

MINUTES

of the Meeting of Occold Parish Council held at 8pm on Monday 11th October 2010 in the Village Hall.

Present: Mr K Chittock, Mr R Burnett, Mr C Cripps, Mrs M Grange,
Mr J Hewitson, Mr B Hull, Mr R Owen

1. Apologies

Apologies had been received from Mr Hubner (delayed train) and Mr Miller

2. Report from Community Police Officer

PCSO Sally Fray introduced herself as the new community police officer covering Occold. She gave the following report to the meeting: -

Reported Crimes

There have been no reported crimes in the Parish of Occold since our last report.

Theft of Trailers

There have been a number of trailers stolen across Suffolk recently and we would urge all owners of such equipment to ensure they are secured when not in use. The marking of such equipment and the recording of identification numbers are essential in assisting recovery.

Bogus Callers/Distracted Burglaries

Since week commencing 9th August there has been a number of distraction burglaries in the Sudbury, Bury St Edmunds, Ipswich, Newmarket, Halesworth and Hitcham areas. Although mentioned in our last report to you we think it is worthwhile bringing this to your attention once again.

Crime Prevention

Buildings

With the onset of longer evenings please be vigilant and secure your property, we recommend leaving a light on if you go out preferably on a timer or with a light sensor also leaving a radio playing on a speech channel will give the impression of the property being occupied. Alarms where fitted should be activated when the premises are empty and keys stored out of view.

Garages and outbuildings are easy targets for thieves especially if not secure. There have been a number of burglaries recently in the Mid Suffolk area, from outbuildings and the surrounds of property and it should be stressed that outbuildings should where possible be fitted with an alarm

Vehicles

Please even in your driveway remember to make sure your vehicle is locked and remove items of value and do not leave anything on display. If you are out and about shopping do not leave items on show but lock them in the boot out of sight.

Oil Tanks

Wherever possible screen tanks and install security lighting, alarms are becoming more sophisticated and more details can be obtained from ourselves.

IF YOU HAVE INFORMATION OR ARE SUSPICIOUS ABOUT ANYTHING
REPORT IT ON 01473 613500 and IF YOU THINK A CRIME IS BEING COMMITTED
ALWAYS DIAL 999.

HOW ARE WE DOING

Below are some facts and figures relating to THE SUFFOLK CONSTABULARY

Performance

- Suffolk remains one of the safest counties in the country. The current crime rate for the county is at its lowest for a decade.
- 88% of people in Suffolk feel safe where they live (year end 2009/2010)
- Figures for the first five months of this year show that reports of criminal damage are down 8%, sexual offences are down 7% and drug offences are down 26%.
- Incidents of anti-social behaviour are down 11.8% so far this year, with rowdy or inconsiderate behaviour down 15.4%
- Although domestic burglary has risen by more than 100 crimes this year, we are keeping on top of detections, which have increased by 72. The detection rate is up by more than 5%.
- Violence in public places is slightly down this year (5 crimes), but the number of detections has gone up to 25, giving a detection rate of 42%
- Community resolutions have made a significant contribution to the number of crimes we 'solve'. So far, 1356 crimes have been community resolved, giving an overall solved rate of 31%.

Priorities

- Along with our partners, we are committed to reducing crime and anti-social behaviour across the county. Together we have developed Minimum Standards of service for victims and witnesses of anti-social behaviour, ensuring a high level of service is provided across the county.

The current Priorities for Mid Suffolk Central are:-

- Carry out speed checks in Stonham Aspal and Thorndon - We are involving the community in educating motorists through work with schools, Parish and District Councils.
- Resolve Anti Social behaviour at Wells Way play area, Debenham, - We are working with the community, Parish Council and Lawrence Homes to resolve issues. We are also working to identify a site for the provision of a Youth Shelter for older youths.
- Investigate Road Safety in the area of Stonham Aspal Primary School.

Efficiency

- We have made changes to the opening hours of public enquiry desks at police stations across the county to better suit local needs. The opening hours will now reflect the demand they face, making better use of our resources. Police stations will remain open as operational bases for officers. **This will not affect the availability of police officers to respond to emergency incidents 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, nor the continued presence of Safer Neighbourhood**

Teams to engage with the public on local concerns and to deal with community issues on a daily basis.

Have Your Say

The Community Priority Setting Meeting is now open to the public and is where our priorities for the following month will be set, please come along and raise any issues. The next meeting is on 26th January 2011, at Dove Cottage, High Street, Debenham IP14 6QN.

