

Milden Parish Meeting – Tuesday 24th November 2015

Minutes of the Parish Meeting held on 24th November 2015 in Milden Pavilion at 7pm

Chairman: Angus Cundey
Treasurer: Sandy De'Ath
Clerk: Sara Godfrey

Present: James Finch, Bryn Hurren, Stephen Morley, Christopher Hawkins, Joy Morley, Jan Ditheridge, Mark Isahak, Sally Miles, Adrian Miles, Tissa Rigby, Pearl Gee, Denise Thomas, Janet Meyer, Jo Eggby, Dick Histed, Bridget Hawkins, Justine Turner.

1. **Apologies for absence**

were received from Myranda Cundey, Rosy Porteous Butler, Tony Ditheridge, John Rigby, Julie Isahak and Joe Coulter

2. **Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on 28th April 2015**

The minutes had been distributed before the meeting. These were accepted as an accurate record of that meeting and were duly signed by the Chairman.

Proposed: Joy Morley Seconded: Stephen Morley

3. **Matters arising from those minutes.**

Matters arising were all covered in the agenda for this meeting.

4. **Suffolk Constabulary letter re meeting attendance**

Sara Godfrey advised the meeting that a letter had been received from Suffolk Constabulary on 24th September 2015 advising the Parish Meeting that the police would no longer routinely attend due to cuts imposed by the government. Police would attend in the event of a major incident or if a specific issue of local concern required their input. She reminded parishioners that SNT Babergh send out a monthly crime report which details crimes on a parish by parish basis. She distributes this by email to all on her distribution list, anyone wishing to add their name to the distribution list should advise her directly.

5. **County Councillor's Report.**

Councillor Finch presented his report to the meeting, a copy of which is attached to these minutes. There was additional discussion on the subject of superfast broadband.

Councillor Finch announced that Milden will be in Phase 2 of the contract to supply fibre broadband to rural areas. Phase 2 will be implemented between January 2016 and the end of 2018.

Due to some unspecified legal problem they have been unable to announce the phasing of this work and we therefore do not know whether Milden will be near the beginning or the end of this period. Hopefully this information will be available before the end of the year.

In the meantime, SCC are offering a voucher, worth some £400, to connect to a satellite broadband provider (8-10 MB). The only proviso is that the user has to demonstrate that they currently have below 2MB. The user will be responsible for the monthly contract payment and there is a 12 month minimum contract period. It was unclear how much the monthly payment would be, but it is thought it will be relative to data usage and different packages would be available.

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James Finch asked Sara Godfrey to put together a list of all those interested in the satellite broadband option (*post meeting note email sent out 25/11/15 – responses appreciated by mid December please*)

The chairman extended the meetings thanks to Councillor Finch for his interesting and informative report.

6. District Councillor's Report

Councillor Hurren gave his report. The financial situation continues to be challenging at Babergh. The community infrastructure levy results in a payment which comes back to the village where houses are built, in effect it is a contribution from the new build to the cost of village infrastructure.

Councillor Hurren is sceptical about local devolution and the benefits of Suffolk joining with Norfolk. He believes a wider geographical body – such as an East Anglian parliament would be more effective.

A cost saving measure, championed by Councillor Hurren has been the introduction of solar panels on 2,200 council houses across the district. These have been successful, cutting bills by 50% and providing revenue to the council from the feed-in tariff.

Housing continues to be a major issue in the district with 2000 people on the waiting list. We now have a reasonable amount of affordable housing in Boxford, where there is significant local need, the Sandhills development has started construction. In Boxford the Goodlands Farm development behind the butchers provides 7 local needs houses as well as 14 executives home with prices ranging from £350,000 to £750,000.

The Post Office in Boxford is now secure, Royal Mail have committed to its future. A shop has also commenced trading in the same building. Tissa Rigby mentioned that if sufficient parishioners express an interest they will start a newspaper delivery service to Milden. We now have a coffee shop in Boxford, which is proving popular and successful.

A large amount of lead has been stolen from the church roof of St Bartholomews in Groton. Milden church does not have a lead roof, however, Councillor Hurren urged everyone to be watchful and report any suspicious activity.

Councillor Hurren is now the representative on the Citizens Advice Bureau in Ipswich. The CAB is grant aided by Babergh District Council.

