

# DRINKSTONE PARISH COUNCIL

## Minutes

Minutes of the meeting held in All Saints Church on Monday 4<sup>th</sup> February 2013

### Present

Cllrs A. Clarke, S. Cousins, M. Goldstaub, A. Johnson, C. Munford, P. Nolan, the Clerk SCC/MSDC Cllr P. Otton and eight residents.

### 1 – Apologies for Absence

An apology was received from CPO Annelly Miles

### 2 – Declarations of Interest

None

### 3 – Police Report

The Clerk read a written report from CPO Annelly Miles:-

- No crimes were recorded in the village again this month. However, in recent weeks there have been a number of crimes committed in isolated dwellings in the Cockfield area. As this is quite close to Drinkstone the Police advise that security is tightened. Any suspicious activity or vehicles should be reported. If you have to leave your home unattended a security light should be left on; criminals do not like taking chances and will avoid confrontation if they think there someone is at home.
- A replacement for Sian Uttley is still to be confirmed; details of the new Community Police Safety Officer will be passed on as soon as the appointment is made.
- The Safer Neighbourhood Team has recently had success in arresting four people in relation to possession, supply and cultivation of cannabis.
- An operation is currently running to reduce rural crime and police have been targeting poachers and hare coursers. Police are taking a robust stance towards prosecution. Any suspicious activity should be reported. The Chairman advised that hare coursers should not be approached as they have a reputation of being aggressive.

### 4 – Cllr Otton's Reports

#### Suffolk County Council

- Snow and Gritting – All of the major routes were kept open although some of the side and minor roads were left untreated. Cllr Munford said it would have been useful to have had extra grit heaps in Cross Street as the road was not gritted.
- Council Tax – It is expected that the County Council will not increase council tax when it meets to finalise its 2013/14 budget. Significant savings have been made in school budgets; uniformed fire fighters; and the number of children in care has reduced.
- Suffolk Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy – It is required under the Health and Social Care Act 2012 that the County should have a Health and Wellbeing Policy – full details can be obtained on the Council website
- Sizewell C – At its meeting on the 29<sup>th</sup> January the Council indicated support for the new nuclear power plant at Sizewell. However, since then one of the main partners has pulled out which has put doubt on the project going ahead.
- Highways – The contract with Balfour Beatty to take over the Highways is on hold. The Council cannot award the contract as previously thought; the exact details are not known. The procurement process will revert back to the previous stage where other tenders will be reconsidered.
- Education – The GCSE results across the County were disappointing; Suffolk has dropped to 141 out of 152 authorities. Cllr Nolan said that some schools were doing very well especially the schools in Bury and it was a shame that the demographics and boundary shifts had reflected in the league table.
- Young Peoples Travel Card – Suffolk is re-introducing a smart travel card for young people aged 16-19
- Schools Reorganisation – A meeting was held on the 23<sup>rd</sup> January to discuss the design of the new extension at Rattlesden Primary School. There was little opposition to what Cllr Otton describes as a “poor design in a

conservation area". It was also decided that overhead sprinklers would not be installed as they are not necessary and too expensive.

#### Mid Suffolk District Council

- Council Tax – Mid Suffolk is also proposing a zero increase in Council Tax. However, some people will have to pay tax who have not paid before due to the benefit changes.
- Council House Rents – There is a proposal to increase rents by 4.5%. Cllr Otton said she would not be in favour of a large increase at such a difficult time.
- Fuel Costs – The Council is looking at a joint fuel consortium and is in talks with Forest Heath and Babergh to find the best deal.
- Lorry Movements – Cllr Otton reported that she has asked planning enforcement to look at the increase in number of lorries travelling to the old Rookery Farm site.
- Planning – Cllr Goldstaub stated that she was disappointed that once again there has been no guidance issued by Mid Suffolk about the Governments proposals to changes in the planning law. SALC has sent out a briefing and some information but there has been utter silence from Mid Suffolk. It would have been useful to have had a guide as to where the District and Parish stand in relation to the new proposals in the National Planning Policy Framework and how it will affect the Local Development Framework. Cllr Goldstaub asked Cllr Otton to redouble her efforts to get some answers from the planning department on how the changes will be dealt with.

#### **5 – PC Vacancy**

The Chairman invited Christine Harbutt to be co-opted as a new member of the Council. The appointment fills the seat which was vacated last year. The Chairman welcomed Christine to the Parish Council and thanked her for volunteering to serve as a Parish Councillor.

#### **6 – Election of Vice Chair**

It was proposed by Cllr Cousins and seconded by Cllr Johnson that Cllr Clarke be appointed as Vice Chair. Cllr Clarke accepted the appointment

#### **7 – Open Forum**

The Chairman opened the meeting to the floor.

- It was reported that the hedge from Park Road to the Hessett junction is very overgrown and needs to be cut back.
- The flooding in Park Road and Gedding Road has once again been a problem. The Clerk agreed to write to Highways again about the worsening problems.
- It was reported that the ditch from the pumping station to Burts Farm has been cleared out and this should improve drainage and water flow.

#### **8 – Minutes**

Cllr Clarke queried the minute under Finance (item 9) stating that the allotment rents would not be increased this year. His recollection was that the water bills would be reviewed before a decision was made. As the water meters have been read this week it was agreed to re-visit this item on next months agenda when the latest water bills for both sites will be to hand.

Cllr Munford pointed out that under Matters Arising (item 15) Age Concern should be amended to Age UK. The minute was duly amended and authorised.

