

Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held at the Village Hall, Lakenheath
Monday 21st March 2016 at 7.00pm.

Present: - Cllr Gathercole (Chairman), 8 members of the Parish Council, Councillor Noble and 38 members of the public were present.

The Chairman, David Gathercole, welcomed all to the meeting.

Apologies – Cllr Marston.

MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 16th March 2015 were available to all present. The Chairman allowed those present time to read the minutes, which were confirmed as correct and signed by the Chairman.

MATTERS ARISING

There were none.

POLICE MATTERS

There was none.

PAROCHIAL CHARITIES

The Clerk to Lakenheath Consolidated Charities, Mrs Rissen, gave the report for the year:

“In December 2015, 273 applications were received by the Trustees of Lakenheath Consolidated Charities from the aged and needy of the Parish, 24 of whom were over 90 years of age. After considering the applications, the Trustees agreed that each applicant would receive £35 with those over 90 receiving £40. Making a total of £9,640 to be distributed. The amount paid to each individual was less than the previous year because the payment from Natural England was not received until after the distribution date. The Trustees agreed to maintain the age of eligibility for the 2015 distribution at 68”.

SUFFOLK COUNTY COUNCIL

Councillor Colin Noble gave his report:

Council Tax

- Suffolk County Council and Forest Heath District Council have frozen their element of the Council Tax. A small increase of 2% is seen for the National Adult Care Levy and the National Living Wage which is a cost of £6m this year and rising.
- SCC spend £0.25 billion on adult care with £600k spent in Lakenheath.

Highways

- A power cable had been laid from the solar farm to Lords Walk. A utility company can demand to do work and the job was done quite quickly. There were a few incidents including red lights jumped. They were standard sequencing. Some places have not been finished quite up to scratch but will be addressed.
- Palmer Drive – roadworks were in place for drainage works.

- Past investment has not been great on Highways but the SCC website can be used to report problems.
- Broom Road has a recurring problem.

Street Lighting

- All G39 street lights are being replaced in Lakenheath and across the county with LED lights.
- High Street lights go off at midnight. It cannot be extended due to policy.
- Two estates are SCC lights – The Mallards & Briscoe Way, with the remainder being FHDC or LPC. LPC are making decisions on their lights.
- LED use 1/10th of electricity and last 20 years. There are 150 variances that can be used and if any are too bright let SCC or Councillor Noble know.

Infrastructure

- SCC are looking at young people. Due to the USAF market, house rent in Lakenheath is unaffordable. 1/3 of new development will be affordable housing with social landlords.
- CCG have been consulted re the doctors to ensure more doctors, nurses and appointment availability.
- Last year 46 families didn't get a space in the Primary School due to it being full. Portacabins were offered to the school but they declined. £6m has been secured for a new school and a site allocated. A planning application was submitted but subsequently withdrawn leaving little time for the school to be open in Sept 2017. This will mean another round of parents will have to bus their children to school out of the village. All that is needed is the planning permission.

The good news is Council Tax has not been increased with £34m cuts and that first line services will be protected.

The Chairman asked for *questions*, to which Councillor Noble responded.

Is the Solar Farm in Sedge Fen or Lakenheath?

Lakenheath

Did SCC provide the funding for brown bins?

Landfill waste is now incinerated. European and UK legislation has meant less money and the monies that SCC supplemented for brown bins in FHDC has been withdrawn. Babergh have always charged £50. As not everyone uses the brown bin a universal increase in the Council Tax was not made and an at cost charge is made. Government – SCC – FHDC funding has been cut.

Isn't this effectively a rise in Council Tax?

No it's a choice as you don't have to use it. It would disadvantage those who do not use.

Was there not another way to sort this out?

The Council debated a long time before making their decision.

How has it been decided that the brown bin cannot be used for half of the old waste?

Compost. Food waste is composted outside with JCBs to move. Foot and mouth has been traced back to a ham sandwich. SCC use in-vessel composting inside sheds which costs significantly less money. The increased use of black bins will be closely monitored.

Council Tax has not been put up but fly tipping or black bin use may increase?

A charge is now made for rubble and other waste. This issue will be closely monitored. Fly tipping is illegal and CCTV is used in regular hot-spots.

What is the uptake of brown bins?

It is too early to say. Other councils have seen 85% and the cost reflects this model.

If not taken up will the cost be put up?

Most places already charge.

Are the contents of the brown bin burnt?

Brown = compost / black = burnt / blue = recycled.

