

ASHBY ST MARY PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on Thursday 26 April 2007 at 7.45 pm at Ashby and Thurton Village Hall

MINUTES

Present: Robert Todd (Chairman), Peter Wright (Vice Chairman), Terry Kitt, Carol Powell and Mark Rolph.

Also Present: Linda Gray (Clerk), Adrian Gunson, County Councillor, Derek Blake, District Councillor and 18 Members of Public.

1. Apologies

Apologies were received from Edgar Hoddy and Sarah Cook who arrived during the meeting. Apologies were received from Wendy Premachandra, Tree Warden, and on behalf of Thurton and Ashby St Mary Pre-School.

2. Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on 2 May 2006

A précis of the minutes were read out by the clerk, were approved and signed by the Chairman.

3. Chairman's Report

Report by Robert Todd.

Thanks were extended to all the Councillors who continued to support the Parish Council and to Linda Gray who had completed two years as clerk. County and District Councillors Adrian Gunson and Derek Blake also continued to support the village very well and tried to attend each meeting, for which the Parish Council was appreciative. Key objectives of the Parish Council were to support the Village with new initiatives, represent resident's views and help local groups.

Mill Road, Ashby/ Ashby Road, Thurton. New signage had been put in place to identify the point at which Thurton ends and Ashby St Mary starts. Many residents had been concerned especially when Ambulances could not find properties in the Village.

Police. More information had been made available from the Police in form of crime reports this year, but with no Community Support Officers appointed in Loddon they could not attend the Annual Parish Meeting. The Parish Council looked forward to meeting new Community Support Officers and fully supported the new communication point in Loddon at Hobart High School.

Web Site. The provision of a Village Web Site was included on the Parish Plan as a medium term project for the Parish Council. The Web Site was now available and a presentation of the accessible information would be presented later in the meeting.

Local Development Framework remained a concern but would not progress further until Norwich City Council and Broadland District Council attained the level which South Norfolk Council had achieved.

Planning. Activity had increased marginally during the year with residents seeking planning permission for modifications and extensions to their homes. The Parish Council always commented in a fair and appropriate manner with consideration to the views of the village.

Local Elections. Recently all councillors were re-appointed and would continue to serve Ashby St Mary.

4. Financial Report

Report by Mark Rolph

For the year 1 April 2006 to 31 March 2007. In respect of income the Parish Council, as in previous years, had continued to seek the same level of precept £2000 per annum and on average equated to £16 per household and £6.67 per inhabitant. Due to the careful management of the funds it was not felt necessary to increase the Precept, which had remained unchanged since 1999/2000.

The introduction of the kerbside adopter last year which rewards the Village for supporting recycling initiatives, had covered the expense of Audit Commission Fees, Accountancy Fees and some room hire costs. On the expenditure side, most of the amounts were made up of statutory costs, obligatory fees and essential subscriptions. Donations were awarded for which decisions were made on a case-by-case basis and following thorough and sympathetic consideration. The amount brought forward from last year of £2,177 equated to the annual expenditure which was therefore a contingency fund for any unforeseen financial circumstances.

5. Homewatch

Report by Carol Powell.

The majority of responses to the Parish Plan questionnaire were in favour of Homewatch and the Parish Council had actively responded to this request. Homewatch was now included on every agenda and had been for the last year. John Broughton, who was based at Diss Police station, cascaded information to existing and new co-ordinators covering the whole of Ashby St Mary. The coordinators contacted local residents, who had joined the scheme, with the information. At present only ¼ of residents had joined the scheme. If anyone else wished to be included, they should contact the Clerk for more information. John Broughton was about to retire and Alan James was his successor.

6. Police Report

No report was received from the Police Constabulary. Community Support Officers for Loddon should be appointed soon.

7. County Councillors Report

Report from Adrian Gunson, County Councillor.

Thurton School. The planning application for the new school had been submitted and if there were no objections, work could start later this year. A feasibility study would take place soon to decide if further works were required on the pedestrian crossing of the A146. George Close and Park Close was to have yellow lines soon for safety reasons.

Hobart High School. All of the classrooms were complete, including the Music Room and Canteen extensions. The Specialist Status in Science award had brought in further funds. The planning application for the All Weather Pitch had been submitted. The swimming pool was in need of refurbishment, which the school was investigating. When all of these facilities were completed the school wished to extend their use to the community. GCSE results were very good putting Hobart in the top 2-3 schools in Norfolk.

Bus Service. The morning commuter buses had been experiencing problems which could have been due to the frequent change in management at the First bus company.

Highways. Studies of the Trowse traffic lights, which gave priority to those leaving the Southern By Pass from Gt Yarmouth, had taken place but results had not been received.

There were no plans of the A47 to be dualled between Gt Yarmouth and Peterborough in the near future. The outer harbour plans at Gt Yarmouth would raise concerns over the status of the A47 as a major route. It was unlikely that local bypass projects including Long Stratton would now take place.

Norwich Unitary Bid. This has received a lot of opposition and the period of consultation had been extended to the end of June. Those Parish Councils who opposed this bid needed to respond with their views.

