CVs and approach interviews. In the first month more than 500 young had made use of the centre.

### **Education**

Under the councils new School Improvement Strategy we have recently sent out the second risk-rating letter in which each school is rated red, amber or green, based on information the school has provided as well as government data. This is all part of the work we are doing to keep on top of poor performing schools and to be able to pin point where assistance to improve their outturn is required. Meanwhile last year's exam results showed an improvement at all levels, in some cases reaching national levels, but there is still a long way to go.

### **Locality and minor highways grants**

During the year I was very pleased to be able to help various people and organisations with financial assistance, the locality grant being over- subscribed. However, due to the problems mentioned earlier, the highways grant was not fully utilised, but I am able to carry the balance forward to this year.

As always feel free to telephone me on 01473 735259 or e-mail on **peter.bellfield@suffolk.gov.uk** for any assistance you may require with the County Council.

Peter Bellfield

#### **iv) SCDC Councillor Bob Snell: (Report read by TC in BS's absence)**

##### **1. Council Finances**

SCDC's share of Council Tax has been frozen for the fifth consecutive year, as your district council continues to drive down costs without any cut in front-line services and without borrowing any money (even for its impending office move). The year's cost budget at £12m has been further reduced by 1.3%, despite a drop in government grant of more than £3m since 2010. We have achieved this by cutting costs by more than £10m since 2010, without increasing Council tax, through such programmes as our joint services programme with Waveney (reducing our combined manpower by 40% since 2008) and £1.7m savings from our contract with Norse SCS Services. Your district council retains the strongest Local Authority economy in the county, with unemployment having reduced over the past three years from 2.1% to 0.7%, although this belies an underlying problem of a shortage of technically skilled workers which companies like BT are trying to alleviate by taking on and training 1,000 new technical staff at Martlesham.

There remains a budget gap of £2.71 over the next four years, which we expect to fill by even more operating efficiencies, £500,000 a year from a new contract for our Leisure Services partner and £8 million savings over 20 years from the office relocation, including a reduction in the number of councillors from 54 to 44..

Notwithstanding the need for such economies, the council has agreed to adopt from 1 April 2015 the living wage for its direct employees, in recognition of their hard work and dedication. Although only expected to cost about £10K a year, it could have a big impact on the lives of some of our lower paid employees.

## 2. Planning Matters

**(a) Site specific allocations consultation update.** The Site Allocations and Area Specific Policies eleven weeks' consultation and drop in sessions ended recently. Officers are now busy examining the responses for a report in June/July 2016 on those preferred sites that will be subject to further public consultation at the end of this year. There will follow an examination by a planning inspector, with the target of putting the final recommended version to full council in July 2016.

**(b) Neighbourhood Plans.** Having been approved by a Planning Inspector, the Rendlesham Plan was endorsed by 97% of a turnout of 47% of the electorate and "made" by the full District Council on 19 March. It will now be used to help decide planning applications in its area. Six other areas are in various stages of developing their own plans – Framlingham, Great Bealings, Leiston, Melton, Martlesham & Woodbridge, and Wenhaston with Mells.

**(c) C.I.L.** Our plans for the new levy, which will replace negotiated sums of money embraced in Section 106 agreements, were presented to a Planning Inspector on 5 December, who appointed an Examiner whose one day public hearing took place on Thursday 19 March (outcome awaited). Details on web site.

**(d) Affordable homes.** Notwithstanding the Government's easing of obligations on developers, we expect to deliver 256 over three years:

Delivered Oct-Dec 2014	13
To be delivered Jan-Mar 2015	26
Due 2015/16	65
Due 2016/17	114

## 3. NANT legal action

On 17 February 2015 The Court of Appeal finally dismissed the latest appeal by NANT, which was holding up progress on our Local Plan, and awarded costs to SCDC (though, unfortunately, they are capped by European legislation to £10,000 in cases of challenge on environmental grounds). NANT has now applied appealed for permission to appeal to the Supreme Court, which would impose yet another delay in the Local Plan process.

## 4. SCDC accommodation review

The new location of SCDC's HQ is part of the former Girdlestons site in Melton (opposite the station), where purpose-built offices of the 21st century should be ready for occupation late in 2016. The land has been purchased by the council from Riduna Holdings in a deal that will save £200K running costs per year, rising to £500K a year in the longer term. The existing site in Woodbridge has been put on the market.

## 5. Recycling

SCDC continues to meet its recycling target, with 58% of household recycled, leaving only 274kg residual waste per household – the best performance of any local authority in Suffolk and in the top 20 nationally.

## 6. Yet more benefit fraud

In our continuing “zero tolerance” drive against benefit fraud, a man from Leiston pleaded guilty on 17 Feb to claiming housing benefit, council tax benefit and council tax reduction to which he was not entitled amounting to £18,000. Apart from having to repay it, he earned a 12-months suspended sentence and a criminal record.

## 7. Spa Theatre

A deal is finally expected to be in place on 15 May for the re-opening of the theatre and restaurant, following completion of the regeneration of the sea front gardens in Felixstowe.

## 8. Car parking grace period

SCDC already grants a 10-minute grace period in its council operated car parks, which it has just been announced will become a legal norm nationwide. (This only applies to simple time related offences.)

## 9. New ward boundaries.

These will be in place for the elections on 7 May 2015.

SCDC Bob Snell

### v) Community Police Support Officer: (Report read by TC in CH's absence)

There has been 1 reported crime from 28<sup>th</sup> February 2014 through to 28<sup>th</sup> February 2015.

- 1) 1 x Burglary – Other building 09-10/10/2014

Within the same period last year there were 8 reported crimes within the Letheringham Parish.

HOW DOES THIS COMPARE WITH OTHER PARISHES BORDERING LETHERINGHAM?

DURING THE SAME TIME PERIOD (28/02/2014 to 28/02/2015)

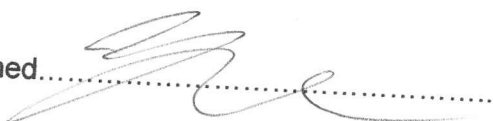
KETTLEBURGH	2
MONEWDEN	6
HOO	6
EASTON	8
CHARSFIELD	9
WICKHAM MARKET	90

PCSO3034 Hassler

**4. Feedback from village residents relating to the 12 months ending March 2015**

None.

The meeting closed at 8.40 pm.

Signed.....

Date.....23/8/2016