

**Minutes of Withersfield Annual Village Meeting held on Tuesday,
16 May 2017 at 7.00 pm in the Village Hall**

Present: Cllrs Terry Rich (Chairman), Geoff Hayward (Vice Chair), Rosie Wenham;
Clerk: Jill Johnson; County Cllr Mary Evans; Chris Oakes, Speed Watch.

1 Parish Council Chair's Annual Report

See attachment.

2 Suffolk Police Annual Report

See attachment.

3 Suffolk County Council Annual Report

County Cllr Evans covered the main issues on which she had reported over the last year, indicating the current position.

Speeding traffic

Cllr Evans had had a recent meeting with the SN Speeding Team which is tasked with sending vehicles out on control. The Team had asked for the VAS data to be forwarded to them as this provides a very good indication of problem areas.

Flooding

The flooding which occurred in Withersfield last June was terrible for all concerned and Cllr Evans had been active in ensuring that as much as possible could be done to prevent further problems. Currently work had been underway in Thurlow Road to address drainage problems but it had been identified that tree roots had caused much more of a problem than had originally been thought and it would therefore be necessary to replace a whole pipe rather than undertake a repair. This work was now scheduled for mid-June.

Education

Over the last two years the County Council had focused on both education and highways as these had been failing areas. Education was much improved with Suffolk performing well at GCSE and now standing 55th out of 121 authorities; previously Suffolk had been placed at 119 for English and 109 for Maths. There was currently a campaign for fairer funding for counties and Suffolk had been awarded an additional 2.7% from government, but unfortunately this does not go very far. Additional funding makes possible, for example, employment of higher quality staff and despite improvement Suffolk as a whole was still not performing as well as, say, Hackney.

Highways

Cllr Evans reported that £475 million a year was spent on contracts and procurement but that this could be more efficiently administered as not all areas had been properly covered. In the past money had been wasted, for example, by raising a separate invoice for every pothole. There was a re-organisation underway which would create specialist teams; the first two (Lighting and Drainage) were now in place, and a better and higher level of service was being envisaged.

Devolution

This had not gone ahead as Norfolk had decided against it, but there would be further discussions about streamlining ways of working together to reduce bureaucracy and duplication. Provision of services was more effective if officers are attached to one

authority.

On a personal note, Cllr Evans said that it had been a huge privilege to serve Withersfield Parish over the last 4 years, and very humbling to be elected for a further 4 years. She finally invited further applications from her locality budget.

4 St Edmundsbury Borough Council Annual Report

See attachment.

5 Village Hall Committee Annual Report

See attachment.

6 Speed Watch Report

Chris Oakes referred to the purpose of the Speed Watch Team which was to collect data on behalf of the Police: registration number, speed, and date/time. The Team ran about 30 sessions over the past year, and details of 65-70 motorists exceeding 35 mph had been passed to the Police; on one morning alone 5 or 6 had been in excess of 40 mph. The Team had stood at 11 in number; some members had dropped out and others had been recruited, and it was now at 12. The Police, at their discretion, would send warning letters, with persistent offenders receiving a visit from them. At present the kit was shared with Great Bradley; the Team now had sufficient funds to purchase its own speed gun for about £550.

The Team also operated the VAS on behalf of the Parish Council. This came into operation in February 2016 in order to collect data and raise awareness of speed in the village. Six locations had originally been agreed; however, one location whilst collecting the best data had also been subject to VAS vandalism. Data cannot be used for prosecutions but can be used to pass to speed enforcement officers. Some improvements could be made to the use of the VAS, for example, use of longer poles and more brackets. In the latter connection, Cllr Evans reported that there was no longer a charge for poles by the County Council.

The Chair indicated that the VAS was a good thing for the village, and Cllr Evans referred to the recent decision that offenders should be fined at the upper end of the range for speeds in excess of 50 mph in a 30 mph limit.

7 Tree Warden's Report

See attachment.

8 Sports and Recreation Committee Annual Report

See attachment.

Attachments can be viewed in the Minutes section of the parish website:
<http://withersfield.onesuffolk.net/minutes/>

WITHERSFIELD PARISH COUNCIL

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT – MAY 2017

During 2016/17 your Parish Council has been active dealing with day to day management of parish affairs, and progressing important village projects. We have also needed to call on the assistance of our Parish and Borough Councillors to help deal with incidents and events that have occurred.