This meeting starts at 7.00pm and finishes at 8pm. All members of the Parish Council as well as the public are invited to attend when they can bring any issues/concerns to the meetings attention.

Please contact us to find out when later meetings are, alternatively the information is on our website.

New Team Member

On Monday 9th August Sally Fray joined the Safer Neighbourhood team here at Debenham as a Police Community Support Officer and will be working to provide our services to the Communities of the Mid Suffolk Central region. You will see Sally out and about and she looks forward to meeting members of the community.

Quality of service

If you would like to tell us your views on the service that you have received from us or just to say how nice it is to see a Police Officer in your village, please let us know. We appreciate all feedback & comments from residents within our SNT area.

Contact us

Tel: 01473 613500 & ask to speak to the Mid Suffolk Central Team

E-mail: midsuffcentral.snt@suffolk.pnn.police.uk

Website: www.onesuffolk.co.uk/safersuffolk/midsuffolkcentral - please visit our website which is updated regularly.

3. Minutes of the previous Meeting held on 13th September 2010, which had previously been circulated to Councillors, were approved

4. Matters Arising

4(1) Items 4(2) and 9(2) 13.9.10: Bus stop

A response had been received from Waveney Trees to the Parish Council's enquiry as to why the elm stump had been left when work was carried out in August. Apparently the fence alongside Mr Turner's property is attached to it and so it was left until the fence could be supported in some other way. Mr Burnett offered to visit Mr Turner at the weekend to see if this could be done so that Waveney Trees can come back to remove the stump

Written confirmation of funding for the bus stop and shelter had still not been received from Suffolk County Council, despite the Clerk contacting Brian Lomax about this. He had now been informed that the trees had been cleared in readiness for work to begin.

[When Cllr Stringer arrived later in the meeting he was asked if he could press for a letter to be sent so that the Parish Council could be certain that work was able to go ahead, and he agreed to do so]

4(2) Item 9(1) 13.9.10: Street lights

Nigel Panting from SCC had offered a site visit regarding the G39 compliance of the street lights in the village to hopefully resolve the difference in assessment made by SCC/EDF and Alistair Haveron from Morgan Est. Mr Cripps and Mr Hewitson offered to attend with the Clerk on behalf of the Parish Council. Clerk to arrange a date and time

4(3) Item 10(2) 13.9.10: Speed on B1077

Brian Lomax had responded to the complaint about high vehicle speeds on the B1077 saying that the request had been passed to the Speed Management Administrator for inclusion in the next meeting of the Speed Management Panel

4(4) Correspondence for circulation – any matters arising

Mr Cripps noted that there had been some information in the bundle about illegal signs on the highway and he suggested that people and organisations that put up posters in the village to advertise events etc, should be asked to remove them once the event has taken place. Clerk to suggest to ORAC that an item might be included in the next Oracle

5. Correspondence

5(1) Correspondence for circulation – flyer about Festival of Remembrance to be held in Bury St Edmunds on Thursday 11th November; information about 2011 Census; LAIS 1307 Publicity Code, LAIS 1308 Public Service Ombudsmen, LAIS 1288.1 Abolition of Cheques, LAIS 1309 Big Lottery Fund; LINK Officers Newsletter Summer 2010; MSDC Housing Services Memo re tenant survey

5(2) SALC Public Services Survey (circulated in bundle from previous meeting)

No one had any particular issues to raise

5(3) Consultation on Mid Suffolk Licensing Policy, triennial review (circulated in bundle from previous meeting)

No one had any comments to make

5(4) An invitation had been received from SALC who were looking for five Parish Councils to participate in discussions between SCC and the Highways Agency about diversion routes for trunk roads. As this will not affect Occold directly it was felt that it was more appropriate for councillors from parishes more likely to be affected to take part

5(5) A letter had been received from SCC about the forthcoming review of bus services in the county that are coming to the end of their current contractual commitment. It is expected that the frequency of service of the 113 and 114 that serve Occold will be maintained but with some peak hour alterations to increase use of the lesser used services. Clerk to write to express satisfaction that the vital service for Occold is to be retained

6. Parish Paths Partnership

Several matters had been reported to the Rights of Way department (via Customer Services Direct) after the last meeting, and were being dealt with as follows: -

- No cycling/riding signs are to be put on the fingerpost for FP1 near Occold Hall

early in October

- Broken signs at FP4 (Redlingfield Road) and on B1077 added to contractors list for replacement
- Sign at Occold Hall to be collected

