

STIFFKEY PARISH COUNCIL

Chairman: Mr L Jordan

Clerk's Address:

Wildfowlers Cottage

High Street

Cley

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The next Parish Council Meeting will be held on **MONDAY 7th JANUARY 2002** in **STIFFKEY VILLAGE HALL at 7.00pm**. All parishioners are welcome to attend.

A G E N D A

- 1 Apologies
- 2 Minutes of December Meeting
- 3 Matters Arising
- 4 Correspondence
- 5 Finance
- 6 Planning
- 7 Any Other Business
- 8 Parishioners Question Time
- 9 Date of Next Meeting: **MONDAY 4th FEBRUARY 2002**

*Patricia Temple-Crowe
Clerk to the Parish Council*

3rd January 2002

Minutes of Stiffkey Parish Council Meeting held on Monday 4th February 2002 at 7.00pm.

Present: Lawrence Jordan (Chairman), Roy Rogers, John Pearson, Stanley Sutton, and Michael Jordan

In attendance: The Clerk and 5 parishioners

Apologies: Mark Harrison, Mary Gerrard, Councillor Derek Baxter and Councillor Bernard Crowe

River Stiffkey - Before the commencement of the meeting the Chairman was very pleased to introduce Mr Jeavons from the Environment Agency who had kindly agreed to give a brief talk on the present management of the River Stiffkey and to answer any queries where possible regarding the water level of the river in recent months.

The following points were highlighted during the discussion:

- A booklet called "Living on the Edge" was distributed which details many of the problems and the reason why they occur in low-lying areas.
- During the past 12 months in particular, the river has been at its highest and this has occurred mainly due to the record amount of rainfall.
- Records have been kept since the 1960's which have been used as a guide.
- Parts of the village are in a flood risk area including the White Bridges, hence the reason why a considerable amount of improvement work was carried out approximately 10 years ago.
- The Environment Agency has permissive powers of maintenance which includes silt clearance, obstruction clearance i.e. weeds and trees etc. as necessary
- The Environment Agency does have an obligation to protect the environment.
- They also must maintain the sea defences at the White Bridges.
- Two areas which parishioners felt were a particular cause for concern are the road bridge and occupation bridge.
- Seven weirs have been put in the river between the village and White Bridges which it was felt restricted the water flow.
- Mr Jeavons explained that the weirs had been put in with the full approval of the previous authority (Anglia Water) – a full investigation had been carried out by the Environment Agency to ensure the weirs were not creating a problem. The Environment Agency is satisfied that they do not cause a problem further up stream.
- The banks have been lowered which means flooding occurs on Lord Buxton's land if the water levels get too high.
- During the past three years the water levels in the river have increased
- Following discussions with Lord Buxton tree clearance has been undertaken during the past three years to help the flow of the river. A machine was used during the last year and will again this year to try and ensure the obstructions to the river are reduced further

Continued



Continuation

- The Environment Agency has the power to do the clearance as and when necessary.
- The best most natural method to alleviate the floodwater is to direct it onto the flood plains.
- Parishioners expressed their concern regarding the section of river situated between the Bridge and Old Hall Farm.
- The Environment Agency has carried out some tree clearance in this area and following the concerns raised at this meeting will get a machine to remove some more of the silt, which is clearly part of the problem.
- In response to a query regarding the sluice gates Mr Jeavons explained that they are as good as any other automatic gates that have been installed in the country and the Environment Agency cannot afford to employ a person to manually operate the gates.
- Mr Jeavons thanked those present for their comments and gave an assurance that the Environment Agency would look at some of the concerns raised in particular the obstructions and silting up of the River and hoped the Environment Agency had the Council's support in the present management of the river.
- The Chairman thanked Mr Jeavons for attending the meeting and on behalf of the Council gave their support.
- On a final note, Mr Jeavons clarified a point raised regarding the use of a boat on the river and explained that if anyone wished to take a boat down the length of the River Stiffkey they would technically be required to obtain permission from the landowners. There is no right of navigation – however if anyone has been doing it all their lives, this may be sufficient reason to disregard such a ruling.

1 Minutes

The Minutes of the last meeting held on Monday 7th January 2002 were read approved and signed as a true record by the Chairman.

2 Matters Arising

Footpaths -Site meetings are being arranged with Mr Paul Regan who is the Footpath Officer with the North Norfolk District Council regarding the damage caused by vehicles being driven on the marsh

Stiffkey – 20011600 – Conversion of former butcher shop to holiday dwelling at 64, Wells Road for Mr and Mrs J Cox - A site meeting took place

The following e-mail was received from Bernard Crowe:

Following the site visit, the planning application came before the Committee on 24 January. The decision was to '**defer to negotiate**'. Would you please advise the Parish Council including Lawrence Jordan whose recommendation helped.



3 Correspondence

Mr Peter Thomas Re: Trees in the Greenway, Stiffkey

Norfolk Health Authority Re: The Norfolk Food and Nutrition Strategy

Norfolk County Association of Parish and Town Councils: Sundry literature

Norfolk County Council Norfolk Matters Issue Feb / Mar 2002

4 Finance

Expenditure:

The following payments have been made:

Eastern Contracting Public Lighting Maintenance bankers order £13.14

TXU Energi Monthly Energi Charge £28.19

Fakenham and Wells Citizens Advice Bureau letter acknowledge for the donation of £25.

The Bank Statements were available for inspection

5 Planning

Report from the Development Control Committee West – 24th January 2002 :

Stiffkey – 20011600 – Conversion of former butcher shop to holiday dwelling at 64, Wells Road for Mr and Mrs J Cox - **Recommendation – Refuse on highway safety grounds.**

6 Reports

Councillor Bernard Crowe:

White Paper Strong Local Leadership-Quality Public Services

OUTLINE

This month I discuss some key issues that are raised by the above White Paper published on 11 December 2001. District Councils have been invited to comment by 15 February to the Local Government Association.



6 Reports Continued

The Government has acknowledged that concerns exist about the way in which 'best value' is working and the White Paper addresses the need for a better focus on achieving improved outcomes. Specifically, it promises to:

- Put in place a performance framework to help councils deliver better services for their communities
- Identity more clearly the priorities central government expects from councils
- Encourage fewer and more targeted best value reviews.

A 'balanced scorecard' produced by the Audit Commission will identify each council as either: high performing, striving, coasting or poor performing. The aim is to have the assessments completed by late 2002 for County Councils and by late 2003 for Districts.

High Performing Councils will:

- be near the top of the performance spectrum
- have high performance in priority service areas
- have no poorly performing services
- have proven capacity to improve

They will be given a number of freedoms not available to other categories of council and a much 'lighter touch' inspection regime.

Striving councils will not necessarily be at the top of the performance spectrum but have a proven capacity to improve. They will have access to a package of freedoms approaching that of high performance councils.