Councillor Hurren is Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Quay Theatre in Sudbury. The Quay has added live streaming of National Theatre productions to its offering.

The chairman extended the meetings thanks to Councillor Hurren for looking after us all so well and added that we are all extremely grateful.

7. Finance Report

The Treasurer gave the report to the meeting. The current bank balance is £1,202 of which approximately £350 is committed to paying the Fields in Trust yearly insurance premium

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for the playing fields, a contribution towards the cutting the grass in the churchyard and a final quarterly water bill.

This will leave us with about £852 to carry over to the next financial year which is slightly more than the carry-over of £783 from last year. The subject of cost share of grass cutting with the Milden Pavilion Committee was addressed. The current split is 50:50 but it has been suggested that the Pavilion take on a larger share. Given a quorum of the Pavilion Committee were in attendance they were able to agree that the Pavilion would pay 100% of the grass cutting costs this year as their finances were healthy. It was agreed that the split of costs will be reviewed annually at the November meeting.

The precept from Babergh District Council for 2015/2016 was £889 plus £12 grant, making a total of £901. This was a negligible increase from last year's precept of £900 despite the increase of 2% due to the fact that the grant is being reduced every year.

The actual amount we pay for Milden Parish in our precept has actually gone down this year due to an increase in the tax base.

The Treasurer proposed another 2% increase in the precept for next year. This was proposed by Denise Thomas, seconded by Tissa Rigby and agreed by the Meeting.

The annual audit was completed and returned. There was one matter arising, the Fixed Assets. The meeting is depreciating the value of its assets, namely one wooden bench. This is not correct as assets should be included in the accounts of the Meeting at purchase cost and the value of assets held should only change if any assets are acquired or sold within the year.

8. Pavilion/Recreation Ground.

Adrian Miles gave the Pavilion report. The Pavilion continues to be self-funding with cricket club fees, hire fees and fund raising activities bringing in income. The cricket club has had a successful season. The cricket club fees and hire fees cover running costs and all fund raising money can be put towards capital projects. Some secure sheds are currently being considered.

Since the last Parish Meeting there have been two Milden Singers Concerts; "Get in the Country Mood" in May and last weekend the "Classical Mix". Both concerts were very well attended and both raised in excess of £1000. The Chairman expressed the thoughts of the Meeting when he thanked Pearl Gee for all she had done in organising these splendid events. There was a round of applause.

Adrian Miles also reported that Tracey Northwood's plant sales had raised some £1200, with huge thanks to her and the ever popular Milden Ball had raised in excess of £2000. With many thanks to Juliet and Christopher Hawkins for holding it at Milden Hall.

9. Pound Corner Planning Applications

The meeting was told that the proposed development of three houses developed from the existing farm buildings on Pound Corner had been turned down on appeal to the Secretary of State. The buildings have seen some use recently for agricultural purposes and the

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majority feeling of the meeting was that this status quo was acceptable. There are some who hold the view that a small in-keeping development would be desirable. Sara Godfrey reported back to the Meeting on a meeting she and the Chairman had had with Sunila Osborne, Community Development Officer - Rural Affordable Housing.

In the first instance the Planning Department has to agree that they would in principle agree to development of such a site. This is not usually the case in designated “open countryside”. Local needs housing is generally focussed in “core villages” which have the appropriate infrastructure. Sunila has requested an indication from the planners with regard to the Pound Corner site, but is still awaiting a response. Secondly the owner has to agree to sell the land to the Housing Association at a deeply discounted rate, eg. 10% of market value. Thirdly a housing needs survey for Milden would need to be completed and analysed. The cost of this would be of the order of £2000, although we could do it jointly with a neighbouring parish to reduce the cost. In any event we await the views of the planners before deciding on an appropriate course of action.

The Meeting then turned its attention to Planning matters on the other side of the road at Pound Farm House. There are two potential elements. The conversion of a barn into two four bedroomed houses and the partial conversion of an open barn into a single storey residence. Babergh Council have given permission for a change of use from agricultural to residential. Those parishioners in neighbouring properties are concerned by the process by which the council reached this decision. There were delays due to the illness of a Planning officer, the site was not inspected and there was no opportunity for the Parish Meeting or parishioners to lodge their comments.