All other minutes of the meeting held on Monday 7<sup>th</sup> January 2012 were approved and signed by the Chairman as a true record.

#### **9 – Matters Arising**

- A letter was sent to Highways about the various problems reported last month. Some of the pot holes have been repaired. Mr Thurlow confirmed that the weir is working well – sheer volume of water had caused the flooding from the lake.
- A letter has been sent to planning about further activity on the old Rookery Farm site.
- Plans to move the healthy hedge plants from the Cricket to the Rattlesden Road allotments on the 19<sup>th</sup> January were postponed due to bad weather. The work has been rescheduled for Saturday 9<sup>th</sup> February.

- The Chairman and Clerk have redrafted the Housing Needs Survey letter which has been circulated.

### **10 – Finance**

The current account stands at £1681.19; deposit account 1 at £2651.08; deposit account 2 at £5.27 and VAT owing is £133.82 giving a total balance of £4471.36.

The separate allotment account stands at £587.70

It was agreed that the Widows Charity cheque from National Savings (£56.34) should be paid into the PC account and further discussion held with the Wrenn and Cambourne Trustees regarding combining the remaining small charities. Cllr Otton advised that charities with income of less than £5000 can operate without registering with the Charity Commission and still claim all the charity tax benefits.

The following invoices were approved for payment - £168 – All Saints Church (meeting fees); £10 – Local History Group (website fees) and £50 CAB donation.

Sue Eburne has resigned as the Internal Auditor. Cllr Cousins said she had spoken to Henry Riches who had said he would be willing to do the audit this year. It was proposed by Cllr Cousins and seconded by Cllr Goldstaub that the Clerk writes to Henry to thank him for taking on the task.

Cllr Cousins said she would obtain change of signature forms from the bank to add Cllr Clarke's signature to the authorised list. Cllr Goldstaub said it would be useful for the Clerk's signature to be added in case of emergency. Cllr Goldstaub stated that following last month's discussion the parish precept for 13/14 would be increased by 2.7% (the current rate of inflation). She added that although this was over 2% it could not trigger a referendum as this rule only applied to the larger District and County Councils.

It was agreed that discussions on the budget would begin much earlier this year giving Councillors more time to consider how the money should be spent.

### **11 – Planning**

No new planning applications this month

MSDC has approved the following applications:-

3126/12 - Listed Building Consent to Hill Farm for erection of side extension with links to outbuildings

3651/12 – Installation of steel flue to barn at Hill Farm

3651/12 – Installation of wood pellet fuelled boiler system and insertion of flue at Hill Farm

3666/12 – Erection of single storey rear extension and first floor side extension at Southernwood, Rattlesden Road.

Cllr Goldstaub reported that she had been advised that Gipping Homes has found an alternative electricity source and will no longer have to bring the power from the Ridsdill-Smiths land across Cross Street and down the side of the cricket to the building site. It was agreed that the Clerk would ask Mr Blemings to clarify how this has been achieved as both the Ridsdill-Smiths and the PC were expecting the previous route to go ahead.

### **12 – Housing Needs Survey**

All Councillors had received a copy of the re-drafted letter to go to residents with the Housing Needs Survey. It was agreed to take out the sentence relating to handing the surveys back to Councillors and to ask residents to post the survey back in the envelope provided. The Clerk stated that there were 236 homes in the village - an order for 250 copies should cover the requirements. A few spare copies are needed for people who wish to return to the village. All Councillors were asked to help with the distribution of the survey. The closing date for the survey will be 31<sup>st</sup> March and it is hoped that the results will be available by the AGM in May.

### **13 – Footpaths**

- Following last month's meeting an email was sent to the Rights of Way Officer about proposals to improve the Chapel Lane/Gedding Road footpath. Patrick Scrivens had replied that he was happy for the volunteers to carry out the work provided that they are competent and do not take on any activities that could trigger a health and safety issue. Cllr Clarke said this response was unacceptable and it was agreed that the Clerk should write a formal letter insisting that guidance and a site visit is made by the Rights of Way Officer before any work is commenced.
- It was reported that the finger post in Cross Street has been repaired and replaced and also the long awaited step has been installed on the footbridge on footpath 14.

### **14 – Allotments**

The ditch along the Chapel Lane side of the Gedding Road allotments has been cleared out and the ditch is now working well. The hedge has also been tidied and a few more hedging plants are required to complete the task. It may

be possible to use some of the hawthorn from the Cricket hedge if it is suitable; if not further hedging will be purchased.

Cllr Clarke reported that water bills have risen by 20% in the last few years and the need to scrutinise the water prices over the coming months was vital.

#### **15 – Drinkstone Mills**

The Clerk reported that a Conservation Architect from Mid Suffolk has been in touch regarding a new draft appraisal of the Drinkstone Mills Conservation Area. He has asked to come along to the March meeting to do a short presentation and to answer any questions on the report. It was agreed to invite him along and to invite residents with an interest in the mill to attend the meeting. A notice will be placed in the magazine advising residents of the consultation event.

#### **16 – Correspondence**

Mid Suffolk CAB – Appeal for funding  
Suffolk Age UK – Update  
Letter from Mr M Mason re Allotment Administration  
Glasdon Services  
Clerks and Councils Direct

#### **17 – Other Business**

No other business was raised

The meeting closed at 9:03pm

**Date of next meeting – Monday 4<sup>th</sup> March 2013**