



Minutes of Annual Reach Parish Meeting held on; Wednesday 2nd May 2012

Attendance

Michael Aves	Vice Chairman	Present
Malcolm Brearley	Chairman	Present
Ross Clark	Councillor	Present
Rita Dunnett	Councillor	Present
Hilary Fielding	Councillor	Present
Joyce Harrison	Councillor	Present
David Thomas	Councillor	Not Present
David Parr	Clerk	Present
Allen Alderson	District Councillor	Present
David Brown	County Councillor	Present

plus members of the Reach public.

Chairman's Report

The year began with a rarity: a contested parish council election, as a result of which the council was replenished with two new members. Turnout was extremely high, which is hopefully a sign of interest in parish council affairs. The downside was having to pay towards the holding of the election. The cost of democracy for a community the size of Reach is regrettably high, setting us back to the tune of £646 – or about £6 per household.

In spite of this, the parish council succeeded in freezing its precept for the second year running, meaning that taxpayers have made no additional contribution towards the parish through their council tax bills. This was down to keen cost-control.

A highlight this year has been working on the proposals for the 24Acre field, the lease for which is on the point of being signed with the National Trust. It has been a drawn-out and sometimes frustrating process obtaining a lease from the National Trust, but we do appear now to have a workable 25 year lease covering half of the 24Acre field – which is what we concluded we needed for the various projects – which include an orchard, a coppice woodland, a cricket pitch, a ménage and an observatory. The lease will begin on 1 October, once the current tenant has collected the harvest.

It is a principle of the 24Acre project that no funding of the projects will come from the parish precept and that therefore project leaders are having to raise the money in other ways. In some cases funding applications are at a fairly advanced stage.

Elsewhere, the two mowing contracts, one for the cemetery and the other for other areas, continue to work well. In addition, the council is putting in a greater effort to maintaining the lode bank on the Hythe in a state which is more welcoming to boat-users. We have just put in place a new mooring agreement with a small charge for either daily or annual moorings in order to contribute to the costs of maintaining the bank. We continue to have a mooring agreeing with the Greater Ouse Boating Association, for which we receive rent and which enables its members to use the moorings for no extra charge.

The parish council has undertaken a number of tree works this year. An additional tree – a sweet chestnut – will be planted on the top green so that we will have a fairly mature tree ready for when the current horse chestnut expires – which we have been warned may well be over the next decade or so.

Finance Report

The following comments are based on our 2011-2012 unaudited accounts.

1. Income was at £9, 079 against a budget of £9,222. Cemetery income was down by £77 and tennis court income by £76 – but we do now have a tennis court reserve of £674.
2. Cemetery cost savings were £275 due mainly to less mowing than planned plus lower maintenance costs.
3. Maintenance/Repairs spending was £182 lower than budget. We did no hedgecutting, saving £400 and with less mowing there was a saving of £466. This was offset by tree cutting excess spending of £800.
4. Other expenses were overspent by £412 due to unbudgeted election expenses of £646 – but we had training savings of £200.
5. Overall, we planned a small profit of £175 and came in with just £77 profit. However with tree cutting overspend of £800 and election expenses of £646 this is a good achievement with savings being made in other areas.
6. Our “normal” reserves are now around £4,600 and with the tennis court earmarked funds, £5,319 which is some 60% of annual spend.
7. Our budget for 2013 – with the precept held at the previous year’s level, shows a breakeven situation.
8. This coming year will be an interesting one with the Parish Council endeavouring to find funding for the 24Acres Project.

County Council Report

For me personally, 2011-12 at the County Council has been a very interesting and rewarding year. It started with Nick Clarke, the new Leader of CCC, offering me the role of Cabinet Member for Children and Young People. This is a role (and challenge) that I was delighted to take on and have thoroughly enjoyed throughout the year. Any role with responsibility for Children’s Social care was bound to bring challenges and there have certainly been plenty of those. 2011-12 has seen the County Council introduce a total restructure of how we work in Children’s Social Care. This has taken considerable time, effort and resource but I am pleased to say that initial feedback from staff and partners has been extremely positive.

As a member of Cabinet, wrestling with the Integrated Plan for the next 4 years has taken up considerable time. Cambridgeshire faces significant demographic challenges as a rapidly growing County. The County Council is keen to position Cambridgeshire to take best advantage once the economy improves. This means investing in areas such as superfast broadband, roads and footpaths and new infrastructure to deal with the bottleneck caused by the Ely Level Crossing junction. At the same time we are addressing pressures on school places and rising demand on services for vulnerable adults and children in the County. All this is taking place at a time of severe pressure on public finances, which means we need to continue to deliver savings across the Council. This necessitated a rise in Council Tax of 2.95% but as a Cabinet we believe our budget will deliver for the benefit of the people of Cambridgeshire.