The most significant of these “events” was the **torrential rain** we faced in June which had disastrous consequences in two parts of our village. Heavy rainfall that lasted just a short time caused the Stour brook to burst its banks at the bridge with water levels rising higher than most people could recall, and completely engulfing the bridge. On Thurlow Road rain water running off fields led to severe problems there too.

We have been hard at work pressing the County Council to come up with long term solutions to provide us with greater safety from such extreme weather events, but also to provide better drainage and management of the river and rain water and so avoid the recurrent problems that we have faced. Works to Thurlow Road are underway as I write, but funding is still being sought to undertake remedial works at the bridge on Church Street and the banks along the Stour brook. Suffolk's flooding team are due to come to our July meeting to present the findings of a period of hydraulic modelling of the Stour flow and the proposed solutions. We will be pressing the County Council to keep to this commitment.

Last year the Borough Council undertook a **review of Parish boundaries**. The initial proposal would have led to the Parish boundary shrinking to exclude Hanchett End, Barsey Close and the new Arboretum development. The outcome of our consultations was that a majority of parishioners considered that the Parish Council should oppose this proposal. In the summer, we heard that the Borough Council had decided to back the views of the Parish Council and to leave the boundary unchanged. This means the Parish's population has continued to grow as the new development has neared completion. It also means the income that the Parish Council receives from Council tax has risen making the Parish Council's finances more sustainable. It should also mean that there are more of us parishioners to get involved and support local events and activities.

There were differing views both within Withersfield and beyond about the Parish Boundary review. July's Haverhill Echo led with an article in which the Haverhill Town Clerk levelled robust criticism at the decision and at our council. However, the Parish Council having asked for the views of its residents felt that it should respect those opinions and back them.

The **Speedwatch** team has continued to work hard assisted by our Vehicle Activated Sign (VAS). Unfortunately, the VAS has not been universally welcomed and it has suffered two spates of damage from vandalism. Luckily the costs of repairs have been met by insurance. The VAS continues to contribute towards combating speeding and so make our village safer.

The Parish Council has invested in a **defibrillator**, partially funded by a grant from the British Red Cross. This will be located at the Parish Hall. Whilst training is not necessary, we are hoping to arrange some sessions for interested villagers to be able to familiarise themselves with the device.

We are also waiting for decision on an application for funding to part fund the restoration of our **war memorial**. Our plan is that it should be restored to its original condition by the time of the 100th anniversary of the ending of the First World War in 2018.

The future of our **village pub** has been a concern raised by residents with the Parish Council. After Lee and Bianca left at Christmas and there were real worries about whether the pub would reopen. At this time, it is good to see it back up and running and we wish the new managers, Adrian and Tracey Collingwood, all the best. I hear that the pub will soon change its name back to the White Horse, which will be welcomed by all. For the future, I guess it's a case of “Use it or lose it” – so I hope to see many of you in the White Horse occasionally.

In the meantime the Parish Council decided that we should apply to register the pub as a **Community Asset**, under the 2011 Localism Act. We are currently awaiting the outcome of the application from the borough council. If successful it gives a period of protection (six months) should there be moves to dispose of the pub for redevelopment or other use.

A few parishioners turned out in March for our **annual village Spring Clean**. This received coverage in the Haverhill Echo which reinforced the message to drivers to respect our environment rather than throwing their cans, bottles and take-away food wrappers along our verges. It would be very much appreciated if more people could contribute to this event next year.

Perry Morley has continued as **Footpath Officer** and his contribution has helped us to ensure that our footpaths are maintained. Perry is standing down from this role after many years of tireless footpath tramping and we thank him for his contribution. We are looking for someone willing to take on this role on behalf of the parish. Maybe it would suit a dog-walker or anyone who enjoys regularly walking our beautiful footpaths. Let me know if you think you could help. Thanks also to Alex Talbot who continues as our **Tree Warden** despite having moved out of the village.

The **Village Hall Management committee** have continued to do a great job managing our hall and ensuring a great range of social activities throughout the year. They have produced a very professional business case to support improvement works to the village hall which when implemented will make the hall even more practical for use by local groups.

Last year's **village fete**, organised by Sheila Tibbenham and her team of volunteers, was enjoyed by all and raised valuable resources that help to maintain the Parish Church. This year there will be a Village Tea Party instead of a fete on June 24th which will I am sure will be an opportunity for parishioners to get together in the summer sunshine. Perhaps there will be people who would be interested in getting together to think about an event for next year?