Coasting councils will:

- not be at the top of the performance spectrum
- have limited or no proven capacity to improve

They will be required to negotiate a proportionate action plan with the Audit Commission following their assessment. This will include their programmes for best value reviews, their audits and inspection. They will have their performance monitored against the plan and receive support for capacity building.

Poor performing councils will:

- be consistently near the bottom of the performance spectrum
- have limited or no capacity to improve

They will have their performance monitored against their action plan negotiated with the Audit Commission and receive a 'directed approach' for support and capacity building to enable their improvement. They will be subject to central government intervention where necessary to tackle either service or corporate weakness.



6 Reports – Continued

In summary, the positive changes will be limited to councils who are assessed as 'high performing' or 'striving'. 'Coasting' and 'poor performing' councils, on the other hand, will be subjected to greater monitoring against the action plan agreed as a result of their less than satisfactory assessment.

Your views are welcome with respect to the North Norfolk District Council.

FINANCE

The White Paper states that there is little hard evidence for or against the view that the current balance between national and local taxes has an adverse impact on local government autonomy. This is debatable. My view is that having 75% of council spending funded centrally, adversely affects local accountability and gives central government undue influence over local spending decisions. Ministers are more likely to want to impose their own priorities over local government. Such a high proportion of central grant also increases local government's dependence on central government and reduces flexibility. Discussions within the Local Government Association indicate that the majority opinion remains that the level of funding raised locally is critical to the democratic status of local government.

Do you agree?

CENTRALISING OR DECENTRALISING

Does the White Paper achieve, on balance, greater freedom for local government? It emphasizes the importance of providing the public with high quality services, meeting rising expectations, providing choice for customers, and providing strong community leadership. My argument is that community leadership and local choice are best achieved by strong local government free to make locally appropriate choices, listening to local people rather than distant civil servants, quangos and inspectorates. This requires significant decentralisation from what we have at present. A reduction in some centralised services would also free up resources for local service delivery.

The White Paper acknowledges the large number of plans and partnerships which central government now require of local government. The DTLR has identified sixty-six plans which councils are required to produce for central government. The government produces no evidence of added value from having to submit those plans.

The government acknowledges the problems that have been caused by too many centralised initiatives. The problems they identify include excessive use of ring-fenced grants, too many centrally required plans and initiatives, and a large and uncoordinated number of small area initiatives. I will end by quoting from the independent Local Government Information Unit: 'The government emphasizes the need to show effective performance and value for money from local government, yet does not apply the same criteria to its own initiatives'. Your comments are welcome.



Reports - Continued

COUNCIL TAX

The government has already announced that they intend to revalue domestic properties, with the work starting in 2005, ready for the tax bills that go out in 2007.

The White Paper states that the council tax has worked reasonably well but they say that they are concerned about the fairness of the tax. They propose, therefore, to listen to the views of taxpayers and local government about possible future changes to banding and other issues. Perhaps readers will have views on whether they believe reforming the council tax is a priority and may wish to suggest possible ways in which this could be achieved.

SECOND HOMES

Thank you for your views on the subject of charging the full council tax on second homeowners. At the time of writing, I am still consulting with Parish Councils. I will provide a summary of the consultation in the next Glaven Valley Newsletter.

COUNCIL TAX FY 2002-03

1. General

I do not normally introduce politics at Parish Council meetings except where Council Tax and other financial issues are involved. This is the case now. Over the last 5 years, the Lib-Lab Pact at District and County have been the majority parties and taxes have risen as follows: North Norfolk District Council up 47%; Norfolk County Council up 60%; Norfolk Police Authority up 120%.

In May 2002, the Conservative Party gained control of the County Council, has inherited the rising Lib-Lab expenditure, and is taking steps to bring it under control. In May 2003, the Conservative Party plans, with the help of local voters, to take charge of the District Council and to curb rising expenditure and higher council taxes.

2. Executive Committee 4 February 2002.

The Conservative Group proposed that Council Tax should be capped at 5.9% and that the budget gap of £110,208 should be found from undertaking savings. The Lib-Lab Group proposed instead an increase of Council Tax of 8.8% which was carried by 5 votes (Lib-Lab Group) to 3 votes (Conservative Group).



6 Reports - Continued

3. Full Council 27 February 2002

If the Lib-Lab majority push through the increase at Full Council, the combined Parish & District elements of Council Tax, at Band D, for the Parishes of the Blakeney Ward will be:

Blakeney	£136.44	6.4% increase	equiv. to 16p per week
Langham	£114.98	7.6% increase	16 p per week
Morston	£116.69	7.8% increase	16p per week
Stiffkey	£123.17	9.9% increase	21p per week
Wiveton	£121.50	7.8% increase	17p per week

Report from Councillor Derek Baxter

Fly Tipping

Norfolk's local authorities responded to some 7,800 incidents of fly tipping in 2000/2001.

The Norfolk County Council Waste Review Panel have discussed new efforts to target fly tipping and are recommending the distribution of a new leaflet telling people how to report fly tipping and warning householders of the dangers of cowboy operators who offer to take their waste away on the cheap - it often ends up being dumped at the side of the road.

Offenders can be fined up to £20,000 and even be sent to prison.

There is no need to worry if you have an old fridge or freezer that needs replacing. It may be taken away by the District Council for a small charge (less than £20) or it may be taken to a Household Waste Recycling Centre free of charge.

Progress Report on Hospital Access

Members of the County Council's Planning & Transportation Review Panel are getting a progress report on options for improving road access to the new Norwich and Norfolk University Hospital.

The options are not mutually exclusive and have all the benefits and disbenefits which will needed to be considered in more detail. All the options will require co-operation and support by a number of organisations and landowners if they are to be delivered within a reasonable timescale.



6 Reports - Continued

The options in brief are:

B1108 Watton Road link

As well as improving the B1108 this option would provide a new road from the B1108 to the area of potential future development together with a connecting road to the hospital.

Thickthorn junction link

A new road could link the existing A11 Thickthorn roundabout to the new hospital on Colney Lane.

Hethersett Lane improvement

This would involve widening and improvement of the existing Hethersett Lane from its junction with the B1172 (the old A11) to an area near the hospital which is being considered for development in the future.

Direct access road from the A47

This option should remain on the table despite being turned down by the Highways Agency.

Colney Link and Colney Lane improvement

The proposed housing development on land to the south-west of Colney Lane currently provides for a link road from the A11. This option includes increasing the width of the new road and possibly widening part of Colney Lane.

Hethersett Lane link

This would be a new road linking the Thickthorn roundabout to Hethersett Lane which could give more direct access to the development sites off Hethersett Lane but potentially less direct access to the hospital for general traffic.

Freezing weather keeps gritters busy

Since the freeze started on 21st December, the County Council have: Driven the gritting lorries over 30,000 miles (which is the equivalent of crossing the Atlantic eight times)!

Turned out over 20 times to treat the principal gritting routes, including Christmas Day and New Year.

Spread about 8,000 tonnes of salt.

