

**WHATFIELD PARISH COUNCIL  
MINUTES OF ANNUAL PARISH MEETING  
HELD AT WHATFIELD VILLAGE HALL ON 3<sup>rd</sup> MAY 2017**

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The meeting opened at 7.50pm.

**Present**

Mr. P. Whittle	Chairman
Mr. D. Dray	Parish Councillor
Mrs C Curtis	Parish Councillor
Mr G Smith	Parish Councillor
Mr S Clifford	Parish Councillor
Mrs. J. Antill	County Councillor
Mr. A. Ferguson	District Councillor
Mrs. L. King	Clerk

**1. Chairman's Welcome**

Mr Paul Whittle was elected Chairman for a period of 12 months at the Annual General Meeting

**2. Apologies for Absence**

Mr David Cross Parish Councillor

**3. Matters Arising and Confirmation of Minutes of meeting 4<sup>th</sup> May 2016**

No matters arising. The Minutes were approved as a true record of the meeting and signed by the Chairman. Prop Mrs H. Landon ; Sec. Mr. S. Clifford Accepted unanimously.

**4. Chairman's Report**

There have been some personnel changes since the end of 2016. Ray Parker our chairman and Ruth Lucas have both resigned from the parish council. Both gave the village excellent service over a number of years and deserve our thanks and good wishes for the future. As elected Vice Chairman I am now acting chairman until the AGM in 3<sup>rd</sup> May. We had several people propose themselves for co-option onto the council and we welcome Graham Smith and Simon Clifford who have joined us to bring the council back up to full strength.

The residents at Sheckie Meadow have been living in the village for coming up for two years now and are well settled into the village with at least one child attending the school and others learning about allotment growing!

The larger development at Church Farm is nearing completion with houses now advertised and on sale. A very useful newsletter has been produced by Councillor David Dray to keep villagers up to date on progress throughout the build. The rather impressive website at <http://www.landex.co.uk/current-developments/church-farm-place-whatfield/> shows that the "first plot complete & ready for viewing end May 2017". We should see some new villagers moving in this summer and autumn. There are ten 2-5 bedroom detached houses for private sale and a further five properties will be 'affordable'. A two acre field alongside the development will be landscaped for villagers' use.

We have had some brand new signs erected on the village green to help direct people to the school and the Village Hall. Thanks to Councillor David Cross. The continuing success and use made of the village playground is very rewarding for the council, the original work and ongoing maintenance led by Councillor Helen Landon.

The project to get a speed indicator device (SID) installed in Whatfield is progressing. The SID is expensive so with help from SCC the remaining cost will be shared with Monks Leigh, and the equipment will be used alternately in both parishes. Both parishes now have posts in place on which to mount the kit. We are reviewing a draft agreement and then we can proceed to purchase the equipment. A village Welcome Pack has been produced to help new villagers understand and gain access to all the wonderful clubs and facilities in the village. Thanks to Councillor David Dray. The allotments are all up and running with contracts signed for the new year with almost all plots taken. Unfortunately there has been more 'opportunistic' crime in the village over the last year so please be vigilant and lock away valuables. Since 2016 we have not had a police presence at parish council meetings and it appears, anecdotally at least, that there are less police patrols.

The damaged horse chestnut tree in front of the bungalows in The Street has been removed. We continue to rent and maintain the car park off The Street for use by villagers for off-street parking. We have chased up the repair of potholes, cracks and a broken drain cover with the county council highways with some success. There appears to be simply too much work across the county for the resources allocated. Other ongoing items include the future of the telephone box in The Street –we want to keep this but for change of use (yet to be determined); emptying of the Dog Poo bins around the village; upkeep of the village seat around the oak tree on the corner of Wheatfields, and consideration of how to make the (non) walkway along The Street into Semer Road safe for children walking to school.

