

POLSTEAD PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on Thursday 30th April 2009 in the Village Hall, Polstead.

In the Chair: Mr Nick Brandt

In attendance: Mr David Yorke-Edwards (County Councillor), Mrs Sue Wigglesworth (District Councillor), Councillors Mandy Flather, Michael Hackford, Richard Kilshaw, Anne Macwilson. Mrs Sandra Gray (Clerk) and eight Members of the Public

1) Apologies for Absence: John Baxter, Jim Marshall, Matt Paisley (Suffolk Constabulary), Brian & Margaret Regan, Richard Sandford

2) Minutes of the meeting of 22nd April 2008

The Minutes of the 22nd April 2008 were approved and signed by the Chairman.

3) Report from Suffolk Constabulary:

Seven crimes had been reported.

4) Report from County Councillor

David Yorke-Edwards presented his report. He stated that he had completed nearly four years as County Council and believed that this year had been Suffolk County Council's most successful year. The Audit Commission gave Suffolk the top rating of four stars and said that the authority was "improving well". Suffolk County Council was able to announce its lowest ever council tax increase of just 2.45% for 2009-10. David Yorke-Edwards was delighted to say that he had been able to donate to Polstead Village Hall the sum of £800.00 from his Locality Budget. This was used towards the cost of replacing the central heating boiler in the Village Hall.

5) Report from District Councillor:

Councillor Sue Wigglesworth presented her report. She stated that the increase of 2.9% remains the lowest District or Borough Council in Suffolk. Panel Sue Wigglesworth, as Chairman of the Housing Committee, has been closely involved with the commissioning of 755 new homes and 83 completed during 2008/9. The Leisure facilities at Hadleigh are still in progress. Sue is the only independent involved with the consultations around the Local Government Review which is now in the second consultation period. At the Annual Council Meeting on 21st April, Babergh's official response was to support the two unitary option.

6) Report from Chairman of Polstead Parish Council

The Chairman Nick Brandt welcomed the Parishioners to the present Council's second Annual Parish Meeting. The present Council, which is now half way through its term of office, stated that the policy of Polstead Parish Council was and is to maintain the infrastructure of the village. Improvements had been made with the allotments which were all now cultivated. The Council had paid for labour to maintain the footpaths of which there were 27.5 miles. The bank of the pond was also to be kept clear and the Chairman explained all the work which had been undertaken as

well as future work to be done with Carse Pond. With the Parish Council having undertaken some clearance with Carse Pond, a meeting with Mr Boucher of Suffolk Highways had resulted in the ditches being cleared in Heath Road. The flooding, which had occurred in January, had been brought to the attention of Highways and the Council are awaiting the pressure jetting of the culverts before any more work can be arranged.

The Chairman stated that the days of many volunteers doing the work had disappeared and the culture of “getting a man in” had taken over. Therefore the Council had paid for the work needed to maintain the infrastructure.

In relation to the subject of a bus stop/shelter, the Chairman Nick Brandt informed the parishioners that this was still an on going and the Council was awaiting a report from Suffolk Highways. Once there is a viable project to put forward, there will be a public meeting for the parishioners of the village. In the end the decision of whether or not to proceed will lie with the Parish Council. The Chairman stressed that the Parish Council Standing Orders require the Councillors to give full weight to any views expressed and that there will be a genuine consultation exercise and not a cosmetic one.

The year had seen the annual Carol Service on the Green and the Village Hog Roast in September. Both events had been well attended, particularly the Carol Service. With regards to the Hog Roast, the Council had agreed to repeat the event on 12th September this year. The Chairman stated that, with the experience of last year, it was anticipated that the event will be self funding.

As to the 29% increase in the precept, the Chairman explained that a third was used to pay for a Clerk and RFO. A professional Clerk was required these days to deal not only with the accounts but also the work which came down from Government and County Council.

Parishioners questioned the Chairman as to whether the precept would increase by 29% each year. The Chairman explained that for several years the precept had been low and the Clerk and he had investigated the precept level and when compared to similar Parishes the precept for Polstead was in fact very low. The belief of the Council was that to make the village pleasant it had to be paid for but he believed that the precept would not need to increase by 29% next year.

A parishioner thanked the Council for the work done on the footpaths and in particular the clearance of the Triangle by the pond which was a horse watering hole. The Chairman explained that the bench in the Triangle had been donated in memory of a parishioner.

7) Report from Polstead Neighbourhood Watch

In the absence of Brian Regan, the Clerk read his report. The report stated that the incidence of crime in the parish continues to be generally low, even when the recent thefts of quad bikes and motor bikes are taken into account. Brian Regan continues to chair the six monthly meetings between the police Safer Neighbourhood Team and NW coordinators from Hadleigh and surrounding parishes. With warmer weather on the way and windows and doors being left open, as will garages and garden sheds when the

lawnmowers are in use, Brian Regan asked for vigilance and stressed the advantage of Police Direct.

8) Report from Polstead Village Hall Committee

Sue Wigglesworth, Chair of the Village Hall Committee, reported to the Council that the year had been a financial strain with the breaking down of the boiler and a new one costing £6,000. The Village Hall Committee anticipated, however, that the new boiler would be more economical and the Parish Council was thanked for their continuing support in paying for £800.00 of heating oil. The Youth project was under way and special mention was given to Lisa Matthews for her perseverance in setting it up despite all the hurdles regarding working with children legislation.

9) Report from Polstead Village Recorder

Bill Wigglesworth reported to the Council. The main developments during the last year were:

- Census Records available from Martin Mitchell for the years 1881, 1891 and 1901 helped with the enquiries about past residents of the area. Church records will be on display at the Open Day planned for later this year.
- Military Survey of Polstead in 1522 provided by Martin Mitchell shows an interesting excerpt, relating to Polstead, from the Military Survey of Babergh Hundred in 1522.
- Suffolk Recorders Day on 8 October 2008 and research into aspects of the history of St. Mary's Church Polstead.
- History of Polstead School and Public Houses in Polstead. Anne Lewis has been working on gathering information on both these areas and would welcome any information and records that may be available.

Bill Wigglesworth finished his report by informing the parish of future activities which included developing the information available on the Polstead Website and he welcomed suggestions from Parishioners for inclusion.

10) Report from Polstead Tree warden

In the absence of Jim Marshall the Clerk read his report. Jim Marshall has given advice to both the Parish Council and Parishioners of various aspects of trees within the Parish and attended Tree warden Meetings organised by Babergh. The Hedgerow Survey due for 2010 has yet to be completed and any offers of help to complete the survey work would be greatly appreciated.

11) Reports and Questions from members of Polstead Village

The Polstead Community Shop celebrates 25 years this year and is the fourth oldest Community Shop in the country. Parishioners were invited to a celebration at the shop on May 8th at 6.30 to 8.30pm.

The Chairman closed the meeting at 20.45 .