

# STANSFIELD PARISH COUNCIL

## Minutes of the Stansfield Annual Parish Meeting 20th May 2015

**PARISH COUNCILLORS PRESENT:** Sarah Douglas Pennant (Chairman), Jane Ballard, Trevor Lang, Robert Dennis and Ed Cardozo

**ALSO PRESENT:** J Ince (clerk), District Councillor Peter Stevens, Suffolk County Councillor Mary Evans and Richard Evans (previous village hall chairman)

**APOLOGIES:** Apologies were received from Sarah Hopkins and the Safer Neighbourhood Team

**1. Approval of the minutes of last year's Annual Parish Meeting held on Wednesday 21st May 2014**

The minutes were confirmed and signed as correct by the Chairman.

**2. Written Report from the Safer Neighbourhood Team**

Since 21st January 2015 there has been one crime in Stansfield, an incident of criminal damage to a sign at the end of a driveway.

The Police are asking people to remain vigilant in the fight against burglars/suspicious visitors/vehicles. This seems to be the most common offence at the moment and unfortunately people are still becoming victims. The Police ask that residents report anything suspicious to the police however trivial it may seem.

**3. Report from Councillor Evans**

Councillor Evans spoke about the following:

- Education and Highways both need to improve though progress is being made. Nikki Edwards, who joined SCC last summer as Deputy Director for Education, has galvanised the education team which is much quicker off the mark now in stepping in when schools need help. Suffolk is working its way back up the school league tables – for example the gap in pupil attainment at GCSE between Suffolk teenagers and the national average has narrowed from 8% to 1%.
- The appointment of the Fire Chief Mark Hardingham last summer to head up the Highways team has been critical in tackling the problems that developed in the operation of the highways contract. His experience as a leader, from a discipline working to command and control, enabled him to gain a rapid and thorough insight and understanding of the problems – and begin to tackle them. A large backlog of about 800 small scale works had built up – projects that take place in local communities. A big effort has been made to clear the lists – about 10 are still outstanding. A new system for ordering these works, with a set timescale for completion, has been set up to prevent any slippage again.
- Highways has managed to improve the drainage at the bottom of Plough Hill.
- The new online reporting system for highways issues is proving efficient and effective.
- Speeding is still a problem. She has been working with parishes to provide Vehicle Activated Signs. There will be a meeting in Hargrave on 28th May.
- Broadband. One of her duties at SCC is to chair the councillor group concerned with the roll out of high-speed broadband in rural communities. The first phase of the Suffolk Better Broadband Programme will be completed this summer and will reach 85% of the population. BT engineers are currently working out the order in which they will deliver the second phase and more information should be available in the autumn.
- Mobile phone service. There is a proposal to site a phone mast at Assington Green, but planning permission has not been sought yet.
- Cavendish Road in Clare is due to close for 7 weeks in June for gas works. There will be a meeting about this in Clare on 2nd June.
- Colin Noble has been appointed as the new leader of Suffolk County Council. Mary Evans is no longer Assistant Cabinet Member for Highways but will now chair the Scrutiny Committee.

**4. Report from Councillor Peter Stevens**

Councillor Stevens presented his report. He was elected as Borough Councillor for the first time in many years rather than taking part in an uncontested election. He has been appointed to the Waste and Property portfolio again. Recycling rates are currently at 53%. There has been a lot of opposition to the proposed Waste Transfer Station in Fornham. He spoke about the Energy from Waste facility in Great Blakenham which is running well. Members of the public are welcome to visit.

There have been changes to planning staff and there should be a more pragmatic approach to rural housing.

Locality budgets were very popular last year and he was happy to make a donation to the Village Hall. Donations can now be made directly to parish councils as well.

He predicts big changes to local government in West Suffolk with more amalgamation with Forest Heath District Council.

There will be a huge increase in traffic on rural roads when Cavendish Road is closed in Clare.

A question was asked about street lights in Stansfield, which is the only village in the area to have street lights. Is it cost effective to have them particularly considering the issue of light pollution? Peter Stephens said LED lighting and ground lighting is being adopted in the Borough.

**5. Stansfield Village Hall report**

Another year of varied and successful events has raised a reasonable sum of money. Three grants were secured, one for the mower repairs (from Peter Stephens), one from SCC for external repairs, and one from a private funder who was impressed by their Red Nose grant application application and agreed to provide the money when the Red Nose fund had run out.

He thanked the Parish Council for their donation. Capital is building which should enable match funding for other grant applications

**6. Chairman’s Report by Richard Evans**

Planning was a big issue. SEBC's Vision 2031 not very supportive of rural communities, however the new planning officer, Stephen Wood, attended a meeting in Stansfield and said SEBC would take a more flexible approach to rural housing. Stansfield Parish Council took the unusual step of objecting to a planning application for Shadowbush Farm which was subsequently withdrawn.

Richard Evans said he had always hoped the Parish Council would engage more with the residents as he felt the Parish Council was operating in a vacuum. Once success was the donation to Stansfield Village Hall for the repair to repair the lawn mowers which will benefit not just the cricket club but the whole village as the playing fields look superb..

He thanked the councillors for all their good will and co-operation. He gave special thanks to Paul Long and Gordon Houghton Johnson who have now stepped down. He also thanked the clerk, Peter Stephens and Mary Evans.

**7. Any other issues or concerns raised by members of the public**

No other issues were raised.

The meeting closed at 8.39pm

Signed .....

Dated.....