Once again we have not raised the parish precept. For this year it equates to £23.17 per year for a Band D property. This shows as a reduction on the Council Tax Bill as a percentage of the (increased) number of properties in the district. Obviously the precept pays for all the items that the parish council manage and contribute to for the welfare of the village, amongst which is the upkeep of the church graveyards. These are kept in an excellent state by Councillor Graham Smith and helpers. Graham also looks after the village footpaths, which are described in a new local map that can be found on the village website.

Finally, many thanks again to all those who manage the footpaths, cut the grass on the village green, manage the children's' playground and manage the conservation areas.

## **5. Clerk's Report**

Following the APM in May last year, the Parish Council meetings in July, October and December 2016, and January and April 2017.

Two new Councillor joined at the 2016 due to the resignations of Mr Parker and Mrs Lucas. Mr Graham Smith and Mr Simon Clifford were co-opted onto the Parish Council.

## **6. Playground report**

Can't believe we've had the Playground 5 years now! It has proved extremely popular with families from the village and also visitors. The School also makes good use of it too. We are due our annual inspection next month, I will inspect/fix any minor things prior to this. Generally people have used the equipment respectfully & safely, no real issues this year. Grass cutting & strimming is underway for the growing season, our new volunteer, Karl from Sheckie Meadow has done a great job - continuing this season without my asking! I did give him £50 for fuel at the end of last season. Our maintenance funds remain healthy, any maintenance so far has come from the interest on the funds. Still of concern is road safety outside!

## **7. Annual Accounts for YE 31.3.17 and appointment of internal Auditor**

(Appendix A) It was agreed to re-appoint Mr. Roy Plumbly as Internal Auditor if he is agreeable. The Accounts were approved and signed. Prop Mr. Cross; sec. Mrs. Landon Unanimous.

## **8. County Councillor's Report**

This will be my last report to your Annual Meeting as your County Councillor since the Council comes to an end in early May.

Looking back over the past four years I wish that I had a more exciting record of achievement at the Council to report. Unfortunately however the very difficult financial circumstance in which all of local government finds itself has meant that the activities of the council have been necessarily limited. The main focus therefore has been on measures to cut costs while doing as little damage to council services as possible and on the whole I believe that this has been achieved.

Over the past four years our funding from Central Government has been reduced dramatically representing a large proportion of our net budget of a little over £550m. We have been obliged as a result to find savings of over £100m over the period. Further savings are likely to be necessary in years to come. As we promised in 2013 the County Council's share of council tax has not gone up. we have however increased the County Council share of the council tax bill by 2% last year and 3% in 2017/18 to reflect the levy permitted by Central Government to support our Social Care activities.

Suffolk has a population that includes more people over 60 than other parts of the country, and this puts particular pressure on our Social Care budget. Thanks to investment in new care homes made prior to 2013, and a programme that changed the way that we deliver services to users, we have with one or two exceptions managed to continue to deliver adequate services to those in need who qualify. This has not been easy and there is need for further increases in resources in the years to come combined with improved co-operation with the National Health Service.

I think that it is fair to say that over the past two years the attention of the leaders of councils across Suffolk has been quite pointlessly distracted by the issue of Devolution. It was obvious as soon as the arrival of the new administration under Theresa May that this matter had fallen down the Government's agenda, and that only the most enthusiastic regions, which did not include Norfolk and Suffolk, would be pressing ahead with what was in any event a flawed initiative.

I would expect future changes in local government to be connected with the creation of unitary councils, which would to my mind be a good thing.

The Highways Department has been held back by problems relating to the contract that was signed four years ago now with Keir. It is clear that insufficient thought went into the design of these arrangements, and this is only now being sorted out. I will not dwell on highways apart from saying that demand for road repair and improvement, particularly in a dispersed county such as Suffolk, is infinite and it is almost impossible to satisfy the demands of everyone.

