

SAXTEAD PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Annual Meeting of the Parish of Saxtead held at
Saxtead School of Dance, Saxtead on Wednesday 27 April 2011 at 19:30
under the Chairmanship of Councillor George Cullingford

Present: George Cullingford (Chair), Kevin Davis, Graham Ward, Robert Watts, Kate Hoare, Tony Hutt (Clerk), Cllr C Hart (SCC, from 8.20pm), Cllr C Walker (SCDC). Mr Peter Ross (SCDC) attended, PCSO Mary Thompson and 9 members of the public. The meeting started at 7.34pm.

Apologies: Cllr W Rose (SCDC); Ms Susan Stone of Suffolk Wildlife Trust had been invited but sent apologies; Peter and Sandra Hartley; Deborah and Michael Sharman.

Approval of Minutes for Last Year's Parish Meeting

The minutes for last year's Annual Parish Meeting on 14 April 2010 were approved and signed as correct with one correction to the second paragraph of the Chairman's report: change "residential curtilage" to "residential curtilage at Manor Farm".

Report by the Chairman of the Parish Council

Planning applications during the year had included a new chalet style bungalow on land adjacent to Four Winds (refused) and replace garages nearby (granted), and alterations and additions at Parsonage Cottage.

A very successful litter pick was held and he thanked Graham Ward for his organisation.

In the summer David Perry gave up his position as Parish Council Clerk and Tony Hutt was appointed. The job now involved a lot more than in previous years. He thanked Tony for sorting out and dealing with the vast quantity of official documents and communications that the Council receive and "keeping us all in line".

George and Catherine were invited to Buckingham Palace on 22 July for a Garden Party and had an unforgettable and enjoyable time.

A new group *Wild About Saxtead* has been formed by Louisa Yorke to introduce local people to the wildlife and plants on the Green and to organise and carry out conservation work within the Village.

The Chairman also thanked the District Councillors Colin Walker and Winter Rose for their attendance, help and support; the latter is not standing for election. He thanked fellow councillors for their help and support during the year including Robert Watts who has decided not to stand for election.

He believed he had been on the Council for 38 years and Chairman for 30 years.

Report from the Governors of Earl Soham CP School

A written report was distributed from Karl Pearce (Headteacher) and Alison Garrett (Chair of Governors) and is filed with the minutes. Lisa Handley believed about six children attended from Saxtead, out of the 82 on roll.

Report from Colin Hart - Suffolk County Council

Cllr Hart arrived at 8.20pm and gave a verbal report. There was an unprecedented financial challenge facing county councils. Formerly 50% came from central government but this grant was being cut but 28% over four years, front-loaded, so SCC have agreed £42.5m cuts in 2011/12 and intend further £50m cuts in 2012/13. The SCC part of Council Tax is frozen this year. SCC were looking to divest to voluntary groups, town and parish councils. The strategy known as New Strategic Direction has evolved and is likely to change further with the change of leadership three weeks ago: Jeremy Pembroke resigned after three years and Mark Bee is acting leader, to be confirmed at the AGM at the end of May. The latter felt the country council needed to listen to communities more and move at a speed which all could follow, and a time for reflection and review; to slow down and think more carefully. Cllr Hart believed the policy was in the right direction but we need to know what will be put in place of services being cut. A transition fund has been created.

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A parishioner asked would be saved. Cllr Hart said that services being maintained were not being emphasised: these included road maintenance (budget unchanged). A local example of how savings could be made was youth activities in Framlingham, where FAYAP do a better job than SCC. More complicated discussions were needed and SCC need to work out how to help voluntary organisations.

Report by Colin Walker - Suffolk Coastal District Councillor

Cllr Walker had looked at the statistics for 114 polling stations; there were 81 parishes with uncontested town/parish council elections and a small number with contested elections, including Framlingham (the first time in 20 years, 13 candidates for 11 places, having reduced from 13 last year and once was 15).