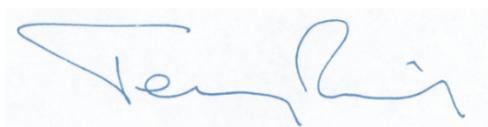
We have continued to contract for regular **grass cutting** and maintenance of our village greens. We have also budgeted to have money available for additional cuts if the growing season extends due to a warm autumn.

The Parish Council continues to work to be more **open and transparent**, this includes regular reports in the Parish Magazine, and more information about how we spend the money that we manage on your behalf. We have been awarded a grant to support our work to improve transparency – this will include ensuring that more Parish Council documents and information are on our website. [www//withersfield/onesuffolk.net](http://www/withersfield/onesuffolk.net)

Attached to this report is a summary of our income and expenditure over the last year and our draft budget for the year ahead.

This year the Parish Council was strengthened by the involvement of three new co-opted councillor – Sheila Tibbenham, Ian Kinloch, and Stuart Murlis who lives at the Arboretum. We will be seeking new councillors in the coming months as Stuart has had to stand down due to work commitments.

Thanks go to Cllr Mary Evans our County Councillor, and Jane Midwood our Borough Councillor for their attendance at our meetings and for their support over the year. Also, last but by no means least, thanks to Jill Johnson who has worked tirelessly as our Parish Clerk over the year. She is a major asset to the village and the work of the Parish Council.



Haverhill Safer Neighbourhood Team

Report to Withersfield Annual Parish Council Meeting – 21/04/17

This report covers the period from 01/04/2016 through to and inclusive of 00/00/2017. During this period there have been 30 reported crimes compared to 22 in the 2015-2016 period¹.

As shared this time last year, all Safer Neighbourhood Teams have now moved over to producing a generic “Area” Newsletter which are provided monthly and are published on our “all new” external website. Suffolk Constabulary has recently carried a review of its local Policing. Following both a reduction in funding and a change in the nature of crime, we have had to reassess what our priorities will be. It was decided that our focus should be on protecting vulnerable people from crimes against them including on-line offences, drugs, offences against children, domestic violence and serious sexual offences. This has meant less time to focus on some of the traditional complaints which is often led by parking matters.

Using the Suffolk Police and Crime Plan Priorities, final figures in these fields for the parish of Withersfield are as follows.....

BURGLARY DWELLING – 1 ...On 26/08/16 a dwelling in Church Street was entered, cash and cards were taken from a ladies hand bag therein

ROBBERY – 0

VIOLENCE WITH INJURY – 1 ... On 06/08/16 a couple from out of the region were attending a party in the parish but a disagreement broke out between them and a concerned witness notified police. Minor injuries were visible on the wrists and hands of one of the parties and such an A.B.H. was reported. The victim declined to substantiate the offence by way of making a statement and wouldn't support any positive action.

SERIOUS SEXUAL ASSAULT – 1 ...On 25/04/16 an sex offence allegation (previously occurred) was made between parties known in the parish. All parties have been formally spoken to and no prosecutions were brought about. As this was a “no publicity” investigation and there are no risks to the wider community from this matter.

DRUG TRAFFICKING - 0

ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR – 2 All parties in an on-going neighbour dispute have accepted the offer of mediation by the “Catch 22” service and secondly Police continue to monitor the pond site off Flemming Way

The remaining reports are broken down as such....

¹ Note - Time period for this year taken from 01/04/16 through to 10/05/17 inclusive....therefore 13 months effectively. A total of **9** crimes occurred South of the A1307 or in other words on the new estate.

Thefts/Attempted Thefts – 6

Harassments – 4

Common Assault (Non-injuries) – 3

Criminal Damages – 3 ...pretty much all targetted at VAS signage

Malicious Communications – 3

Burglary to other buildings – 2

Fraud – 1

Possession of Class B Drugs (Cannabis) – 1

Perverting the Course of Justice – 1

Theft from Motor Vehicle – 1

CURRENT CRIME TRENDS

West Suffolk has recently suffered an increase in Dwelling Burglaries. The trademark M.O. tends to be framework forced via jemmy use at the rear of properties. Thorough “tidy” searches area made lulling returning homeowners to not initially realising that they’ve been targeted. Gloves are always worn and a pillow case is typically taken to transport jewellery and cash. Some burglaries have involved high value vehicles stolen from driveways too.