Not all of the news has been negative. Our Children's Services, both in the area of education and in looked after children have both shown an improving trend. Firstly, Suffolk's Children in Care services received a Good rating from Ofsted last year. Secondly, four years ago standards in Suffolk's Schools were very poor. Indeed one of my stated aims in my election material at the election in 2013 was to try to help to support improvements in educational attainment in the

County. I have enjoyed being a member of the Schools Improvement Board which has had oversight of this process. Suffolk has gradually risen from the bottom of the league tables, and now stands at or slightly above average in most areas which is a good achievement. One area where we still need to make improvements is in the area of special needs children and the focus is now shifting towards this aim.

Whatfield

It has been a great pleasure to represent Whatfield over the past four years. I was pleased to be able to contribute towards chairs for the village school and items for the school from my locality budget.

I have enjoyed visiting the village, and attending your Parish Council meetings.

It only remains to thank the Chairman of the Council, the Clerk, and the other councillors for their help and co-operation and the warm welcome that I have always enjoyed, and to wish all residents of Whatfield all the very best for the future.

## **9. District Councillor's Report** **End of Year 2**

As we reach the end of the second year in its history with a Conservative majority in Babergh I can again report that the year has been challenging. In the year, Babergh (and Mid Suffolk) have had to address some key issues that are almost all about "process change" to facilitate better and more effective decision making. The next 2 year will focus more on "outcomes" for our constituents.

### **Devolution**

Devolution (now just for Suffolk) sits on a Minister's desk in Whitehall. I will be amazed if it goes ahead with Suffolk alone as it goes against all the "bigger is better" principles that this government has pushed in a devolution context.

### **Governance Arrangements**

After the Babergh AGM in May 17 and when we move to Ipswich, Babergh District Councillors will move from a Committee to a Cabinet governance arrangement. This (in theory at least) should make decision making quicker and easier although the power of decision making will rest in the hands of a smaller group of Councillors.

### **Public Access**

An odd name for part of the decision to move from Babergh and Needham Market to Endeavour House, Ipswich. The move will take place in the middle of the year and be completed by September 17. With a shared back office Officer support arrangement this should make us more efficient as we will sit alongside our County Council colleagues and money will be saved by not having 2 half empty District Council buildings. However, the move will be challenging although we will ensure that support arrangements are put in place so that constituents do not have to go to Ipswich if they wish to meet with Council Officers. Details yet to be released.

### **Boundary Commission**

As I have briefed previously, the Boundary Commission (BC) is looking at the number of District Councillors that we have in Babergh DC. Currently we have 43 but the Chief Executive has advised the BC that we require only 31 to populate the various committees that are needed to manage day to day business. The new number, therefore, is likely to be close to 31 (effective for next District Council elections in 2019) rather than the 36 that we suggested. I voted against 31 in the Full Council Meeting as I think the logic that got us to that number is flawed ie every District Councillor will sit on a minimum of 2 committees. The jury is out on that one, but irrespective, I do not anticipate the reduction from 43 to 31 to impact on the South Cosford Ward

### **Housing (Public Sector)**

We have recently completed a new public sector housing development in Lavenham and we have another that should be completed this year. We also have ambitious plans to build more council owned property. Details to follow.

### **Housing – Private Sector**

We are building nowhere near the number of private sector houses that are required for our growing population in Babergh. However, I will remain strongly in favour of "right type", "right place" and "right number" as we look at individual planning applications

We have also agreed that a new McCarthy Stone development will go ahead in Hadleigh. The approval is for 65 flats and 2-3 bedroom chalet bungalows in what is best known as the site where Tesco planned (and failed) to build their supermarket. The project has been well monitored and influenced for the better by Councillor Sian Dawson (Hadleigh

North) to ensure that it is built to a high standard in keeping with the desirable location behind the High Street and close to the river. Building work is planned to start before the end of 2017.

## **East House Hadleigh**

**At last** and after too many years, the disposal of East House has been agreed. It was offered at offers over £650,000 and it went under offer within 2 weeks – sold for £700K to a developer. This valuable asset should again become a high profile part of the town.