The salt comes from a mine in Cheshire and is stored in seven distinctive bee-hive shaped barns in strategic locations around Norfolk. New supplies are delivered all the time to replenish stocks depleted by any prolonged cold spell.



6 Reports - Continued

A typical run involves 54 gritting lorries spreading 321 tonnes of salt. The operation takes some three hours to complete and costs about £19,000 each time.

There are over 6,000 miles of highway in Norfolk so they cannot all be treated. Priority is given to the county's busiest roads and gritting routes are reviewed each year. Some minor roads may also be treated if the Council's resources allow.

Learning Centre at Wells

Wells Learning Centre (to be situated in the current library) will provide access to a range of informal and formal learning for people in Wells-Next-The-Sea and surrounding villages. In addition, two Learning Support Officers will undertake outreach work in a number of small isolated communities in North Norfolk, introducing computer based learning to many people for the first time. Six computer learning stations will be added to the library's existing computer provision, enabling users to access on-line learning programmes and use CD-ROM based courses. Up to eight hours a week of formal courses will be provided by the Adult Education Service ranging from basic computer skills, accounting, family history and garden design.

The Centre and the working rural communities will benefit those who currently have no or only limited access to computers at home or work, with job seekers, older people and those wanting to develop their skills either to improve their employment opportunities or for leisure interests.

It is expected that the Centre will be up and running by Summer 2002.

This project is significant in extending access to learning to isolated rural communities. Equally important, local communities will be involve, through consultation and the use of volunteers, in determining the sort of programmes that are offered and how the Centre develops.

7 A O B

Commemorating the Golden Jubilee The Parish Council agreed to purchase a new seat for the Knoll to mark the Golden Jubilee.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 9.45pm



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A G E N D A

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- 9 Parishioners Question Time
- 10 Date of Next Meeting: **MONDAY 8th APRIL 2002**

Patricia Temple-Crowe
Clerk to the Parish Council

1st February 2002

1st April 2002

Minutes of Stiffkey Parish Council Meeting held on Monday 4th March 2002 at 7.00pm.

Present: Lawrence Jordan (Chairman), Mark Harrison, Roy Rogers, John Pearson, Stanley Sutton, and Michael Jordan

In attendance: Councillor Bernard Crowe, the Clerk and 2 parishioners

Apologies: Mary Gerrard, Councillor Derek Baxter, P C Durrant

1 Minutes

The Minutes of the last meeting held on Monday 4th February were read approved and signed as a true record by the Chairman.

2 Matters Arising

Golden Jubilee Commemorative Seat

The Parish Council agreed to spend up to £500 on the seat and Mr Stanley Sutton agreed to carry out an investigation to ensure the most appropriate type of seat was purchased

A149 Wells Road, Stiffkey (Greenways to Red Lion P H) Footway Assessment

The following e-mail has been sent to Mr Schramm:

I am in receipt of your letter concerning the above which has now been discussed at a full Council Meeting and the Councillors have asked me to organise a site meeting.

I would be very grateful if you could give me a date and time when you could meet representative from the Parish Council to look at the problem and discuss this issue in more detail.

The Clerk is waiting for a response a further e-mail has been sent and telephone message has been left at his office in the hopes that a meeting can be arranged.

3 Correspondence

Godfrey Sayers Re: Wells Maritime Heritage Centre Mr Ian Scott has requested a meeting to be held with representatives of the Parish Councils on Friday 15th March. - The Chairman, Mr John Pearson and Mr Roy Rogers will attend.

North Norfolk District Council

- North Norfolk Joint Area Committee – East and West Area committee Meeting on 14th March 2002.



- Agenda Council Meeting 27th February 2002

3 Correspondence – Continued

C P R E - The Government's Planning Green Paper : planning to ignore you.

Norfolk County Council:

- Local Bus Variation for Service Number 36 Coast Hopper – Route King's Lynn – Hunstanton – Wells – Sheringham
- Norfolk's Local Transport Plan (LTP) Annual Forum

Norfolk Coast Project - Transport – Going Somewhere? Report of the Norfolk Coast AONB Community Conference held at the Auden Theatre, Gresham's School, Holt on Tuesday 30th October 2001.

Councillor Bernard Crowe – Project Reach Out – Arrangements for Initial Training

4 Finance

The Clerk has received the following:

TXU Energi Monthly Energy Charge - direct debit £28.19

The Bank Statement was available for inspection

5 Planning

Development Control Committee (West) – 21st February 2002 – Conversion of former butchers shop to holiday dwelling: 64 Wells Road for Mr and Mrs J Cox. –

Recommendation – Refusal on highways grounds.

The following is a copy of a report to the Development Committee on 21st February from Councillor Bernard Crowe following the above site meeting:

There is a presentation on the progress of the Community Strategy to the Executive Cttee at 1230 p.m. on 21 Feb. If Application 20011600 is not called before then, I would be grateful if you would take the attached as the comments of the local member please.

Comment

Members visited the site on 17 January. The key issue is to find a solution that provides safe access from the Old Butchers Shop onto the A149. Members did not support the original proposal; i.e. to chamfer the attractive corner end of the building to provide an improved sight line of westward approaching traffic. Instead members decided to defer a decision to allow the applicant to negotiate a solution which would involve rebuilding the roadside wall on a new line. In my opinion this will meet Policy 147:



5 Planning - Continued

E-mail from Bernard Crowe – Continued

1. By providing an improved sight line of westward approaching traffics which is already subject to a 30 mph speed limit in that area.
2. By not compromising safe movement and free flow of traffic or the safe use of the road by others.

Although the Highways Officer has, quite rightly, drawn attention to the possible danger of exiting on the 30-mph limit, NCC has not found it necessary to place white lines (indicating restricted forward visibility). This despite the fact that the track immediately to the East of the Old Butchers Shop is used by Mrs Butler, next door neighbour, daily; and by the adjacent second home owner when on holiday. Neither experience difficulty in accessing the A149.

In a recent planning application by The Red Lion, Stiffkey, (Application 20011340), the Planning Officer over rode the concerns of the Highways officer regarding exit onto the A149 in the 20-mph zone. Those who visited the site will recall that I stopped the bus so that members could see the similar example.

I recommend to the Committee that the application be approved.

The additional bonus is the restoration of 150-year-old building of interesting architecture which, if not repaired, will fall down. The development will enhance the appearance and character of the area; and is wholly supported by the Parish Council including the re-alignment of the roadside wall.

I note that the Planning Officer is content with the application apart from the objections of the Highways Officer.

Finally, may I remind members that this application is for holiday use only. Permanent occupation is not allowed, and the number of occasions access onto the A149 from the Old Butchers Shop will be limited.

I hope that members will consider approval of the application.

A further e-mail to the Clerk was received from Councillor Bernard Crowe on the 22nd February which reads as follows:

“I got the refusal reversed. Please advise SPC in due course. John Cox has been informed.”