A parishioner asked about traffic arising from the Sizewell C development; did the Parish Council have any figures on the likely impact? The Chairman said they did not. The same parishioner asked what emergency procedures were in place in case of an accident similar to the recent one in Japan. Cllr Walker said he was part of the team which developed Sizewell A; emergency plans were drawn up and regular meetings held with developers; he could supply more information. Cllr Ward said emergency plans were in public libraries and were demonstrated and rehearsed annually. The same parishioner asked if all the Parish Council were familiar with these procedures. Cllr Ward said he knew the procedures. PCSO Thompson said the Police were also closely involved.

Report from PCSO Mary Thompson

PCSO Thompson reported that nine crimes were reported in the preceding year 1/4/10-31/3/11, compared with five the previous year; four were theft, two arson, one burglary, one driving with excess alcohol and one fraud (credit card cloning). Two other crimes had taken place on the A1120, in Earl Soham and Yoxford, which may have been related. A written report was provided (filed with the minutes).

Report from Neighbourhood Watch

Cllr Graham Ward provided a report to the meeting and copies of his report were handed out. Litter Picks were held on 9 May 2010 and 10 April 2011. Litter collected during the latest had included a large lampshade, a telephone and various hub caps.

Report from Townlands Trust

Mr Charles Elliot distributed a financial statement for the Trust to those present. The financial situation was very similar to last year: income £2032.52, net income (after audit expenditure £211.50) being given 1/3 to All Saints Church and 2/3 to the Welfare Trust. The latter provided relief payments to people in the village of £670 and Christmas gifts of £78.56, ending with funds of just under £9,000.

Royal Wedding Celebrations

The only village event planned was on Monday 2 May at 2.30pm on The Green. Charles Simpson was in charge of tug-of-war as Graham Ward couldn't attend; Val Speight would help with _____.

It was hoped a bigger celebration would take place in 2012 for the Queen's Diamond Jubilee in June 2012. The Parish Council will suggest a committee to organise this, with support from the Council. (Note: an extra Bank Holiday on 5 June, and one on 4 June instead of 28 May.)

Saxtead Green Management

The Chairman said that SCDC had taken over responsibility from Saxtead Parish Council some years ago for management of the Green but the time had possibly come to give the responsibility back. A meeting had been held between representatives of SCDC, Saxtead Parish Council and owners Pembroke College. Various matters needed to be sorted out first.

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Mr Peter Ross, Countryside Officer for SCDC, said Schemes of Management under the Commons Act 1899 determined public access. SCDC managed 40 sites. The Localism Agenda sought to give more responsibilities to town and parish councils. Middleton, Westleton and Wenhaston had groups affiliated to parish councils. SCDC were likely to transfer responsibilities to Ufford PC and had transferred Broomheath to Woodbridge TC. Discussions were taking place with Aldeburgh and Martlesham. However four countryside sites were being taken over from SCC as part of the Divestment Strategy.

Saxtead Green (33 acres) had had fairly basic management for 15-20 years: an annual hay cut (now costing £1,600 p.a.), looking after the pond opposite the pub and odds and ends. Approaches had been made six months ago by parishioners to have more influence. The Green could be better if managed more intricately. SCDC had taken on two Countryside Ranger last summer and were offering their services to the Parish Council.

Two meetings had been held: one with the Parish Council and other representatives (9 March) and another with Suffolk Wildlife Trust and interested parishioners (10 March). Susan Stone of SWT planned to do surveys. Following this a plan would be produced in conjunction with the Parish Council. Natural England's Stewardship Scheme offered £800 p.a., only half that needed for the hay cutting. However he was pursuing four other options: so far two were not interested, one had quoted £1,500 and one was expected to be under £1,000.

When the current management scheme runs out in 2013 SCDC would try to enter the Higher Level Stewardship scheme. Natural England have been affected by budget cuts so prospects are not so good and benefits must be shown for extra management. However, unimproved grassland such as The Green are of great interest to them.

Over the next six months Mr Ross felt we needed to discuss what we wanted on The Green. Middleton wanted more involvement and the moor to be tidier, prettier and better for wildlife; a local farmer now cuts it for free.

Eventually the Scheme of Regulation may transfer back to the Parish Council.