## **5 Year Land Bank**

As part of our housing delivery requirements from national government, we are required to maintain a 5 year supply of potential building sites. Just last month, and out of the blue, Babergh has declared that it no longer meets this requirement, which makes us vulnerable to speculative planning applications. Not good news and especially relevant to villages such as Whatfield where developments are being considered.

### **10. Conservation Report – Buckles Meadow**

The grass is growing well and hopefully will be cut for hay at the same time as the old Rectory. Richard has replanted an oak tree in the far corner of further Buckles and some cowslips in the nearer part of the meadow. The Kestrels seem to be nesting and will hopefully bring of young.

Hunty's Vale - Richard has continued to cut the paths and eliminated the seedling trees. The nestboxes appear to be occupied, nuthatches have been seen. The owl box is being visited , hopefully it will be used. Richard has mended the lower gate\_latch.

The Driftway - All the trees are growing well and the growth surrounding has been cut . The path has been cut and trees planted on that side are doing well.

More and more I am aware of the amount of work done by Richard and our indebtedness to him This conservation area would not be sustainable without that amount of input.

### **11. Tree Warden's Report = No Report**

### **12. Footpath Warden's Report**

The footpaths have had a good year, I know we have had a lot of rain at times and the only ones to suffer where the path by the Travis and the one between the chapel house and silver lays, at times it was a bit of a difficult journey but like good bodies that we are we over came. Dog walkers are still not remembering to put those little plastic bags in there pockets take them out and pick up, one day we shall be in luck ha ha. We have one hedge that needs a haircut, Lynn asked for it to be cut but it did not happen, but come September we will ask again. Thank you to everyone who love to walk and walk with love and care. His only companion during the building of the patio was a robin who has been there day in and out ,Graham named him Fluff ,why because his feathers grow the wrong way and he looks like a ball of fluff, so we have named the patio "Fluffs Space" when you go and look at this great piece of work please look out for Fluff.

**13. Village Hall Report** It does not seem a year has passed, and what a year we have had, the Friday night pub night have been getting more loved by our beautiful punters and we have seen new faces, thank you to all who come. The bookings have risen and the feedback from hirers is all praise .saying what a lovely hall it is everything is just right, we had a very beautiful wedding with fairy lights and the dressing of the hall was out of this world photos did not give it justice but gave it a good go. Now for our new feature a patio between the hall and the oak tree. This all down to Graham Smith who has been working at this for over 6 weeks. He arranged for Phillip Munson to come with his mini digger we asked Michael Craske if we could put our dig out spoil on the soil heap, yes was the reply, on the day of the big dig Carl turned up with a tractor and trailer and took load after load down to the farm, and it rained and rained and rained but I was all done in the morning, since then a group of men spent the morning moving the hard core, the laying the slabs, pointing up and now it is nearing the end it is going to be grand and a great assist to the hall, thank you to hubby where would we be without you. Roll on the rest of the year let's have a good one

**14. Allotment Report** Our allotments are progressing well. We now have a plan of the individual plots with allocated plot numbers, a complete list of plot holders with contact details, a new contract signed by all holders, and all plots in use are paid up. Holders are using the gate padlock system very well so far. Hopefully, all except a single half plot will be in use by May. We have photos of each plot for monitoring, with updates as the seasons progress. Plot holders feel free to contact me about any issues, and these can usually be resolved with a chat and some clarification. It is nice to see

villagers plus individuals from Elmsett and Ash Street contributing to the allotments, and we have several families from Sheckie Meadow introducing their children to the delights of growing food and looking after chickens. I will ask the PC to consider sponsoring a competition for Best Kept Allotment and Most Improved Allotment in the near future!

15. **Community Council Report** A good year and the whole team have worked very hard again organising and supporting many functions, which have raised lots of money to support the Village Hall. This has endeavoured to keep the building up to date when necessary and support new projects. But also raising money for the yearly community events. Even without our Annual Village Fete other ideas were organised and were just as profitable so change is sometimes good.

