

Rocklands Parish Council (RPC)
Minutes of Annual Parish Meeting held in Rocklands Village Hall
7.00pm on Monday 13th April 2015

Present: David Howie Chair
 Shirley Colenutt
 Cath Jones
 David Witt
 Roger Steel

 Kim Austin Clerk
 Bill Smith District Councillor
 Cliff Jordan County Councillor

Also present: 73 members of the public

The Chair Cllr. David Howie welcomed everybody to the Annual Parish Meeting at 7.05 after those that were interested had been introduced to the new Defibrillator located on the outside of the village hall.

1. To consider accepting apologies for absence

RESOLVED to accept apologies from Cllr. Nicola Southgate who had other commitments.

2. To approve the minutes of the last parish meeting (Annual Assembly) on Monday 7th April 2014

RESOLVED to approve the minutes that had been circulated prior to the meeting, as a true and accurate record of the meeting. The minutes were duly signed by the Chair, Cllr. David Howie.

3. To discuss any matters arising from the minutes, not on the agenda

There were no matters arising from the minutes.

4. To hear the Chairman's report

The chair Cllr. David Howie delivered his report. David said:
I believe it has been another good year for the Parish.

The **Community Shop and Post Office** has now been open for over a year and continues to flourish.

The **White Hart Public House** seems to be prospering. I wish the management well and hope this continues.

The **Village Hall** has improved its facilities over the year and continues to be well used.

The **Playing Field** is looking very good, and further improvements are being considered. However, Alan Fisher, the person who has been responsible for the fantastic

Signed

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development of the sports facility and who has done much excellent work over the years has now retired. Alan will be missed, but I suspect and hope that he will still remain involved. Grant monies from Sport England have now been paid in full. All legal matters concerning the grant and deeds have been finalised and all that remains is to apportion the associated costs. Improvements planned for the Children's Play Area have been put on hold temporarily, due to the cost and the possible need to treat the grass for Chafer grubs. Improvements are also needed to the pavilion, but the Children's Play Area remains a priority.

Rockland's School continues to maintain its high standards and to be full.

The new **Trod** at the junction of The Street and Chapel Street was jointly funded by the Parish Council and the Mann Trust and for this we thank them. The workmanship was disappointing however and the Trod did not meet the standards required. The surface deteriorated in a short space of time and became dangerous. The Highways department recognised the problem after much prompting and the work was redone. The trod is now as it should have been in the first place. Various other Highway matters are being discussed, but are yet to be resolved.

The **Phone Box Library** is working well, but the box needs a spruce up, hopefully this will be done soon. Thank you to Sue Steel for being responsible for the Library.

The **Parish Council Notice Board** is in very poor condition and desperately needs replacing. Alan and Elaine Johnson have a nearly new board which they have offered to replace the old one, at no cost, and for this I thank them.

The Parish **Street Lights** are old and are often in need of repair. Spares for these old lights are becoming increasingly difficult to source so at some point all street lighting will need to be replaced. The Parish Council is currently obtaining quotes to replace some, or all, with LED lights, which will be more effective and will cost less to run. The initial outlay will however be great and the Parish Council will be looking to apply for any available grants to cover all or part of the cost.

Finally, we have the **Defibrillator Unit**. This unit has been donated to us by the East of England Co-operative Society. They have also given us £100 towards the cost of installation and training. This was due in no small part to Kim Austin our Parish Clerk. It is now installed on the outside of the village hall. My thanks go to David Witt and Cyril Ruffles for the installation. Some awareness training will take place for the villagers.

Broadband within the Parish is poor but after some prompting a survey has been recently carried out with a view to installing a new box which will allow for new fibre optic connections in the village.

The **Web Site** is working well and for this I must thank Ian Scholes.

Signed

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At every Parish Council meeting there are **planning applications** to discuss and comment on. The task has not been too onerous in the past year, but with the recent application for 17 new dwellings to be built on land at the back of Fredena in Chapel Street, maybe our jobs are about to become more testing as we deal with such an application to reflect the views of the Parish. In dealing with all applications, the village and its future is priority and we aim to adopt a fair and responsible approach at all times.

I would also like to say something about the **Parish Precept**, which is the amount of money needed to run the Parish Council and support the Parish. Despite rising costs and additional costs for legal fees etc. we are happy to report that we have still been able to keep the precept as low as possible.