The group suspected of being involved are certainly cross border criminals thought to be active in Norfolk, Suffolk and Cambs. In recent weeks we’ve had properties targetted in Cavendish, Hundon, Hargrave and Hawstead and more further afield.

Should any parishioner see what they believe to be furtive activity on their or neighbouring addresses, this is a definite 999 call and **we will** promptly attend.

We make no apologies for recommending again that all home owners remain vigilant and regularly review their home security. Great advice can always be sought from our newly revised Suffolk Constabulary Web Site.

Secondly

Since early March’17, the Sudbury and Haverhill areas have suffered x 17 Theft From Motor Vehicles. In the main, Ford Transits and Connect style vans are tending to be targeted, invariably via an entry method that leaves no damage. As usual, the proceeds of these

crimes are almost always high value branded power tools but cash and some hand tools have also been removed at some scenes.

We always advise that valuables are removed from work vans when unattended and certainly overnight. Please consider installing additional alarms even a classic shed style alarm or sensor padlock. As ever, should you see anything of a suspicious nature close to home or whilst on your travels please call it in as matter of urgency and I can assure you that we'll check it out quick-time.

Thanks for your continued support.....

PC 270 Marshall and all on your Safer Neighbourhood Team

April 2017

Borough Council Report for Annual Parish Meetings
2017

Good evening to everyone in Withersfield. I am sorry that I am unable to be with you this evening – my husband recently had a second hip replacement and is not really independent enough for me to leave him to get his own supper.

The £40 brown bin system is now into its second year and I am told that take up is as expected – that is a small increase on the first year. I hope residents will report any problems they may have to me with any of the waste bins or collections. Unfortunately I can see no change at all in the awful state of our roadside verges with litter strewn everywhere and fly tipping too. Village litter picks, supported by the loan of equipment by St Edmundsbury do a fine job in their annual or twice yearly collections but it is not really the answer to the culture that seems to think it is OK to eat and drink in the car and then throw the remains out of the window.

I have found a use for our redundant brown bin – I have donated it to Great Thurlow Parish Church! You may be able to do the same with a redundant bin here in Withersfield. Collection of green waste from churches is free of charge and if you would like to make use of this service please let me know and I can give you the contact details of the officer you need to get started.

Last year I spoke to you about the proposed West Suffolk Waste Hub. Planning permission has not yet been granted owing to some traffic management and water problems and the project will go ahead once these have been ironed out.

The Community Governance Review last year recommended that a large area of Withersfield was moved to Haverhill. I am pleased to say that I was able to defend the wishes of the majority of Withersfield residents and the parish boundaries have remained the same – until that is the next time the Boundary Commission decides to interfere with historic local village areas.

You will have seen from the local press that St Edmundsbury Borough Council and Forest Heath District Council are to merge and become one council. I believe that this will be very good for West Suffolk residents. However, with reference to what I said about the Boundary Commission it will inevitably mean another review of local parishes.

I look forward to hearing about your Locality Budget spending and applications for next year's budget too.

When I became your Borough Councillor in 2015 I had no idea how contentious Planning (or Development Control) could be. I still have a lot to learn, especially on the consultation process. Please be assured that I will listen to residents' concerns and take up issues with planning officers.

On April 25th, before the St Edmundsbury Full Council meeting, Tim Passmore, Suffolk Police and Crime Commissioner, gave a presentation. I was impressed by his knowledge of the county and concern for rural parishes in particular.

Please email me or telephone if there are Borough matters you wish to discuss and I send all good wishes to everyone in the local community.

Parish Council Meeting

Annual Report form the Village Hall Committee - May 2017

Background

- The village hall continues to be a popular location for holding a variety of events.
- Our regular lettings include: -
 - A variety of keep fit classes
 - 2 indoor bowls teams
 - 2 bridge clubs
 - Obedience classes for dogs
 - Training events
- There is off course our ad-hoc lettings for parties and weddings
- We also supplement our income but running 2 fundraising events each year. Namely the race night which is normally held in the autumn and also the village quiz, which is held at the end of March. The fundraising normally generates just over £1000.
- In total the fundraising and the lettings raise about £10,000 per year. This allows us to keep the hall in good repair and build up reserves for larger less frequent projects. In a normal year we would general be able to increase our reserves by about £3,000.