6 Reports

Report from Councillor Bernard Crowe

SECOND HOMES

The Government circulated a consultation paper in November 2001. I provided a summary in this newsletter and also discussed the proposals with Parish Councils, and with those who contacted me subsequently. The key points from the Government's consultation paper were:

'We believe that long term empty homes can have a significant impact on local communities. Our main proposals are to give billing authorities discretion to:

- *Remove or reduce the existing 50% discount for second homes*
- *Remove or reduce the existing 50% council tax discount for long term empty homes*
- *Give greater freedom over council tax discounts and exemptions in response to local issues.*
- *Allow a range of options for using the additional council tax raised.*

The North Norfolk District Council took into account the views of Town and Parish Councils, and of the individuals who responded. Given below is the summary of responses made to the Department of Transport, Local Government and the Regions (DTLR).

Do you agree that local authorities should be given discretion to reduce or end the council tax discounts for second homes?

[It is estimated that there are 5077 second homes in North Norfolk]

Answer: The Council fully supports the proposal to give discretion to reduce or end the council tax discount for second homes.

The Parish Councils of Blakeney, Langham, Morston, Wiveton and Stiffkey agreed; as did all towns and parishes who responded except Sustead parish council.

Do you agree this discretion should also extend to long-term empty homes?

[The estimate of long-term empty properties is 862].

Answer: The Council fully supports the proposal to extend the discretion to long-term empty homes.

The majority of towns and parish councils agreed, including the Blakeney Ward. 20% had no view.



6 Reports - Continued

Should local authorities also have powers to create their own council tax exemptions and discounts, including powers to grant relief on a case by case basis?

Answer: The council supports the move to enable authorities to have greater freedom to offer discounts and exemptions and in particular the power to grant relief to meet local circumstances.

The majority of towns and parish council agreed including the Blakeney Ward. 25% had no view. Runton parish council disagreed.

Should individual local authorities be able to retain the additional council tax raised, or should the additional money be spread across all local authorities in England?

Answer: The Council believes that local authorities should be able to retain locally the additional council tax raised.

The majority of town and parish councils agreed including the Blakeney Ward. 15% had no view.

If you believe there should be local retention, should proceeds be retained for just second homes or for long-term empty homes as well?

Answer: The Council supports the view that the proceeds from second homes and long-term empty properties should be retained.

The majority of town and parish councils agreed including the Blakeney Ward. 7% had no view.

If so, which option would be the most appropriate means of retention?

Answer: The Council supports the view that it should have the freedom to spend the proceeds in accordance with the Housing and Community Strategies. (Note: the latter will be developed by autumn 2002).

This response to this question was finely balanced with 45% opting for 'ring fencing' the proceeds entirely for housing purposes, especially for affordable housing. Blakeney suggested an option whereby the additional proceeds would be fed back to reduce council tax for homeowners where the second homes exist. Langham favoured a varied use including a reduction of the NNDC element of council tax. Stiffkey and Wiveton favoured varied use as per answer above. Morston favoured 'ring fencing' for housing purposes.

Do you agree that local authorities should meet the costs of any additional exemption or discounts granted?



Answer: In view of the additional income and degree of local discretion being proposed, it is only reasonable that the billing authority should bear the costs provided they can be met from the taxes raised.

6 Reports - Continued

Next Steps

The DTLR will consider the responses from the consultation and issue a Green Paper with proposals, followed by a White Paper with intentions. This process could take 2-3 years, so don't hold your breath!

Report from Councillor Derek Baxter

BACS to the future

As the County Council move towards buying and paying for goods and services electronically (e-procurement) they are reviewing the way they pay their suppliers.

In 2002 they paid 338,000 invoices submitted by 18,500 suppliers. Of those suppliers

* 15,100 were paid by cheque (88,000 invoices)

* 3,400 by BACS (250,000 invoices)

BACS - Bankers Automated Clearing Services - means that money is paid directly in to a bank account (in the same way as our salaries or pensions may be paid each month).

Paying by BACS is one of the first steps towards trading electronically with suppliers. It is more efficient than paying by cheque and also incurs lower bank charges.

So why is the County Council still paying over 15,000 suppliers by cheque?

Capita (a partner of the County Council) is working with existing suppliers to transfer them to ABCs payments.

County Council staff have now received information on how to set up new suppliers so that they are paid by BACS.

They have also been asked to make BACS a condition of any contracts. In general, suppliers tend to prefer this method of payment as they don't have to take a cheque to the bank.

Public Footpaths

An innovative approach to signing public footpaths that cross fields was discussed by the County Council's Environment Review Panel at the end of January.

Norfolk has a high percentage of cross-field paths and a recent national survey of Public Rights of Way carried out by the Countryside Agency found that, despite many



improvements made to the network of paths, a significant number were being obstructed by ploughing and cropping. Local surveys support these findings.

6 Reports - Continued

In the past, resources and time have been spent trying to keep these cross paths open by reminding farmers to reinstate them, serving legal notices and cutting the cropped paths as part of County Council routine maintenance.

The new approach to improve the situation, which will complement the other approaches used, is to attach signs to waymark/fingerposts at each end of the cross-field path so that ramblers know that the path is open, whatever the ground looks like. The signs will also remind farmers and contractors of the existence of the path and the need to keep it walkable. By encouraging walkers to use the paths throughout the year, it is hoped that more paths will be reinstated by use, allowing staff to concentrate on other more persistent problems.

New Code of Conduct/Register of Interests

At its meeting on 21st January 2002, the County Council agreed to adopt a Code of Conduct for Councillors and co-opted members. It came into effect immediately after the full Council Meeting on 25th February. All Councillors must sign an undertaking to comply with the Code. This must be done within two months of the Code being adopted. If any Councillors fail to sign, they will cease to become members.

The Code of Conduct also requires that within 28 days of it being adopted, Councillors and co-opted members must register financial and other interests by providing written notification to the Head of Law who is the Council's Monitoring Officer.

Training in the Code of Practice and its implications is being arranged for Councillors.

New Director of Planning & Transportation

Norfolk County Council has appointed Tim Malynn as its new Director of Planning & Transportation. Mr Malynn will take up his post at the beginning of May 2002.

Mr Malynn is a Chartered Civil Engineer and a Member of the Institution of Civil Engineers. He holds a B.Eng. Honours Degree in Civil and Structural Engineering for Sheffield University and an MBA from City University.

Improving Norfolk Bridges

Three Norfolk bridges - at Dunston, Wighton and Raynham - are in the first phase of a new bridge strengthening and maintenance contract announced by Norfolk County Council.

Over the next two years, some 25 bridges in all will be improved, under a pioneering contract between the Council and its partners, the construction company May Gurney. The work is worth £3 million in total.



Wighton Bridge has a substandard load-carrying capacity and the deck will be replaced.

7 **A O B**

Golden Jubilee Commemoration. The Parish Council discussed the purchase of a box of 'Young Queen' mugs from Impact China Limited. The Council agreed that a box of 36 mugs would be sufficient to give one to every child in the village of school age and under. Mr Stanley Sutton generously promised a donation of £50 and Mr Lawrence Jordan generously promised a donation of £20 towards the cost of the mugs.