Locally, I have been involved in a number of issues on behalf of residents, both as a group and as individuals. Work continues on the Burwell Masterplan, where I represent the County Council on the Working Party. We have seen numerous improvements to roads, footpaths and drop kerbs in my area and work is scheduled to start on more soon. The South Neighbourhood Panel has met frequently, with problems associated with speeding cars and anti-social driving at Bottisham Village College recurring themes. I have also intervened on behalf of a number of individuals experiencing problems, such as housing, bullying at school and problems with neighbours.

There have also been some truly memorable moments on the less formal side. The County Council holds the operating licence for the Duke of Edinburgh Awards and I had the privilege of being presented with our licence by HRH Prince Philip at St James’ Palace. I also presented awards at a number of events, including to foster parents and carers, to Children in the care of the County Council and to school Governors

District Council Report

This is included as supplied (below).

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District Councillor's Annual Report - May 2012

Council tax 2012/13

We increased the council tax by 2.95% this year. This relates to £3.99 pence per year on a band D property, 7.67 pence per week.

Accepting the Government's freeze grant again this year would most probably result in a budget gap of £273,000 by 2014/15, equivalent to an estimated 6.7% increase on a band D property.

We are trying to set a balanced budget for the next three years. Also we are told to expect a nearly £1 million increase in the new waste contract in 2015.

Newmarket Recycling Centre

Many residents from the district use this facility. When it closed for several weeks, then re-opened under new management with a charging schedule for some items, I was concerned that it would lead to an increase in fly tipping in the area. Thankfully so far this has not happened.

Unauthorised Traveller encampments

There have been none of note in the Ward during the last year.

The Swaffham Bulbeck Youth Bus

This is on the Dennis every Tuesday. I visited it and was pleased to see that it is very well run. It has a play station, a karioki type music centre, a chill out area, and a small tuck cupboard. In good daylight evenings it shares the facilities of the Dennis pavilion.

Tourism

The 'Visit Ely' website is proving to be a valuable information tool for anybody intending to visit Ely. Oliver Cromwell's House in Ely has shown increases in its attendance + sales levels.

Last Autumn Ely's Apple Day was well attended, even though we did have to take an umbrella with us.

2

District Councillors Annual Report - May 2012 (Continued)
Ely's Eel Festival is on Saturday May 5th and includes Eel throwing (imitations) and other events including a carnival procession which begins at 10-30 am

Ely's market continues to be popular, with all pitches taken
It recently hosted a Continental Market.

Housing

The average property cost in the district is £197,212 according to 2009 Land Registry figures.

The district's housing list register stands at 1446

The 2011/31 additional affordable homes plans shows a need for 264 homes per annum.

Last year there were 65 completions in the District, of which 18 were under the Government's 'first buy' shared equity scheme.

An element of affordable housing is generally provided on open market housing sites that are built by developers. 30% north of district, 40% south of district.

Through Section 106 agreements,

Other affordable housing schemes are also brought forward by housing associations and charitable institutions, generally on what are termed exception sites.

Community Land Trusts

C. Land Trusts are proving a success in other parts of the country. This is a scheme where members of a community join together to form a trust and buy land for housing. The advantage is the trust sets the tenancy criteria.

The housing is owned by the trust in perpetuity, thereby keeping rented housing within their community.

There are various funding streams, such as -

- The Home & Community Agency, (Housing Corporation previously).
- Community Land Trust Fund.
- Start Up Fund issues loans
- Can also borrow commercially from banks, etc.

③ District Councillors Annual Report - May 2012 (Continued)
Ely Rail Crossings

The A142 through Ely carries 15,000 vehicles per day including 1200 HGVs, such as lorries + buses. Leading to long queues at the level crossing near the station as the existing underpass has a height restriction

In 2010 surveys revealed the crossing gates were closed for 35 minutes in the hour.

Network Rail are going to upgrade the Felixstowe to Nuneaton freight route meaning 19 extra freight trains travelling through Ely by 2014. The gates will then be closed for 40 minutes per hour.

It is proposed to build a new by-pass from the A142 that will cross the river + railway line and join up with Angel Drive. In a consultation 80% of respondents chose this option, called the Southern Link Road.

It is proposed to commence by 2015 following more information gathering and funding being available

Councils Priorities for 2012/15

The controlling Conservative have set the following priorities for this period

Business Growth

- 1) To ensure the commencement of the Southern Link Road by 2015.
- 2) To meet with the District's top employers on an annual basis to support job creation

3) To introduce super fast broadband to the District by 2015

Housing 4) To implement a policy to prioritise people who work in the district for affordable housing

5) To deliver one Community Land Trust in East Cambs by 2013

Leisure 6) To approve a model for leisure facilities across the district by 2013

Waste 7) To submit a bid for funding to DCLG by August 2012 to retain weekly collections of waste and enhance recycling rates.

Littleport 8) To run the "Talking Up Littleport" campaign in 2012

(4)

District Councillors Annual Report - May 2012 (continued)

Committees and other bodies

I sit on the following -

- 1) Licencing committee
- 2) Development and Transport Committee
- 3) East Cambs Traffic Management Area Joint Committee
- 4) South Area Neighbourhood Panel
- 5) Swaffham Internal Drainage Board.

Plus three Parish Councils

This next year I have also been asked to take up the position of Vice Chairman of Development and Transport committee, plus sit on the Community and Environment committee as well as being a substitute member on the Personnel committee

Ellen Alderson.

Swaffham Prior Parochial Charities Report

There are usually only three meetings each year and we meet mainly to consider applications for financial help. The funding comes from the rent of small parcels of land in Swaffham Prior and Reach.

This past year we have again given to the elderly and needy at Christmas. Swaffham Prior have once more received an amount from us to help children of less well-off parents to participate in school outings.

Other donations have been given to both Swaffham Prior and Reach towards the Jubilee celebrations.

Although we are sometimes asked to contribute towards students' projects, this year we had no such requests.

It is rather a sore point but although we usually receive thanks from those we have helped, only one person who received a Christmas gift acknowledged this!

Amenity Fund Committee

The Amenity Fund committee this year has made a grant of £750 towards new tents for the Swaffham Prior Scouts - which also extends its remit to the children of Reach. The committee has also made a grant of £500 towards a farm vehicle for Snakehall Farm and approved spending of up to £1,000 on the Diamond Jubilee Garden Party - although the latter is likely to come in at considerably less than this. The Amenity Fund made a similar commitment last year to fund last year's Royal Wedding Garden Party, the call upon the fund of which eventually came to £196:24.

The only other grant this year was £141 towards the running of Sports Day. The committee has also met to discuss some funding for the 24Acres projects. It has indicated an interest in doing so, although awaits further information before making a decision.

The balance of the fund is currently £3,424.51.

Village Centre Committee Report

[This report was provided subsequent to the meeting]

Background

Reach Village Centre has official charity status and has been managed by a committee of volunteers since the mid 1970's. The committee is elected each year and is governed by its constitution.

The committee's principle role is to manage the running and maintenance of the Centre for the benefit of the village. The building is leased from the Diocese of Ely for a peppercorn annual rent. The Committee's other principle role is to organise and run the annual Reach Fair.

Meetings are held each month (apart from August) with an AGM in July of each year where the committee for the forthcoming year is elected from those wishing to stand.

Reach Village Centre Committee numbers 14 members for the year 2011-2012.

Running, Maintenance and Building Work Expenditure

As in the past, the costs of running and maintaining the Centre are met from net profits generated from the annual Fair, letting the building on a regular and casual basis, hiring out marquees and village games as well as occasionally applying for external community grants for high capital expenditure projects. There is no income from the Parish Council Rates.

Over the last few years the Centre has been extended, modernised and become compliant with DDA regulations. No major expenditure is expected in the short to medium term with only minimal building maintenance costs expected.

2011 Recent Building Project – the refurbishment of the brick shed which was long overdue. Monies came from external local community grant assistance and from our own reserves.

2012 New Project – Small Meeting Room - interior redecoration, flooring and furniture provision. In the past few years this room has become a storage dumping ground. Now with the shed watertight and rodent free and better organised in terms of storage space, the meeting room will become, when it's completed, another space which may be let, generating additional small income. Work will start by Autumn 2012.

Amenity Fund

Presently the Amenity Fund receives all its funds from a minimum 25% share of net profits from the annual Fair. The Amenity Fund Committee is a separately elected group of volunteers made up from members of the Village Centre Committee, Parish Council and non-committee Reach residents.

Acknowledgements

As the present Chairman, I would like to thank present and past committee members for all their hard work and dedication in maintaining this valuable asset for the benefit of Reach residents and the local community. The hours freely given to attend meetings, maintain the centre and organise the annual Fair are maybe not always fully appreciated and acknowledged - so a big thank you to all.

Jan Tabecki

Chairman – Reach Village Centre Committee

Report collated by David Parr

18th June 2012