The neighbours along with the Chairman had a meeting with the owners of Pound Farm House along with their representatives on 14th November. The meeting was fairly amicable, however, there remains a concern over the development particularly with regard to the conversion of the open barn/cart lodge.

It is anticipated that full plans will be lodged with the council in due course seeking planning permission and at that point the Parish Meeting and individual parishioners will be able to make their comments.

10. Correspondence

There was no correspondence

11. Any Other Business

Dick Histed raised the issue of the quality of the road surface of Boxford Road between the double bends at Pound Corner and Bulls Cross Wood. The road is in a poor state of repair and the road surface is breaking up in some places. These defects were reported in April 2015 on the online reporting tool along with a request to repaint the road markings around the double bends. James Finch asked Sara Godfrey to email him the relevant reference numbers for these reports (*this was done on 25th November and the road markings were repainted on 26th November*). The issue of the perennially leaking water main on Powney Street was also raised and James Finch undertook to make contact with Anglian Water to address the issue.

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The Treasurer reported that an email had been received that day from SALC (Suffolk Association of Local Councils). The arrangements for external audit are changing owing to the abolition of the Audit Commission and a new regulatory framework being introduced. A new body is being set up to administer external audit arrangements for local councils and we have a choice whether we go with this or make our own arrangements. There is a deadline of 31 January 2016 for opting-out. The Meeting voted and unanimously decided to stay with the new body.

Justine Turner had recently attended a First Aid course and had been made aware of the work of the Community Heartbeat Trust. She suggested that we considered a community public access defibrillator for our unused telephone box. This was generally considered a good idea, although those who lived at the edge of the village wondered how they might make use of it in an emergency situation. Joy Morley highlighted the excellent service provided by the community first responders in Boxford. The cost is £2500 and a grant of £500 is available. Sara Godfrey agreed to contact Martin Render of Community Heartbeat Trust to follow up and possibly arrange a meeting for the Parish (to be combined in a meeting with Pound Corner Planning issues/Satellite broadband as necessary)

The next meeting will be in May 2016, a date will be advised in due course.

There being no further business the meeting was closed at 9.00pm.

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James Finch - County Councillor - Summary Report

➤ **Devolution to local councils**

The government is planning to devolve significant powers to a select number of local councils. In September, SCC, together with the district and borough councils, submitted an initial proposal, putting forward our vision of what devolution could mean in Suffolk. It asked for greater powers around such areas as economic development, health and social care, and transport infrastructure, but also made an offer to the government about what we would be able to deliver in return, such as greater savings, more job creation and better services. Many other councils around the country submitted similar bids.

Whilst our bid has been well received, it is clear that the government do not see Suffolk as being a big enough entity to take on some of the broader powers around economic development and other major issues. As a result we have been working very closely with our colleagues in Norfolk, to develop a joint proposal. Discussions will be taking place with the government in the next few weeks, and we will learn the outcome in the next few weeks.

➤ **Raising the bar in Suffolk**

This summer has seen some hugely encouraging results across the board for Suffolk school children.

Provisional GCSE results show Suffolk's 16 year olds have performed better than the national average for the first time since 2007. 53.4% of Suffolk pupils achieved 5 or more A*-C grades including English and Maths, compared to a national figure of 52.8%. Suffolk's results see the county rise 17 places in the overall league table, going from 124 to 107.

Meanwhile, at Key Stage 2 level (aged 11) significant improvements were also made, and the percentage of pupils achieving the expected level in reading, writing and maths in primary schools in Suffolk is continuing to rise. 77% of 11-year-olds achieved level 4 or higher in their SAT tests in the three subjects in 2015 – a 4% rise from 2014. Suffolk has improved on its ranking against all authorities and is now 118 out of 150. This is an improvement of 22 places from last year.

Finally, this year has also seen Suffolk's five-year-olds overtake the national average. More five-year-olds in Suffolk are 'school ready' according to new figures. With an 8% increase in the percentage of Suffolk children achieving a 'good level of development' at the end of reception, this puts the county above the national average at age five.