A meeting has been arranged for the 25th March to discuss ideas to mark the Golden Jubilee.

20 m.p.h. Sign – The sign has disappeared in Bridge Street near the Manor House – a replacement will be requested.

Mr Keith McDougall from the PCC discussed the poor road surface at the Knoll and asked if it would be possible for the Parish Council to give some financial assistance. Mr Mark Harrison very kindly agreed to organise 2 or 3 loads of gravel with his vehicles as soon as time allowed. This would be a considerable improvement to the road surface at the Knoll and to the entrance to the Church. The Parish Council would finance the cost of the gravel.

The Village Sign - This needs to be repainted and John Pearson and Stanley Sutton agreed to take down the sign and take to Hill House for refurbishment.

Camping Hill Following safety concerns raised by Michael Jordan, the Clerk would ask the Highways Department if it would be possible to erect a barrier on the verge of the dangerous bend up Camping Hill.

Street Lights The No. 4 light is on continuously and the Clerk will request an inspection.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 8.40pm.



STIFFKEY PARISH COUNCIL

Chairman: Mr L Jordan

Clerk's Address:

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- 8 Any Other Business
 - Code of Conduct
- 9 Parishioners Question Time
- 10 Date of Next Meeting: **MONDAY 13th MAY 2002 WHICH WILL BE THE ANNUAL REPORT TO PARISHIONERS.**

*Patricia Temple-Crowe
Clerk to the Parish Council*

Minutes of Stiffkey Parish Council Meeting held on Monday 8th April 2002 at 7.00pm

Present: Lawrence Jordan (Chairman), Mark Harrison, Roy Rogers, John Pearson, Stanley Sutton, Mary Gerard and Michael Jordan

In attendance: The Clerk, 3 parishioners, Councillor Bernard Crowe and P C Durrant the Police Liaison Officer

Apologies: Councillor Derek Baxter

1 Minutes

The Minutes of the last meeting held on Monday 4th March 2002 were read approved and signed as a true record by the Chairman.

2 Correspondence

East Norfolk Rural Transport - Publication: Lets Get Going in Norfolk

Norfolk County Council Planning and Transportation:

- Highways Changes to our Offices
- Local Bus Service Variation

Norfolk County Association of Parish and Town Councils - Sundry Publications

Norfolk County Council Re: Corporate Review of the District Council Services

Norfolk Health Authority

- Re: Strategic Health Authority
- 'Who Cares?' Second Edition 2002

Local Government Commission for England - Periodic Electoral Review of North Norfolk – Draft Recommendations.

DEFRA Re Town and Parish Councils

3 Finance

The Clerk had received the following invoice which was approved for payment:

Norfolk County Association of Parish and Town Councils – Annual subscription 2002-2003 £69.23

The following payments have been made:

TXU Energi (Energy Charge)	direct debit	£28.19
Eastern Contracting (standing order)		£13.14

The Bank Statement was available for inspection.

3 (a)

Code of Conduct The Parish Council formally accept the Code of Conduct and provided the Clerk with all the necessary documentation duly signed. The Clerk would liaise with NNDC to ensure the appropriate advertisement was placed in the E D P.

L. Jordan

4 Planning

The following planning applications have been received:

133 Camping Hill, Stiffkey – Erection of Garage - *The Parish Council had no objection to this application.*

Scaup Cottage, Greenway – Erection of two-storey extension and conservatory - *The Parish Council had no objection to this application*

The following Notice of Decision has been received:

Conversion of former Butchers Shop to holiday dwelling at 64 Wells Road, Stiffkey – *Permission for development.*

5 Reports

Report from Councillor Bernard Crowe

Council Tax

Electors will be concerned regarding the increase in Council Tax over and above inflation for 2002/2003. So that the overall figures are shown in better perspective, I have taken Blakeney as my example. Band D is used, as this is the comparator nationwide.

Parish Precept	£36-45
District Council	£99-99
County Council	£758-52
Police Authority	£100-35
Total	£995-31

The precept for the District Council includes the National Pay Award for Local Government employees of 3.5% and the extra costs of undertaking Best Value reviews for which Government provides no funding.

‘There’s a Hole in my Bucket’

I now want to have look at the situation for 2003/04 and beyond. We forecast a budget gap in excess of £500,000 with effect from 2003/04 unless we take corrective action now. Year on year we have had budget problems that have been resolved by taking small cuts across all services. This not a sustainable way of dealing with the problem. I have advocated a Corporate Review since I joined the North Norfolk District Council, and I am pleased that this is now taking place. We will look at all the Council’s services and activities and all options will be evaluated, be it:

- Increasing services
- Reducing services
- Ceasing services
- Maintaining services
- Starting services

B. Baker

5 Report from Councillor Bernard Crowe - Continued

In examining how services will be provided we will look at a range of ways including:

- Continuing with the in-house service
- Management buy-outs
- Buying goods and services with other organisations
- Offering our services to others
- Bidding for contracts
- Joint ventures
- Setting up trading companies
- Transferring services to another provider

The pressures on us from 2003/04 include major changes to our activities that need to be funded. They include the North Walsham Swimming Pool, the Fakenham Leisure Centre, On-going CCTV commitments, and the increased recycling commitments imposed by Government. It is certain that Government will not give us additional funds for basic services. We might get inflationary increases if we are lucky. In my view, we need to look at opportunities to find savings, efficiencies or additional income of circa £1,000,000 in order to eliminate the budget gap post 2003/04.

When we have proposals ready we will put them out for consultation. In the meantime, if you have any comments on the approach we are taking, I would like to hear from you.

Telecommunications Masts

In view of the concern of residents in the Blakeney and surrounding Wards, I arranged a seminar at the District Council to discuss the issues in more depth. We were able to persuade all the operators to attend. They are BT Cellnet, Vodafone, One-2-One, Orange PCs and Hutchinson 3G.

The Government's policy is to facilitate the growth of new and existing telecommunications systems whilst keeping the environmental impact to a minimum, particularly in Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

The aim of its telecommunications policy is ensure that people have a choice of the provider of their telecommunications service. The operators are in competition to offer services, and this will continue. Local Authorities are not empowered to prevent competition between different operators Nevertheless; operators may be expected to provide evidence regarding the need for their proposed developments.

The Operators agreed that they would, in future, meet with NNDC to carry out annual discussions about roll out plans. We are negotiating to discover whether the operators wish to do this individually or together.

Operators have also agreed to the Industry's Ten commitments. The key commitments are summarised below:

- Participate in obligatory pre-application consultation with NNDC. [I will arrange for Parish participation].



5 Report from Councillor Bernard Crowe – Continued

- Publish clear, transparent and accountable criteria on site sharing.
- Establish workshops on technical developments within telecommunications for local authorities and elected members.
- Deliver a database of information available to the public on radio base stations.
- Assess all radio base stations for international (ICNIRP) compliance for public exposure, and produce a programme for compliance.
- Provide, as part of planning applications for radio base stations, a certification of compliance with ICNIRP public exposure guidelines.
- Support financially the Government’s independent scientific research programme on mobile communication health issues.

Report form Councillor Derek Baxter

E-Procurement

E-procurement means the County Council buying their goods and services electronically. Their current system is paper intensive which is extremely costly. E-procurement gives them the chance to tender their requirements, raise and send orders, receive and process invoices and make payments by email or over the internet.

Some of the benefits of e-procurement will be:

- * information at their fingertips about who is the authorised supplier of goods and services
- * making goods and services cheaper through consolidation of buying power
- * better management information
- * better relationships with suppliers
- * lower transaction costs
- * less spending off-contract

The Council is working towards e-government targets, and these include implementing e-procurement by 2005 for low value, high volume purchasing.

Steps that will now be taken to make e-procurement easier include:

- * paying suppliers by BACS or by direct debit - both methods are also cheaper than cheques and are very important in the battle to reduce costs
- * reducing the number of invoices the Council receives by persuading suppliers to consolidate them or send them less often - say monthly instead of weekly
- * building these requirements and the ability to trade electronically into new tenders and contracts



5 Report from Councillor Derek Baxter – Continued

Over the next two years the Council plans to choose an e-procurement system, train purchasers in how to use it and work with suppliers to ensure that the whole process is trouble free.

Rail Bridge Inspections

As concerns grow about safety where roads cross or run close to rail lines, Norfolk County Council is helping to pilot a national initiative aimed at identifying high risk sites.

The County is responsible for nine bridges which cross Railtrack passenger lines. The majority of these are in urban situations where traffic speeds are restricted. Railtrack are responsible for some 35 bridges in Norfolk.

Norfolk are co-operating fully with the Health and Safety Commission to trial inspections. It is important that the Government has the very best information about where the risk could be the highest here in Norfolk and across the country as a whole. Norfolk County Council has an excellent record in bridge maintenance as well as pioneering innovative contracting methods to improve efficiency and this puts them in a strong position to pilot the new inspection programme so that lessons can be learnt and a new national approach formulated.

A second report by the National Highways Agency, which manages trunk roads for the Government, says that work to clarify who is responsible for improvement work on roads close to rail lines should be completed by June. There are ten dual carriageway bridges managed by the Agency which cross rail lines in Norfolk.

Wiveton Bridge

The County Council has been undertaking assessments of the load bearing capacity of bridges in the County. The results of the work have identified Wiveton bridge as having a load bearing capacity of 17 tonne GVW (Gross Vehicle Weight). As a result, it is proposed that a 17 tonne GVW except empty vehicles weight restriction be implemented. Consultation regarding signage details has taken place with Wiveton Parish Council.

£90 million PFI for Norfolk Schools

Plans for over £90 million of improvements to school buildings in several parts of the county moved a step forward with the news that the Office of Government Commerce has approved the County Council's outline business case for Private Finance Initiative (PFI) funding.

The scheme is open to schools in the Greater Yarmouth, Loddon, Long Stratton, Stalham and Swaffham areas and its up to the governing body of each school to decide whether to take part.



5 Report from Councillor Derek Baxter – Continued

Major improvements that PFI could deliver include:

- * replacing mobile classrooms with permanent buildings
- * more classrooms to provide for changes in pupil numbers
- * additional facilities such as school halls
- * long term guaranteed standards of maintenance
- * provision for increased use of schools by the wider community

The Council expects to sign a contract before March 2004. Building improvements would begin soon afterwards for completion by the end of 2006.

Under PFI the successful bidder for the contract is responsible for school building improvements and services to buildings over at least 25 years.

The County Council has also submitted a separate bid to the Department for Education and Skills for over £160 million of PFI funding for all 114 schools in the Greater Norwich area.

6 A O B

Traffic Calming The Parish Council once again expressed their concern regarding the increasing speed of traffic through the village – it would appear that the traffic calming measures introduced in the past few years are now having very little effect. The Parish Council’s concerns would be conveyed to PC Durrant.

Golden Jubilee Celebrations A meeting has taken place and it has been agreed a party with games etc. will be held on the playing field. Each child in the village will be given a mug from the Parish Council. These will cost approximately £130 - £150 and Mr Stanley Sutton generously donated £50, and Mr Lawrence Jordan donated £20 towards this purchase .

Replacement Seat for the Knoll At the last meeting the Parish Council unanimously approved the purchase of a seat up to the cost of £450 - £500 which will be purchased on behalf of the Parish Council by Mr Stanley Sutton.

Road Surface at the Knoll - Following concerns raised by the P.C.C. regarding the very poor road surface at the Knoll leading to the Church Mr Mark Harrison has kindly offered to use his vehicles to obtain some shingle which will be purchased by the Parish Council.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 9.20pm.



The following correspondence was read out to the members following the Annual Report to Parishioners on Monday 14th May 2002.

Lord Buxton - Invitation to the Parish Councillors, past Parish Councillors and partners - *The Parish Council were delighted to accept Lord Buxton's invitation for Sunday 9th June. The Parish Council would give the Clerk the names and address of anyone who has had close connections to the Parish Council to ensure they also received an invitation*

Barbara Butter – Letter of thanks to the Parish Council for their support of the planning application for the 'Old Butchers Shop'

N N D C

- Notification regarding changes to the electoral role

Norfolk Rural Community Council

- Literature
- Norfolk Village Hall Service Centre Scheme

N N D C

- Temporary Traffic Order A149 Wells Road - *This work has already commenced.*
- Information schedule regarding carriageway resurfacing - *This work has already commenced.*
- Vegetation cutting on public rights of way
- Information schedule Footway and carriageway resurfacing
- West Area Committee Meeting – 14th May 2002
- Parish News – Issue 61
- Agenda Council Meeting 24th April 2002
- Council Matters – April/May Issue

Norfolk Police Authority - Fakenham Sector Community Consultation Forum

Councillor Bernard Crowe - E-mails:

- Re: Track to west of Camping Hill
- Land at Camping Hill - *The Parish Council is still waiting for a decision regarding this land.*
- Complaint regarding litter

Finance

The following invoices had been received and were approved for payment:

TXU Energi direct debit	for April	£28.19
Eastern Contracting standing order	for April	£13.14
Eastern Contracting standing order	for April	£13.14

Income

N N D C Precept	£1,325.00
N N D C Interest on land sale	£14.50
VAT	£65.50



Planning

The Clerk had received the following:

Notice of Decision - Erection of Garage at 133 Camping Hill, Stiffkey - *Permission for Development*

DISTRICT COUNCILLOR'S NOTEBOOK – COUNCILLOR BERNARD CROWE

Periodic Electoral Review

The Commissioner has agreed the recommendations from the District Council on the future electoral arrangements for North Norfolk. They now become the Commissioner's draft recommendations and will be subject to another round of consultation. Everyone is invited to comment by 20 May 2002. The earlier responses may be inspected at the District Council who will advise how send in your comments to the Local Government Commission for England.