7. Planning Matters

7(1) PA2217/10 The Beeches, The Street: Replacement of External front door (Listed Buildings Consent) It was noted that consent had been granted

7(2) An invitation had been received from Diss Town Council to attend conference on future planning policies affecting the town as they prepare for Site Specific Policies as part of the Local Development Framework for South Norfolk. Clerk to respond that the Parish Council is willing to take part dependent on timing of meetings and availability of representatives

8. Meetings and Training

8(1) Report on Village Groups meeting held on 20th September

Mr Hull reported on this meeting which he had attended as Neighbourhood Watch co-ordinator and Parish Council representative. The evening had been interesting, hearing what other groups are doing in the village. A brass group had been started at the school with the help of a music teacher who visited once a week. Work was continuing to resolve the noise issues at the hall, with ORAC, the builders and Mid Suffolk working together to try to sort things out and in the meantime the Environmental Health Officer was to reduce the severity of the Noise Abatement Notice

8(2) An invitation had been received to attend SALC AGM on Monday 8th November 2010 at Henley Community Centre. Unfortunately this is the same date as the next Parish Council meeting and no-one wished to attend

9. Finance

9(1) Budget and Expenditure for first 6 months of year were reviewed and found to be satisfactory. It was noted that it might be useful in future to compare figures with the previous year's

9(2) The Register of Assets was reviewed. The new insurance policy index-links the values of the assets, this year by 3%. Approved and signed by the Chairman

9(3) Submitted for payment Clerk's salary for 1st April 2010 to 30th September 2010 being £918 (SCP22 = £10.198 per hour for 180 hours). Approved

9(4) Receipt of £3475 from Mid Suffolk District Council being precept for 6 months was noted

9(5) Information had been received from Mid Suffolk about estimated election costs for Parish Council elections in 2011. These to be borne in mind when setting the Budget for 2011/12 in January 2011

10. Reports from County and District Councillors

10(1) County Councillor Andrew Stringer gave his report to the meeting: -

New Strategic Direction

I reported to the last meeting that the County Council were looking into how we might save money. The document suggested “We might also want to be the holder of strategic infrastructure that enables smaller enterprises, As we move towards divesting our services there may need to be an interim step of payment by activity and to start creating more commercial skills within our services.”

I interpreted this to mean “here come the cuts”!

How close we were, the county is honestly proposing that within a decade it will be just a commissioning body effectively outsourcing everything. At October’s Full Council this was voted to be acted upon. We did succeed however in gaining an amendment, which suggested that charities and parishes etc be consulted to find out if there was capacity to take on the services being “divested”. If there is not the capacity then this process will become an exercise in wholesale privatisation.

Bridge Open at Last

After a mere wait of around 40 years the Bridge enabling Stowmarket to stand a chance of being gridlock free is at last open. This vital link is the largest single piece of infrastructure the county council has been involved in this year. As reported in earlier reports the bridge has artwork etched into the parapets depicting scenes of the industrial past of Mid Suffolks largest settlement. The opening of this link will also better integrate the near on a thousand houses on Cedar’s Park to be able to not only drive to town but also Cycle and walk. I have had a few comments regarding the number and effectiveness of the traffic lights and would welcome your comments on the issue.

Scrutiny Committees

The Scrutiny committees that sit at the County Council are being reviewed. All of these panels are chaired by the governing group at the moment, and after serving on one for over a year, I am sceptical as to how much real scrutiny is achieved. Our groups submission to the powers that be at County Hall is that the present regime should be scrapped in favour of a more open form of scrutiny were “task and finish” Panels are used to actually tackle specific issues, rather than the present arrangement were we are told the parameters of the questions we might ask. Hopefully, allowing us mere back benchers a more meaningful role in holding the Leaders and Cabinet to account.

Lights Out

Next Wednesday the cabinet will vote whether to adopt a new program of dimming control to their streetlight’s. If approved, it will mean that lights will be able to be controlled to the minute, rather than the dawn to dusk regulation at present. It will provide a lam by lamp control capability. The borrowing needed to achieve this (2.5 million) will be paid for from Energy savings from the network.

10(2) The Clerk read out a report from District Councillor Charles Tilbury: -

Merger with Babergh District Council

In the last week of September both Councils approved the recommendations within the Detailed Business Case, to create a new Council from April 2013, covering the whole of south and central Suffolk.

This is believed to be the first time in the UK that two existing District councils have agreed in principle to press ahead with their own abolition and replacement with a new

authority.