Planning and House building. House building was set to increase from 3000 per annum to 5000 per annum from 2021 to 2026.

Loddon Library's disabled access from the Church Plain Car Park was complete.

Whitlingham Country Park leaflets for a programme of events were now available.

8. District Councillor's Report

Report from Derek Blake, District Councillor

Planning. The Eastern Area Planning Committee was still committed to meeting in Loddon in order that its meetings were accessible to the community and would be changing sites to Hobart High School in the near future. In the last year, due to the lack of a dedicated Enforcement Officer, enforcement had not been upheld as well as usual. Hopefully a new Enforcement Officer would be appointed soon. Ashby St Mary's Parish Plan, as with all Parish Plans, were becoming very important documents, as communities could challenge the decisions of the Planning Department as the view of residents were clearly stated in the plans.

Fly tipping. Problems due to fly tipping were increasing in the area especially in Chedgrave and Bergh Apton.

Gypsy and Traveller sites. The search for new sites was an ongoing problem but it was unlikely that the area of Ashby St Mary would be faced with providing a site due to the lack of facilities to sustain further development.

Norwich Unitary Bid. For the bid to be successful the boundaries of Norwich would need to be extended, and although services would not change, standards may drop due to less funds being available. Parish Councils and Residents needed to write in to oppose the bid.

Local Development Framework. South Norfolk has progressed further than Broadland and Norwich City Councils on this matter. They would now have to wait for them to arrive at the same point, which could take eighteen months to two years.

WREN (Waste Recycling Environmental). Grants were available up to £30k on individual projects. These must be recreational and not for single activity groups.

9. **Ashby and Thurton Playing Field and Village Hall Management Committee Report**

Report by John Pidgen, Chairman of the Management Committee.

Thanks were extended to the Committee for all their hard work and commitment during the year. A programme of refurbishment, along with purchases of new equipment, was on-going with further improvements planned. The Draft Licence for the School to use the Playing Field would soon be considered. The VHMC AGM takes place on 29th May 2007 to which all were invited to attend.

10. **Village Organisation Reports**

Ashby Church

Report by Arnold Miller.

The Church experienced good attendance from the village and surrounding villages for joint services. A number of special events took place last year, which were very well supported. Thanks were extended to the Parochial Church Council for all its help, support and fundraising throughout the year. A group known as the Friends of St Mary's Church was being formed, with its aim being centred upon the restoration and conservation of the building and its contents. A recent survey on the church reported that the building was in good repair. The Bells would be restored later this year, leading to the first time all three bells being rung in living memory. The organ was next on the agenda for restoration and although grants would be available, fundraising was also necessary.

BYRUS

Report by Rev. Peter Knight

All youth groups continued to be well supported under the leadership of Jacqui Hill, the full time youth worker. Bare Rock was a new monthly Saturday evening event held in Yelverton Church. Along with visits to Norwich and planned Youth Camps there was a packed programme of activities.

Thurton and Ashby St Mary Pre-School

Report by Sandra Rennie, Playleader

(The Clerk read the report as Sandra was unable to attend the meeting.)

Thurton and Ashby St Mary Pre-School had maintained a consistent number of children throughout the year. Numbers were set to increase, bringing attendance up to 25 registered children. The Pre-School ran four sessions a week, with a lunch club on Thursdays. It employed four members of staff. The unannounced Ofsted inspection in September resulted in two very good inspection mornings that achieved the second highest standard overall of Good in Care and Education with an overall result of Good. The Committee were organising several fund raising events to cover staff wages and hall rent as the grant funding received did not cover these and the Pre-School tried to keep the fees to a minimum. The garden had seen a lot of use this year due to the mild weather and the children benefited from the fresh air. The Pre-School's aim was to continue to give the children the best start in their education and to work in partnership with parents to achieve this.

Thurton Parent, Baby and Toddler Group continued to provide new families with a friendly environment. The Toddler Leader has provided hours of craft, play and fun, and since Christmas numbers had steadily increased.

Thurton and Ashby WI

Report by Irene O'Neill, Secretary

Meetings continued to take place on the first Thursday of every month in the Village Hall.

The speakers attending the meetings gave information on a variety of topics and there was an interchange of social occasions between neighbouring WI's. The present membership stood at 20. New members were always welcome.

Tree Warden.

Report by Wendy Premachandra.

(The Clerk read the report as Wendy was unable to attend the meeting.)

During tree planting week in November a 50m stretch of mixed hedging was planted on land bordering Ashby Villas Paddock and Chapel Road.

11. Presentation of the Ashby St Mary Parish Council Website.

By Mark Rolph, Parish Councillor

The Parish Website was projected on a screen for all to see the comprehensive information included on the site. Mark started by announcing the easily remembered website address –

www.ashbystmary.org.uk

Demonstrating the extent of the site, he drew attention to each page heading and, in brief, their contents. Items of direct relevance to village residents had been made available as well as useful local information. Thanks were extended by the Chairman to Mark and Carol Powell for their hard work on the website.

12. Any Other Business

The Chairman announced that if any Local Group wished for information to be included on the Parish Council Website that it should be submitted to the Parish Clerk.

The meeting closed at 10.17pm