➤ **Consultation on changes to Suffolk's Fire & Rescue Service to start in November**

Earlier this year, the county council held a pre-consultation on the future of Suffolk's fire and rescue service (SFRS): seeking the views of the public, staff, and other organisations, about the way the fire service should operate in the years ahead: how to maintain the service with a reduced budget, what they value about the current service and what aspects should be preserved. From that pre-consultation, a set of proposals is being drawn up. It is then anticipated that a full public consultation would start in November, if cabinet give the go-ahead, and would run until February.

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The service currently employs 208 full-time firefighters and 435 on-call firefighters. It is further supported by 26 community fire volunteers; a number that the service is keen to increase. In 2014/15 SF&R received 6,762 emergency calls for help and subsequently responded to 5,003 emergencies across Suffolk. This is a reduction of about 40% from the number of 999 calls we attended 10 years ago. SFRS is expecting to make £1m of savings in the next two years. In January, SFRS has offered to visit any village hall or parish council that wishes it, to talk through the proposals. It will only be once this process has finished, that any decision whether or not to go ahead with changes will be made.

➤ **Suffolk's leaders launch bid to find locations for Short Stay Stopping Sites**

Leaders across Suffolk's public sector are calling for landowners and other interested parties to suggest sites that could be used for Short-Stay Stopping Sites for the Gypsy and Traveller community. The aim is to identify land on which to locate three short-stay stopping sites for the Gypsy and Traveller community. Suffolk currently does not have any sites of this type. Between 2009 and July 2015, the county saw 280 unauthorised Gypsy and Traveller encampments, costing tax-payers tens of thousands of pounds each year to deal with. Other counties which have established short-stay stopping sites have seen a significant reduction in unauthorised encampments. The Call for Sites closes on 15th November, with a consultation taking place in December on the resulting proposals, and a final decision will be made in February 2016, naming the sites that will be put forward to the planning process. The aim is to have the sites up and running by the end of 2016. The Call for Sites booklet, a series of FAQs and details of how to respond are all available at www.suffolk.gov.uk/shortstay

➤ **Initial budget proposals for next year published soon: another year of no council tax increase**

Draft proposals for the 2016/17 financial year will be published in the coming weeks, detailing how the council will spend its reduced budget of £470million, while finding savings totalling £49million for the year. The savings are required as a result of a £30m reduction in the council's grant from the government next year, on top of nearly £20m of anticipated added cost pressures, such as increased demand for social care services. The £49million savings will be found as part of a two-year strategy, aimed at saving £75million by the end of the 2017/18 year. The vast majority of this saving will come from major programmes which fundamentally change the way we work, whether with the NHS, or other public organisations, cutting duplication and pooling resources to provide leaner, more effective services. A lot of work is also done to meet care needs at an earlier stage, when the cost of resolving them is a lot less. Next year will see another council tax freeze from the county council. That will make it six years in a row with no increase. The draft budget details will be published in November, ahead of a session of the council's scrutiny committee. Final proposals will then be agreed in the New Year.

➤ **Thousands attend Suffolk Skills Show**

Suffolk businesses turned out in their hundreds to support the second annual Suffolk Skills Show; a skills and careers event reaching over 4,500 young people. The event set out to engage with Suffolk's young people and provide an insight into the career opportunities available to them locally. The show, which took place at Trinity Park in Ipswich, targeted those aged between 11 and 24. The diverse range of businesses exhibiting at the event worked hard to ensure those attending left with their eyes opened to the many career streams across Suffolk. There were many interactive indoor and outdoor stands;

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showcasing opportunities in energy, IT & technology, finance and business services, creative digital, agriculture, construction, motor vehicle, advanced manufacturing, ports and logistics as well as HM Forces and a 'have a go' area where attendees were able to try their hand at new skills.

Those unable to make the event during the day were encouraged to come along for a drop in session in the evening to explore options available to them locally; giving them an opportunity to talk to employers, colleges, training providers and advisers about their future careers. In all, around 4,500 young people have had the chance to see the amazing opportunities for themselves in the county across a wide range of sectors and companies.

My priorities for Suffolk

*Education - Supporting Vulnerable People - Jobs and Growth
Localism and the Stour Valley - Building on Suffolk's Strength –
all underpinned by strong financial management and low council tax*

**James Finch 23rd November 2015
County Councillor Stour Valley Division**