Looking Forward

- Our biggest project looking forwards is the need to expand our current storage facilities.
- We have looked at a number of options and the conclusion is that the best fit taking into account
 - Environmental aesthetics
 - Ease of use
 - Locally situated and
 - Does not reduce existing available space used by our users
- Is to rebuild a larger storage cupboard, using the existing storage space but also to extend outwards at the side of the village hall.
- This is a big project for us and will be a considerable investment.
- The committee are very aware of the need to maintain some level of reserves for other needs and this will mean that we will need to supplement our funds with either additional fundraising events or applying for grants and realistically, a mixture of the two.
- Should the committee get approval to precede with this project the committee will be focusing on how to raise the additional funds required.
- This will mean we will be stepping up the number of fundraising events we will host. Our next meeting will consider the opportunities to take this forward.

- Whilst the Storage project is a key project for us there are other items we would like to get underway during 2017.
- The windows and doors of the village hall now need to be repainted and also some minor woodwork repairs
- The Kitchen could do with a lick of paint
- Internally the main hall floor is due a deep clean and sealing against the general wear and tear.
- We have recently undertaken an audit of the crockery within the kitchen and are in the process of restocking up to the 120 covers we are insured to offer.
- We have also agreed to be the site for the village defibrillator and are currently in discussion about the suitable site and arranging electrical power to keep it fully charged in event of an emergency.
- General facilities
 - The committee is considering whether to purchase items that would support using the hall as a training facility. For example Projectors and white boards/flip charts. A market assessment is required to see whether this will attract new business.
 - The Committee is also looking into whether to invest in a Wi-Fi service for our users. This maybe something where a small charge will apply for the use of it.
- Our Warden – it is sad regret that we are losing our current warden Jill Trowse who has now moved out of the area. We are actively seeking for a replacement and in the meantime the committee members are helping out. This is a paid role and if anyone knows anybody that would be interested then please pass on my details for them to contact me.

Longer term

- The flat roof of the village hall is due for replacement within the next few years. There is no evidence at the moment of any repairs required but we are very mindful of the need to keep this under constant review as the life expectancy nears. Should we get approval to build the storage extension we will most likely replace the flat roof at the same time rather than create a further disturbance in a year or two.
- The kitchen is always a strong debating point for the committee. If we were to introduce facilities for cooking we know that we would be able to increase our rental opportunities.
- However with cooking facilities being on site there would also need to be consideration around the cleaning and other hygiene requirements over and above that which we currently deal with.

Conclusion

- We are proud of our Village Hall and believe that it is a real asset to our local community.
- The committee will continue to look after this important facility for Withersfield and we hope that we can continue to rely on the support of

the residents of Withersfield and the significant support of the parish Council going forward.

- Chairman, at this point I will end my report but will be happy to take any questions.

Annual Village Meeting, Tuesday, 16 May 2017

Tree Warden's report

I have very little to report, I go through the village a few times most days and am always on the look out for any problems. Often, if we have time, we sort them out there and then, if it's a broken branch over the road or hanging over a path. Things like that.

I trimmed the Oak on Burton Green recently to remove the lower limbs that were rubbing on the frame. It is looking very healthy so far, and has put in a good amount of new growth.

The Ash trees are very late this year and I am watching them very closely for any signs of Die-Back, but have seen none yet.

The Chestnuts in Town Green are looking very healthy this time of year, hopefully the Leaf Miner Moth will be less of a problem this year, we'll have to wait and see. The smallest of the row there I am keeping an eye on as it is showing signs of decline, but nothing too bad yet.

Other than that there is nothing to report.

But I remain happy to help should there be anything in the Parish that needs working on or looking at.

Annual Village Meeting, Tuesday, 16 May 2017

Report from Sports and Recreation Committee

There is not a lot to report but in summary Withersfield cricket club having failed once again despite valiant efforts to raise a team for the coming season will not be playing at the sports ground in their own right. However, the continuing relationship with Wratting Lions midweek and Haverhill CC third eleven does mean that cricket will be played by Wratting Lions on some Wednesday evenings and Haverhill CC on alternative Saturdays.

Some repairs have recently been made to the roof of the pavilion but more extensive repairs will be required in the near future. Estimates for the cost of these are currently being obtained; these will be forwarded for consideration by the Parish Council once available.