So thanks to everyone for their time and enthusiasm to do this.

It is also nice to see new members join this year swelling our membership to 11 now. They will hopefully inject some new ideas into the mix.

We will always endeavour to raise money for the hall and with even more events coming up throughout the year we shall continue to do so. Maybe in the future if this agreeable with the committee we will sometimes make suggestions of specific things that could be bought with the money. This could either be done by letter or joint meetings (we could either request a meeting or pre arrange dates for the next year)as I and I hope you all feel this may help to possibly get things moving quicker and keep the two committees going in the right direction.

So hopefully this year will be as exciting and profitable to keep making our hall one of the best in the area.

**15. George Scott Charity Report**

Receipts	Share Div.	£698.18	
	Interest	£ 0.32	
	<b>Total</b>		<b><u>£698.50</u></b>
Expenses	New baby grant (1)	£ 20.00	
	Sickness/distress grant (3)	£ 45.00	
	Christmas grants (31)	£ 310.00	
	Funerals (2)	£ 50.00	
	Clerks fee	£100.00	
	Donations	£ 50.00	
	Other Misc. exps	£ 10.00	
	Grant Returned (1)	£ 25.00	
	<b>Total</b>		<b><u>£560.00</u></b>

**Balance brought forward £138.50**

Meeting closed at 9.10pm

Signed ..... (Chairman) Date .....

**SUMMARY RECEIPTS & PAYMENTS ACCOUNT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31<sup>st</sup> MARCH 2017**

31 <sup>st</sup> March 2016	<i>RECEIPTS</i>	31 <sup>st</sup> March 2017
3,231	Precept	3291.92
	Agency services reimbursed	
	Loans taken out	
	Capital receipts	
	Interest on investments	
280.0	Burial ground fees	297.92
	Allotment rents	
	Recreation ground lettings	
366.64	VAT repayments (SALC)	
533.83 *1)	Miscellaneous (Donations)	475.89 *1)
<b>4,411.47</b>	<b><u>TOTAL RECEIPTS</u></b>	<b>4065.73</b>

<b><u>PAYMENTS</u></b>		
960.58	<u>General administration</u>	881.66
	<u>Agency services (B.D.Store charges)</u>	
587.00	<u>Insurance</u>	612.29
	<u>S137 payments</u>	
1,294.90	<u>Capital spending</u>	
	<u>Loan interest and Loan repayments</u>	
	<u>Loans made</u>	
371.40	<u>Running costs:dog/litter/grit bins</u>	371.40
160	<u>Land lease/rental</u>	160
320	<u>Allotments, burial ground, recreation</u>	320
294.83	<u>ground, land conservation</u>	50
	<u>VAT on payments</u>	
1,269.17	<u>Miscellaneous (Donations)</u>	701.74
<b>5,257.88</b>	<b><u>TOTAL PAYMENTS</u></b>	<b>3097.09</b>

<b><u>RECEIPTS AND PAYMENTS</u></b>		
<b><u>SUMMARY</u></b>		
9729.65	<u>Balance as at 1<sup>st</sup> April 2015/1<sup>st</sup> April 2016</u>	8883.24
4411.47	<u>Total receipts</u>	4065.73
5257.88	<u>Lss total payments</u>	3042.09
<b>8883.24</b>	<b><u>BALANCE 31 MARCH 2016/31</u></b>	<b>9851.88</b>
	<b><u>MARCH 2017</u></b>	

<b><u>These cumulative funds are represented</u></b>		
<b><u>by:</u></b>		
8883.24	<u>Current Account</u>	9851.88
	<u>Deposit Account</u>	
	<u>Other Accounts/Investments</u>	
<b>8883.24</b>		<b>9851.88</b>

The above statement represents fairly the financial position of the authority as at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2017 and reflects its receipts and payments during the year.

111Signed:  
Responsible Financial Officer

Signed:  
**Chairman**

Date: