



# **CODDENHAM**

## **ANNUAL PARISH MEETING**

### **Coddtenham Community & Sports Hall**

167

#### **Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on 14<sup>th</sup> April 2016**

Present: Cllr Burton, (CPC), Chairman, Cllr Passmore, (MSDC),

34 members of the public and 6 members of the Parish Council

1. Apologies for absence were **RECEIVED** from SCC Cllr Hicks, CPC Cllr Lock and Cllr Hardy and Mr Peacock.
2. The minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on April 23<sup>rd</sup> 2015 were **AGREED** by all and signed by Cllr Burton.
3. There were no **MATTERS ARISING** from the minutes of the previous meeting.
4. To **RECEIVE** the Chairman's Report.

**The Chairman** praised the contributions of volunteers from across the parish without whom the work of the Council would be impossible to maintain. He thanked the Parish Councillors, the Community Centre Management Committee, the Sports Club Committees, the Village Website volunteers, the Keeping the Village Tidy group, the Broomhill Management group, the Mill Hill Management group, and the Churchyard Management Committee, naming many of the individuals concerned. Introducing the Staff group, the Chair then explained the various roles of the Parish Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer, the Booking Clerk, the Cleaner and the Footpath Cutter. Cllr. Burton then described the various pieces of land over which the Parish Council holds responsibility, including the recent gift of the Allotments plots on Love Lane from Mr David Harfitt.

Reviewing the innovations which have taken place during the previous year, the Chair highlighted the new format, twice yearly newsletter, available both on hard copy and on the Village website, and asked Parishioners to send contributions for the Autumn edition to the Parish Clerk. Further innovations included: modernising the working of the Parish Council; the development of the Council Policies, including a complaints procedure; improved communications via the internet and newsletter; a reduction in hard copy reports for councillors; and better public understanding of the Functions of Council. The Chair indicated that there was more to come in 2016.

Looking to the future, the Chair mentioned a number of issues which he felt might be considered hot topics for the coming year. These included: repair of Children's Play Equipment on the recreation ground; repair of the Churchyard Wall, street lighting; improvement in the number of users of the Community and Sports Centre; a new hire fee structure for the use of the Community and Sports Hall; re-surfacing the Multi Use Games Area; and an improved Mobile Phone signal.

The Chairman's report was **RECEIVED**

## Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on 14<sup>th</sup> April 2016

168

5. To **RECEIVE** a report from the Responsible Financial Officer of the Parish Council.  
**The Clerk** and **RFO** presented a report showing income and expenditure for the year to March 31<sup>st</sup> 2016, highlighting variations over and under budget. He reported that the Precept had remained static from last year, given the substantial asset maintenance costs , depleted reserves and the necessary recovery period from the 2013/14 Budget deficit of £10,000. He then illustrated the end-of-year balances and general reserves of £5,777 - equivalent to 34 days of running funds - which are still well below the nationally recommended buffer of 3 – 12 months of annual turnover.  
The Clerk and RFO report was **RECEIVED**

6. To **RECEIVE** any reports from and ask questions of elected representatives of the Village.  
**MSDC Cllr Passmore** spoke about the current government push toward devolution to the regions which he felt may result in many changes including among other issues, excessive building in the region. He expressed a concern that an extra tier of local government might be one too many.  
On the environment, Cllr Passmore felt that Coddensham aside, litter and fly-tipping across the county was a problem, for which offenders should receive, on conviction, 100 hrs of community service spent in clearing up the debris.  
He reported that MidSuffolk District Council was seeking a suitable joint HQ with Babergh District Council. He favoured a model where the joint council would have its HQ on the outskirts of Ipswich with satellite offices in both districts, investment in new technology to focus expenditure on the front line, housing, environment, etc. A major concern which he felt needed attention was the lack of capacity in the Leisure Centre in Stowmarket.  
Policing in the County was evolving and Cllr Passmore reported that the closure of Front Desks in Police Stations equated to 15 new police officers. The costs for a PCSO were higher than those of a Police Constable after 5yrs of training. Suffolk Constabulary had reduced the number of PCSO from 145 to 110 through natural turnover and only 8 redundancies and PCSOs are applying for the new PC posts. Cllr Passmore explained that the reasoning for the change in the policing model, (finance aside), is the change in the crime profile. New Technology was playing a more visible role in crime - 30,000 websites had been closed down for radicalisation - and Felixstowe Port was at the forefront of illegal immigration.  
He then answered questions from Parishioners on the cost to Suffolk Police of being called in to assist the Metropolitan Police - Cllr Passmore estimated £30-40K with no rebate and he will continue to push for an answer to this question; and the possibility of a combined police force for Norfolk and Suffolk – Cllr Passmore expressed his view that there was good collaboration across 6 forces (with Kent about to become the seventh) on serious crime. He supported local policing but also felt that there may be scope for savings in joint working arrangements where they might be beneficial, e.g. payroll etc.  
The Chairman thanked Cllr Passmore for his attendance and the Report was **RECEIVED**

7. To **RECEIVE** a report from Suffolk Police. The Clerk advised that the format of future reports from Suffolk Police would be standardised to a wider geographic area of Stowmarket and 22 surrounding villages and published on-line on the Police website. The Clerk displayed a pro-forma of the new style of report.

## Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on 14<sup>th</sup> April 2016

169

8. To **RECEIVE** reports from and ask questions of Representatives of Community Groups and Organisations in the Village.

**Debbie McDonnell** gave a report on the Village Hall and thanked all concerned for their contributions to the maintenance of the Hall.

*“The Hall Committee continue to look for ways to maximise income and provide ‘events’ for villagers. Three successful entertainment events have taken place in the last year; a children’s puppet show – Little Red Riding Hood in March 2015, a jazz night with ‘Body and Soul’ in May 2015 and a production of ‘A Christmas Carol’ in December 2015. We continue to be supported by Creative Arts East who provided subsidised performances. The Parish Council have employed a new cleaner and the committee are very pleased with the high standards of cleanliness that she maintains. To try to make the facilities more attractive we have carried out some internal reorganisation of storage. This is still ongoing but has involved relocating the chairs and badminton and bowls equipment.*

*The committee are very grateful to Richard Budden who has been carrying out routine maintenance tasks and monitoring the heating to ensure costs are kept as low as possible.*

*In February a working party volunteered to spend their Saturday morning cleaning the bowls green and weeding and mulching the flower borders. Again the Committee appreciates the help of all those who work with us voluntarily to keep running costs as low as possible.*

*The Hall is used by groups on all weekday evenings and we continue to look for new ways to promote daytime use.”*

In response to this report a Parishioner suggested a questionnaire to residents for ideas on the future use of the facilities.

A Report was **Received** from **Sarah Skinner**, Head Teacher at Claydon High School which was noted, with thanks.

**David McDonnell** gave a presentation on the work of the Churchyard Management Group:

*“The Churchyard Management Group oversees the maintenance of the Old Churchyard, surrounding the church, but not the actual church building. It is an independent forum to discuss and, where necessary, reconcile, conflicting demands on the churchyard, e.g. parking vs nature conservation, and wildlife value vs neatness. The area is now closed for inhumations (although not for the interment of ashes) and its maintenance is the responsibility of the Parish Council, although much of the necessary work is done by the members of the CMG in order to reduce the cost to the Parish Council and, therefore, the parish ratepayers.*

*The churchyard is a County Wildlife Site, with one of the best displays of wildflowers in Suffolk, and management advice is taken from the Suffolk Wildlife Trust and, occasionally, English Heritage/Historic England.*

*Work over the last 12 months has included regular mowing of the grass paths and parking areas, pruning of trees and shrubs, weed control around the church walls and liaison with the PC, PCC and Diocese over repairs to the boundary walls (subject of other items at the Annual parish Meeting). The main path from the North Gate to the church porch was also re-gravelled, at nil cost, using surplus sweepings from the re-surfacing of the Village Hall car park and volunteer labour.*

## Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on 14<sup>th</sup> April 2016

170

*CMG has just introduced a new grassland management regime, with slightly wider paths, parking areas around the Memorial Garden, and more frequent cuts of the rough area by the northeast boundary. We are currently arranging a meeting with the contractors, who cut the whole churchyard once a year. It is important for wildflower conservation that this is done correctly and at the right time of year. More voluntary help is always welcome – the more volunteers we have, the more we can do and the less the cost to the parish’s inhabitants. If you are interested, please contact David McDonnell”*

**David McDonnell** gave a second presentation on the work of The Gardemau Trusts:

*The Gardemau Trusts were established in the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century by the Rev Balthazar Gardemau and his wife, Lady Catherine Bacon, for the benefit of the church and inhabitants of Coddenham.*

*There are four trusts: The Gardemau Church Charity, The Lady Catherine Gardemau Educational Foundation, The Lady Catherine Gardemau Charity for the Poor and The Gardemau Clothing Charity. For more information on the origins and purpose of the charities, please see the Coddenham Village Website or contact the trustees.*

*The trustees of all four charities are: David McDonnell (Chairman), Tim Thomas (Treasurer), Rev Philip Payne (ex officio), Ann Gudgin and Neil Scoresby. The Clerk is John Pelling.*

*The Gardemau Church Charity has the greatest financial resources. In the last year, it has funded activities linked with St Mary’s Church, such as a very popular and well-attended Good Friday workshop for children and parents, purchased literature and resources for use in the benefice, assisted with the maintenance of equipment, such as the benefice’s photocopier and liaised with the Parochial Church Council on its programme of works for the maintenance of the church building. It has also transferred funds to the Educational Foundation for use in the village.*

*The Lady Catherine Gardemau Educational Foundation’s resources are much more modest but still form a useful source of funding for broadly educational purposes in and around Coddenham. Over the last 12 months, it has funded the purchase of additional laptops for classroom use at Stonham Aspal Primary School (attended by most Coddenham children and the successor to the school founded by Lady Catherine 250 years ago) and also the school’s subscription to the County Music Service. In addition, it bought some equipment for Helmingham Primary School, which is also attended by a significant number of Coddenham children. The charity pays the rent for the Mothers and Toddlers Group for their use of the Village Hall, and for various items of equipment for the Group. Funds are also provided to the Youth Club. In 2015, the Foundation made grants totalling £1000 to local students to assist with University fees, and has recently invited applications for 2016. The Coddenham Village Nature and History Trails leaflets available in the Information Kiosk and church porch were also paid for by the charity, which is also considering arranging and paying for ‘First Person on Scene’ First Aid training for interested villagers, as a community benefit.*

*Resources for The Lady Catherine Gardemau Charity for the Poor are still more modest and its title has been slightly problematic in the past, as the term ‘poor’ can be seen as a stigma. To avoid this issue, the charity pays £100 a month to the award-winning local FIND charity, based in Great Blakenham, which helps local families in need in whatever ways are appropriate.*

## Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on 14<sup>th</sup> April 2016

171

*The Gardemau Clothing Charity is an historical curiosity and its assets amount to just £5! The trustees may decide to wind up this charity, but Charity Commission requirements mean that this is not a totally simple process so, for the time being, it continues.*

*The trustees of all four charities work closely with the other major Coddenham charity, the Day Foundation, as well as the Parish Council, to achieve maximum benefit for the parish. It is worth remembering that its activities are possible only because of the generosity of the Rev Balthazar and Lady Catherine so long ago. We hope they would be pleased that their legacy still benefits the people of the village they loved.*

**David McDonnell** gave a third presentation on the upcoming Open Gardens and Scarecrows day:

*'Open Gardens and Scarecrows' day has been held in alternate years since 2006. OGS is organised by a small Working Group of about half a dozen people. This year's beneficiaries are St Mary's Church, Coddenham and the local Town 102 Kids' Trust, each receiving 50% of the profits from the day. There will be around 16 gardens – large, tiny, formal, informal, traditional and modern - open, plus the allotments and an expected 20/25 scarecrows, with a competition for the best one. Other attractions include home-made lunches and teas at the Village Hall, a barbeque at the Shop, and the Country Club will be open to all. There will hopefully be a Garden Books and Jumble stall. The Churchyard wildflowers should be at their best in mid-June, and the Suffolk Wildlife Trust are interested in having a display there. Admission will be £4 per adult (£3:50 in advance), with children under 16 free. Programmes will be available from Coddenham Food Stores from the end of May and at the Village Hall on the day. The celebrity Roy Hudd has, once again, kindly agreed to do the judging (professional commitments permitting).*

9. To **RECEIVE** a report about Street Lighting in the Village. Cllr Burton gave a report on the condition of the street lighting and asked the meeting for comments on a proposal to renew those considered to be unfit for purpose. The meeting discussed a number of technical details regarding the various types of street light fittings available. There was also considerable discussion regarding lighting on the Green Hill development with some voices in favour of replacing these lights as there is no footpath along School Lane and a significant part of Green Hill, with many young families and senior citizens living in the area. Other contributions favoured the non-replacement of lighting as and when they became obsolete, preferring the village to retain its rural character. Safety issues were a concern, with a call for lights on the High Street and where the footpath crosses School Road. A question was asked as to how many lights might be safely removed to reduce costs.

In summing up the feeling of the meeting the Chair commented on the need for a costed study and asked parishioners to email any additional contributions to the Clerk for consideration at the next Parish Council meeting.

10. To **RECEIVE** a report about St Mary's Churchyard wall.

The Chair outlined the history of the Church, the surrounding wall and the Parish responsibility to maintain it since the 1940s. The wall that surrounds the churchyard is in very poor condition. In the last year there have been 2 collapses.

## Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on 14<sup>th</sup> April 2016

172

The one by the main gate has been repaired and work on re-building part of the rear wall will commence in the next few weeks. Closed churchyard maintenance costs must be funded by the local authority and the Diocese has to approve all works by means of a faculty. The Parish Council has consulted with Diocese and English Heritage and they recommend relaying the 6 brick courses on top of flint wall and repointing the flints along the façade of the wall. Estimated cost: £10,000. Grants may be available to offset any costs and the Parish Clerk will investigate these when the Diocese produce specifications for tender documents to be prepared. Comments from the meeting included asking Suffolk County Councillor Hicks to use his locality budget to defray costs; spreading the cost of the repairs through an application to the Public Works Loan Board; verifying the listed status of the wall to determine whether special funding streams might be applicable. Chair advised that the Parish Clerk would explore all available options.

**11. To RECEIVE** a report about refurbishing the Tennis Court.

Cllr. Burgess reported that the surface of the tennis courts was showing signs of wear and that a resurfacing contract had been put out to tender at the end of last year. The successful bid was in excess of £5000, which would involve clearing all moss algae and plant growth from the surface, deep cleaning in preparation for sealing the surface, sinking two net hooks and repainting all of the lines for tennis and basketball courts. Cllr Burgess outlined the income from the use of the courts showing that the income from the Coddensham Tennis Club had contributed enough over the years to cover a substantial element of the refurbishment costs. Although there was a nominal fee of £6 per hour for casual players the honesty box system of payments was not sustainable and therefore represented no significant income. Parishioners were asked for comments and these were predominantly phrased as questions around whether there was any alternative to the resurfacing of the courts. A number of contributions favoured the facility being available for use at no cost, as they were provided for the use of the Parishioners and that any income was a bonus.

Following a lengthy discussion the Chair advised that it was the responsibility of the Parish Council to maintain the council's assets and that alternative methods were being explored to maximise the use of the playing courts.

**12. To CONSIDER** any matters raised by parishioners.

In the absence of any further questions the Chair declared the Meeting closed at 9.55pm