Engagement at local level is seen as critical to the success of creating a new single Council. We will now start work with communities, councillors and staff to examine what democratic and staffing arrangements are needed at a local level, and what level of interest communities, including Town and Parish Councils, have in becoming involved with the delivery of services and decision making at a local level.

To summarise:

- The business plan expects to save over £7million between both councils over 4 years
- The grant we receive is likely to be cut over the same period by a similar amount
- The government has already agreed a £4 billion budget cut for next year. This will affect monies for areas such as housing, planning, regeneration and economic development
- There will be a nil council tax rise for at least 2 years
- Feedback from council staff is overwhelmingly positive and in favour of pressing on with the merger and provide absolute certainty for the future. They are fed up with prevarication and delay, particularly in light of the LGR debacle
- Failure to provide a clear lead is a failure of leadership and an abdication of responsibility by elected members
- The business plan figures have been exhaustively tested and reviewed. They are very cautious and are therefore likely to be underestimates
- Only a full merger provides this level of savings as there will only be one senior management team
- The lack of money will impinge on the most vulnerable members of society as there will be less money available for affordable housing, community transport, voluntary bodies, community grants, CAB and rural services such as the Coffee Caravan in the more remote areas of both councils
- It will be more difficult to find the resources for economic development in areas such as Stowmarket and discretionary areas of activity such as arts and leisure
- Less resources for leveraging in funding from other sources of government and the private sector
- A joint council covering a third of the county's geographic area will have to be listened to and thus has more influence in critical areas such as the economy, education and healthcare. This is particularly important following the changes being proposed by the county council
- We can also co-ordinate services better with other bodies - health, police, emergency actions etc
- Greater economies of scale when new contracts are signed for leisure, procurement, IT and others
- Arrangements for localities are being drawn up by the constitutional working group. The group is collating evidence from the recently formed unitary councils, outside bodies, parish councils and individuals
- We need to keep the momentum going full steam ahead
- Government is said to be particularly interested in our proposals and will do all they can to assist us.

Waste & recycling

We are continuing our efforts to reduce the amount of waste going into landfill (which attracts a rising amount of tax we have to pay). The contractor is making a concerted effort to check the recycling bins and teams are informing residents of the “do’s and don’ts” of recycling. Between the two of them, the message seems to be getting through, as recycling rates have inched up to 44.96% in June, the best achieved so far.

Hartismere Hospital

Agreement appears finally to have been reached with the PCT on the future of the site. One possible complication is the presence of beds in Paddock House, which are funded by the PCT, and the future plans the County has for residential care. The size of the project is such that it will not require interference from the Strategic Health Authority, which has never understood the needs of more remote rural communities such as ours, and the disadvantaged residents who live there.

Audit Commission

The announced abolition of the Audit Commission should save local authorities such as ours significant sums of money, both in terms of fees (which we have long argued were inflated, were non-negotiable, and did not provide value for money) and in terms of officer time in meeting their requirements. It will be replaced by firms from the private sector, which will be subject to competition, and thus we expect significantly lower costs.

Travellers and gypsies

In September Communities and Local Government Secretary Eric Pickles announced that travellers who play by the rules will get the same rights as other mobile home residents and could benefit from more authorised sites. At the same time, top-down Whitehall planning rules on travellers which ministers believe have undermined community cohesion and harmed the countryside will be scrapped.

Instead, councils will get financial benefits for building authorised sites where they are needed.

The Government has already freed councils from the top-down Regional Strategies and the associated building targets; this now allows councils to decide for themselves how many traveller pitches are necessary in their area according to local need and historic demand.

The Government is concerned about the growing number of unauthorised developments and encampments and the problems they cause within communities. The Secretary of State is looking at ways to strengthen the powers available to councils to more effectively tackle unauthorised development. This will include action against speculative, unscrupulous private developers

11. Matters to be advised (at the Chairman’s discretion)

11(1) The Clerk advised the meeting that a Poppy Wreath had been ordered on behalf of the Parish Council for the forthcoming Remembrance Day service

11(2) It was noted that after heavy rain water was running out of the ditch and across the road downhill at the left hand bend into Eye on the B1077 at the junction with the road to

Redlingfield. It was suggested that it would be advisable for this to be sorted out before the colder weather as it leads to black ice forming there. Clerk to contact Eye Town Council

12. Date of next meeting is Monday 8th November 2010 at 8pm in the Village Hall.

Meeting closed 9.20pm