How long will it be £40 per year?

A 10 year contract is being agreed and the price will be held. Babergh have charged £48 for the past 8 years. The aim is for 5-10 years.

Why is Council Tax in Lakenheath more? What do we get? The village has no facilities.

The County Council supply discreet services.

Why are potholes not being addressed?

SCC are trying to get them done quicker.

Why do Lakenheath pay so much in Council Tax?

SCC pays £250k for discreet children's services and £600k in adult social care in Lakenheath.

Does Lakenheath have more than others?

The Suffolk County Council element is an aggregated sum. Forest Heath District Council is not the cheapest but not the most expensive. Lakenheath Parish Council's precept is higher than any other in FHDC.

The Chairman said that Councillor Colin Noble was representing SCC and FHDC and that Parish Council matters would be discussed later.

Will SCC repair the drains at the bottom of Avenue Road?

It is being looked at.

I have received a letter from SCC stating that the works to Eriswell Road would be completed by the end of last week which is a half-hearted attempt.

It is generous to say half-hearted.

The roads are in a diabolical state, is there a general plan to fix the potholes or is it being done on an ad hoc basis?

There is a general plan and SCC spend £40m per annum with more money being spent proactively rather than reactively. Lorries break up the roads not cars and a highway strategy is being looked at with a faster system. 11,000 people are being surveyed in Suffolk asking 'Are the roads worse than last year'?

When extended three years ago, the Governors of Lakenheath Primary School pleaded for a bigger hall, kitchen, another extra classroom and to build a second floor. Why was this ignored at the time?

The budget was £600k but £1.1 million was spent providing two new classrooms, a high-tech lab and addressing old issues. It is necessary to build a second school. There was a spike in admissions last year with less of a spike expected this year. Additional mobile classrooms have been offered but rejected by the school.

It costs more to build a new school than extend an existing one. The number of children attending determine the funding and there will never be a brilliant school if there are two smaller ones in the village.

I couldn't disagree more, land is available for a 415 space school. Competition is good and makes good schools. Better standards are seen when schools are in competition. Parents can decide. The existing school doesn't have sufficient play area and the professionals are not in favour of funding a further extension.

Why have potholes been left where work has been carried out laying the cable in Eriswell Road?

I couldn't agree more. Contractors were there to put the pipe in. Potholes and the SLOW road marking will be addressed.

How many attempts have there been to fill in potholes on the A1101?

The whole section needs to be addressed.

When a pothole is filled, what guarantee is given by the contractor? The bridge at Mildenhall has been attempted 14 times, is SCC charged 14 times?

Yes as there is structural issues under the bridge. Normally if a pothole opens up again it will be addressed. The problem under the bridge needs to be addressed.

ANNUAL REPORT

Copies of the Annual Report were available to all present. There were no matters arising.

PARISHIONERS' ISSUES

How much money has been spent on legal costs?

The clerk advised that a total of £3188 net of VAT had been spent in this financial year. After referring back to the Annual Parish Meeting minutes from 2015, she confirmed that a total of £15,000 net of VAT had been spent over the past two years.

Why is Lakenheath's Council Tax so high?

The Chairman said that the Parish Council had taken up the slack from FHDC such as the toilets on Wings Road and grass cutting. The village keeper keeps areas of the village tidy and looks after the cemetery which is appreciated by the village. He asked if the village would like these services to continue.

Who is responsible for the High Street?

The Chairman said that the village keeper litter picks in the morning.

Cllr Noble said that FHDC sweep through the village but that it is better to overlap.

I believe that the Parish Council does a good job and makes a difference.

The hedgerows are filled with rubbish. The USAF used to do a litter pick, clearing the warren. I can't understand the mentality.

Parking is seen on pavements day and night.

The Chairman said that PCSO Chittock advises that if a pushchair can get through, it is deemed preferable that half the car is off the road. The issue is discussed regularly at Parish Council meetings.

What is the law on which direction cars can park?

Cars can park anyway they like when they are within a speed restricted area.

The Chairman said that the issue would be taken up again by the Parish Council.

Is a mobility scooter wider than a pushchair?

Thanks to the Parish Council for the new noticeboards. The car park board door is sticking.

The clerk said that she will ask the village keeper to take a look.

The Chairman said that Cllr Noble had contributed half of the cost.

They are a great improvement.

In closing, the Chairman said that it was a pleasure to see so many parishioners and thanked all who had taken the time to attend the meeting.

The meeting closed at 7:55pm.