A parishioner felt that The Green had not been managed properly for 20 years; there was ragwort—a danger to livestock—and thistles. Mr Ross agreed they needed to be identified.

A parishioner asked about the triangle used as a play area. Mr Ross said this was managed by the Parish Council and is outside the Scheme of Regulation. The Chairman said that one year they had left it uncut one year. Opinion was divided but slightly in favour of cutting it, because of concerns over visibility, litter and so on. If brought into the scheme it would have to be cut for hay but there would be visibility problems for traffic. He would welcome views. Mr Ross thought the Parish Council would probably want to include it in the scheme to maximise income, including any parts that residents currently cut. A parishioner was concerned about weeds and rubbish that might result. Mr Ross said that Natural England insist on not cutting. In Middleton (0.5 acres) it worked better with local management and problems disappeared. Grass cutting is allowed between the hay cut and September.

A parishioner asked why councils pay for management if Pembroke College own it. The Chairman deplored the fact that Pembroke College are to the fore to take money from villagers requiring access but do not give any money back to the village. He had received an email saying they "may be in a position to give a small financial assistance". Mr Ross said that under the Scheme of Management SCDC are obliged to manage The Green. The Chairman said that when the scheme finishes in 2013, if the Parish Council are to take over

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management they needed to be sure about the money available, if works are to be done and would not be covered by the scheme.

Following a letter to households bordering The Green, he had received nothing back on ownership of ponds. One person was offering help in surveying.

Wild About Saxtead (conservation group)

Louisa Yorke said she was new to the village two years ago and living in Old Post Office Cottages was surrounded by grassland. 97% of wildflower meadows had been lost over the years and she felt this was an important habitat. Four people were currently involved in the new Wild About Saxtead group and their first event would be a Wild Flower Day on Saturday 11 June; fliers were distributed. This would be co-hosted with two people from SWT and there would be a picnic, a wildflower trail and activities for children.

A parishioner said it wasn't easy to make it work. At the back of The Green from last October there had been gas guns firing from 7.30am to evening on rape fields. Wildlife is disturbed, pheasants and partridges go away but the pigeons just move around. He was also concerned about systemic chemicals being used such as Proline fungicide, claimed to be bee-safe, but his commercial bees were in danger from the imminent spraying of 60 acres of farmland.

The Chairman encouraged people to spread the word about Wild About Saxtead and to volunteer their help.

Hedgerow Survey (13 May)

Training was going ahead and any volunteers were welcome (Saturday 13 May at 10am at Black Cat Cottage).

Parish Council Finances as at 31 March 2011

The Clerk reported the finances of the Parish Council as at the end of the year (31 March 2011), stating that Saxtead Parish Council ended the financial year with:

- £ 309.38 in the Community account (after allowing for £ 294.06 for cheques unrepresented at 29/3/11)
- £ 294.31 in the Business Saver Account.

This means that the Parish starts the new financial year with reserves of **£ 603.69**. This represents 32% of the annual precept, which is the main income for the parish, and is outside the recommended reserve levels of between 50 and 100% of annual income. It appears that the second half precept (£950) may not have been received in November 2009 ; the Clerk is checking what happened and requesting the missing bank statement.

The Saxtead Amenities Fund has a balance of £ 843.96 in the Saver Account and £ 256.07 in the Current Account, making a total of £1,100.03. This is according to the latest statements held which were 13/7/10 and 3/4/09 respectively, but no significant change will have occurred; the Clerk is requesting the missing bank statements. The Saxtead Amenities Fund is not part of Parish Council Funds.

The Parish Council reviewed the budget for 2011-12 at the meeting on 7 December 2010 and agreed to increase the precept to £3,250 for the year. This is an increase of 71% over the previous year.

The Parish accounts are being prepared for audit with a view to their being signed off at the Annual Parish Council Meeting on 10 May and then submitted for internal and external audit.

Questions from Parishioners

Louisa Yorke asked whether a follow-up litter pick could be done before the annual hay cut in future, a week in July. The Parish Council would look at the possibility in the future.

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