I am trying to reintroduce the old Neighbourhood Watch Scheme, now called **Home Watch** and so far the response for people to become involved has been good.

Of the many activities and initiatives that have taken place in the Parish over the last year, it is good to report that all councillors continue to be involved.

As you are all aware there will be a general election on May 7th this year. All Parish Councillors will also stand for re-election and I am happy to report that we have two new applicants wanting to become Parish Councillors. This is excellent news as new blood is always needed. This will hopefully bring the number of councillors up to a full capacity of seven.

But it is sad to report that Roger Steel is leaving the Parish Council after 14 years. His local knowledge in particular will be missed, but I am sure, if required he will continue to assist us. Thank you Roger for your long and excellent service and I wish you well.

I would like to thank District Councillor Bill Smith, who has attended nearly all of our Parish Council meetings, for all his help and advice over the year.

And last but not least, a very big thank you to Kim Austin our clerk for all her work and for ensuring the smooth running of our Parish Council.

5. To receive reports by County & District Councillors

5.1 County Councillor's Report 2015

Norfolk County Council is run by the Rainbow Alliance (5 parties) and there are huge savings that they have to make and from which they are running away.

Firstly, the Council is failing badly in most areas. Adult Social Services were made to reduce funding by 19 million for next year when they are running a 6 to 9 million budget deficit for this current year. As for the savings by the County Council that have to be made amounting to 110 million there are no plans and George Nobbs keeps kicking it up the road for later. (I suspect that they hope that if Ed Miliband is elected they will get relief). Personally I doubt that, the National Debt has to be repaid somehow.

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Spending on Children's Services has increased by 16 million but the outcomes have fallen. There are more schools in special measures with no help for the governors.

Adult education services across Norfolk which George Nobbs refused to modernise has been deemed inadequate by Ofsted. This is after its good report in 2012 under the Conservatives. In the words of Richard Bearman of the Green Party the services now face the real danger of closure thanks to George Nobbs. He has said nothing is going to change at Wensum Lodge. Wensum Lodge is the main place in Norwich that runs Adult Education. When we ran the Council we looked at the Colleges to provide the service. They are good at educating people fit to work.

£700,000 was given to Age UK Pension Fund not front line services at a time when many charities grants have been completely cut.

Refusal to help and support our injured war veterans is going to Full Council on April 13th.

Two years ago the County Council was seen as a good Council. Now it is a failing Council. The damage that the Alliance has done in two years will take decades to put right. The system of governance is a recipe for disaster.

Conservatives Achievements in Opposition.

£150million from central Government for road maintenance and repairs
£141,077 houses can access superfast broadband after the Conservative Government scheme was implemented

A further £8million from Government for school expansion.

Although we are in opposition we have tried and succeeded in some cases, e.g. we have stopped the prospect of charging £2. To visit the tip and we have also increased the Parish Partnership Fund for the next year. Parishes should be encouraged to apply. The success rate of Parishes is quite high.

We also have a Conservative Chairman for the economic Development subcommittee in Beverley Spratt and he is really getting things turned around from the mess that George Nobbs, the Leader of the Council made when he insisted that he ran Economic Development although he had no business history at all.

On another note I have attended as many Parish Council meetings as possible and quite a lot of people have been in touch for help. At the moment I am very busy as you may know I am now Conservative Group Leader at the County. More to do!

Cliff Jordan
County Councillor

5.2 District Councillor's Report 2015

In contrast to the 'failing' County Council, District Cllr. Bill Smith highlighted some of the successes of Breckland District Council over the last year; There was mention of council

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tax, frozen for a second year; savings of £1.1 million through successful efficiencies; £900,000 to be invested in a Better Broadband; Anti-social behaviour reduced by 12% across the area. Breckland trading services going from strength to strength, showing a first year annual income of £40K. Breckland has achieved a quality Excellence accreditation. And much more, too many achievements to mention and do justice to. District Cllr. Bill Smith's full report can be found on the RPC website with these minutes.

Bill Smith
District Councillor

Cllr. David Howie thanked Cllrs. Bill Smith and Cliff Jordan for their reports and for showing their support for and interest in the village.

6. To receive comments from the public

There were no comments from the public

The meeting closed at 7.31pm.

Signed

Date