The Glaven Valley ward will comprise the parishes of Blakeney, Brinton, Field Dalling with Saxlingham, Letheringsett with Glandford, Morston, Stody with Hunworth, Thornage and Wiveton. Langham and Stiffkey parishes leave the present Blakeney Ward to join the Priory Ward with Binham, Hindringham, Holkham, Warham and Wells-next-the-Sea.

The Commission proposes that:

- There should be an increase in the Council size from 46 to 48;
- There should be 34 wards;
- The boundaries of all existing ward should be modified, resulting in a net reduction of two wards, and no wards should retain their existing boundaries;
- Elections should continue to be held for the whole council.

The first election on the new arrangements will be on 1 May 2003.

The Planning Green Paper

The Planning Green Paper has raised a divergence of views amongst local authorities in the region. It is up to the Government to consider all the responses received and to consider a way forward. I believe that it will be linked to the Government's proposals for Regional Government since this was one of the major concerns at County and District level.

Grading of Councils

I advised you in March that County and District Councils are to be graded into High Performing, Striving, Coasting or Poor Performing. This will be carried out by the Audit Commission in their Comprehensive Performance Assessment. The County Council will be assessed this year with the results available by December 2002.



Councillor Bernard Crowe's Report - Continued

The North Norfolk District Council will be assessed between autumn 2002 and December 2003 when the results will be announced. The first step is self-assessment by NNDC. We are asked to make an honest assessment of the quality of our services, their corporate effectiveness and capacity to improve. This assessment must be approved in an appropriate public meeting, so all residents will have the chance to comment. The Commission will then review this assessment and discuss its validity with the District Council.

There's Another Hole in my Bucket

In the last edition, I gave you a break down of the Council Tax charges and gave you an insight of how we plan to close the budget gaps for the following years. You should be aware that a potential problem is emerging concerning national pay negotiations for local government workers. In February 2002, local government employers offered a 3% wage rise for the year beginning 1 April 2002. The unions have rejected this. They have put in a claim for everyone to receive £1750 or 6% whichever is the greater. This rise would add 11.8% to councils' wage bills.

The three unions, UNISON, TGWU and GMB, are now consulting about the offer, and recommending that it is rejected. If, when the consultation is over in mid April, the 3% is rejected, the three unions will probably ballot all their members on strike action. The result of these ballots would then be known in May or June.

The 3% National offer is:

- More than double the rate of inflation (1.3%).
- More than the current pay deals (average 2.5% in economy)
- 20% higher than national minimum wage for those on lowest rate.

I believe that a 12% increase in every council's pay bill is totally unaffordable. It would cost a further £80 in council tax bills for every household, on top of the current 10% average rise. I suspect that you will hear more about this issue in the newspapers. If not, I will keep you up to date in the next edition.



STIFFKEY PARISH COUNCIL

Clerk's Address:

Wildfowlers Cottage
High Street
Cley
NR25 7AP
Tel: 01263 740843

5th May 2002

The Annual Parish Council Meeting will be held on **MONDAY 13th MAY 2002** at 7.00pm in **STIFFKEY VILLAGE HALL** followed by the Annual General Meeting of Stiffkey Village Hall Committee. All parishioners are welcome to attend.

A G E N D A - A P C M

- 1** Apologies
- 2** Minutes of previous Annual Parish Council Meeting
- 3** Presentation of the Annual Report of the Council
- 4** Presentation of the Accounts for the year ended 31st March 2002
- 5** A O B

*Patricia Temple- Crowe
Clerk to the Parish Council*

5th May 2002

2

Minutes of Stiffkey Annual Parish Council Meeting held on Monday 14th May 2001 at 7.00pm.

Present: L Jordan (Chairman), J Pearson, S Sutton, R Rogers, M Gerrard,
E Gambrill and M Harrison

Apologies: Cllr Bernard Crowe and Cllr Derek Baxter

In attendance: The Clerk and 5 parishioners

1 Minutes

The Minutes of the last Annual Parish Meeting held on Monday 8th May 2000 were read approved and signed as a true record by the Chairman.

2 Annual Report

Mr L Jordan Chairman of the Council thanked the Councillors for their support during the past year. He also expressed his thanks and that of the Council to Councillor Bernard Crowe, Councillor Derek Baxter and the Clerk.

The past year had been successful for the village, gaining an award for recycling following an entry into the Village of the Year Competition. Lord Buxton and Mr Harrison ensured the village was kept in a neat and tidy order.

Hopefully negotiations over the next few months would enable the Parish Council to acquire the surplus land at Camping Hill.

The Parish Council had considered 5 planning applications during the past year.

The homewatch scheme was working very well and an asset to the village as was the Shop and Post Office.

The Village Hall Committee has been run in its usual very efficient manner under the guidance of Eva Gambrill with a considerable number of improvements carried out by volunteers.

The Chairman was very sorry to report the resignation of Mrs Eva Gambrill as a Parish Councillor and wished to record a vote of thanks on behalf of the Parish Council to her for her support and assistance. The Clerk would inform the N N D C of the vacancy and an appropriate advertisement would be issued in due course.

3 Finance Report

The Clerk presented the annual accounts for the year ending 31st March 2001 that were unanimously approved and duly signed by the Chairman and Clerk.

There being no further business the Annual Parish Council Meeting closed at 7.45pm.



**STIFFKEY PARISH COUNCIL
INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST MARCH 2002**

31 st March 2001 £	Income	31 st March 2002 £
2400.00	Precept	2400.00
24.26	Interest on investments	7.65
345.59	Miscellaneous	90.75
73.86	VAT	65.50
2843.71	TOTAL INCOME	2563.90
Expenditure		
1298.11	General Administration	1444.11
30.00	Agency Services	50.00
827.00	S 137 Payments	33.28
249.52	Capital Spending	327.06
200.94	Open Spaces	65.50
494.79	Established Charges	456.36
3100.36	TOTAL EXPENDITURE	2376.31
GENERAL FUND		
1508.21	Balance at 1st April 2001	1261.56
2843.71	Total Income	2563.90
3090.36	Less Total Expenditure	<u>2376.31</u>
£1261.56	Balance at 31st March 2002	£1449.15

The above statement represents fairly the financial position of the authority as at **31st March 2002** and reflects its income and expenditure during the year.

Signed:

Signed:

Chairman

Responsible Financial Officer

Date:

Date:

STIFFKEY PARISH COUNCIL

Chairman: Mr L Jordan

Clerk's Address:

Wildfowlers Cottage

High Street

Cley

NR25 7AP

Tel: 01263 740843

e-mail:

tcrowe@morstonassets.com

The next Parish Council Meeting will be held on **MONDAY 10th JUNE 2002** in **STIFFKEY VILLAGE HALL at 7.00pm**. All parishioners are welcome to attend.

AGENDA

- 1 Apologies
- 2 Declarations of Interest
- 3 Minutes of the April Meeting
- 4 Matters Arising
- 5 Correspondence
- 6 Finance
- 7 Planning
- 8 Any Other Business
- 9 Parishioners Question Time
- 10 Date of Next Meeting: **MONDAY 15th JULY 2002**

PLEASE NOTE THE REVISED DATE FOR THE JULY MEETING

Patricia Temple-Crowe

Clerk to the Parish Council

7th June 2002

Minutes of Stiffkey Parish Council Meeting held on Monday 10th June 2002 at 7.00pm

Present: Lawrence Jordan (Chairman), John Pearson, Stanley Sutton, and Michael Jordan

In attendance: The Clerk, Councillor Derek Baxter, 1 parishioners and P C Durrant the Police Liaison Officer

Apologies: Mark Harrison, Roy Rogers, Mary Gerrard, ~~Roy Rogers~~ and Councillor Bernard Crowe

1 Minutes

The Minutes of the last meeting held on Monday 13th May 2002 were read approved and signed as a true record by the Chairman

2 Matters Arising

Golden Jubilee Celebrations The Chairman was delighted to report that these had been very successful and well supported by the village.

Representatives from past Parish Councils and Councillors from the present Council were invited to a drinks reception by Lord and Lady Buxton on the 9th June which was most enjoyable. The Parish Council wished to express their thanks to Lord and Lady Buxton for their kind invitation.

3 Election of Officers

The following Councillors were nominated and unanimously elected unopposed:

- Chairman: Mr Lawrence Jordan
- Vice Chairman: Mr Mark Harrison
- Internal Auditor: Mr Roy Rogers

4 Correspondence

Norfolk Coast Partnership – Land use planning in the Norfolk Coast A O N B

Norfolk County Council:

- **Planning and Transportation** – Norfolk Local Transport Plan (LTP) Annual Report Forum Feedback
- **Planning and Transportation** – A149 Wells road, Stiffkey (Greenways to Red Lion P H) Footway Assessment – *The Clerk has already responded to this letter and sent copies of correspondence and e-mails requesting a site meeting to enable the Parish Council to discuss this issue further with Mr Schramm*

Mrs Butter – Letter of thanks to the Parish Council for their support regarding the recent planning application.



4 Correspondence – Continued

North Norfolk District Council:

- Late night opening at the Council Offices, Cromer
- North Norfolk Joint Area Committees – East Area Committee Meeting 17th June 2002
- North Norfolk District Council Website – www.northnorfolk.org
- Amendments to the electoral role

DTLT - Consultation Paper – Local investigation and determination of misconduct allegations

Norfolk County Association of Parish and Town Councils – Various publications

Thames Valley Police - Youth Shelters and Sports Systems A Good Practice Guide

5 Finance

Expenditure

TXU Energi monthly energy charge direct debit £28.19
 Impact china Limited £112.81
 Clerk’s Salary and Expenses £375.42

Income:

Income received:
 VAT Refund : £200.94

Cornhill Insurance:

- Notification of the increase in cover for the village furniture - no additional charge for each seat to be insured for £450 - £500 instead of £300 for all three seats.
- Following discussions with the insurance company an insurance claim form for the original seat on the Knoll will be completed.

Audit Commission - Further details

Bank Statement

6 Reports

E-mail from Councillor Bernard Crowe

I had a fall on Friday and suffered a sprained ankle which was an incorrect diagnosis by me. Spent Monday morning at Cromer Hospital and am now in plaster and off to see the Fracture specialist at the Norfolk and Norwich for a chipped ankle bone and stress fracture.

This will prevent me from driving for a while.



6 Report from Councillor Bernard Crowe – Continued

PARISH COUNCILS

In my view the work of our unpaid parish councillors is valued. I believe also that new regulations and interference by central government may ultimately curtail the role of parish councils and entail a reduction in the number of people willing to be involved. If we look back to 1999, readers will remember the proposals to replace parish councils with 'neighbourhood forums'. Then it was agreed that parish councils should remain but include appointed officials to be known as 'neighbourhood managers'. The following year it was suggested that parish councils lacked the ability to represent rural people.

Thankfully, these draft policies never materialised. Nevertheless, some still feel that there exists a stealth campaign to abolish parish councils altogether. The rationale for this view lies in Whitehall's passion for micromanagement of local government.

The 'Consultation Paper on Parish Councils' in November 2001 outlined proposals for 'Quality Parish Councils'. In order to obtain new sources of funding, Parish Councils are required to meet rigid, centrally set targets. This mirrors the Comprehensive Performance Assessment for District and County Councils where those tiers of local government are to be assessed on whether they too achieve centrally set targets. They will be categorised as High Performing, Striving, Coasting or Low Performing councils. As a colleague commented: 'Councils will earn the right to be classed as 'High Performing' as long as they act as the direct agents of central government'.

I suggest that Parish Councils should be given freedoms automatically rather than having to 'earn' them. Only if Councils fail should such freedoms be curtailed. A blueprint of rigid conformity on Parish Councils is not the way ahead. Nor is the use of the unelected quango as a tool of micromanagement. Do you remember the outcry when the government quango, the Countryside Agency, pigeon-holed every parish in England into the categories of 'vibrant', 'active', 'barely active', or 'sleeping', without even consulting local communities?

Parish Councils cannot rest on their laurels. They need to stand back and assess their competence in delivering services to the community they represent. Some have carried out Best Value Reviews internally. Others have gone further and have undertaken Village Appraisals. I am in favour of this route because it involves all stakeholders in the community and presents a business plan to the Parish Council for implementation. Ideally, I would like to see this procedure adopted before the next round of elections in May 2003. It could form the basis of the manifesto on which Parish Councils could be elected and asked to deliver.

Whilst an internal Best Value review is a useful means of good housekeeping, it is questionable whether Parish Councils should be subject to the full rigours and cost of the Best Value regime initiated by central government.

I now want to consider the Model Code of Conduct for Parish Councils in England. This is mandatory under the Local Government Act 2000. The Order came into force on 27 November 2001.

Continued



15

6 Report Councillor Bernard Crowe - Continued

Under Section 51 of the Local Government Act 2000, a Code based on this Order must be adopted within six months of the Order coming into force. The deadline was 27 May 2002. All Parish Councils within the Blakeney Ward have adopted the Code. So within 28 days of the Parish Council's code of conduct being drawn up, or within 28 days of a new parish councillor being appointed, councillors must register their interests in the council's register, and make amendments within 28 days of new interests.

This is a mandatory obligation set by central government. I would have preferred extensive consultation with Parish Councils across England with redrafting where necessary. I believe the Code fails to distinguish between major and minor breaches. Its reach is too broad. It forces national investigation by the Standards Board of England for even minor infringements. Minimum infringements will be reported as parish councillors now have a duty to make written allegations about the conduct of other councillors.

I think that all will agree that there is a need for a lighter touch. Overwhelmingly, parish councillors are honest and well intentioned. The introduction of such strict rules may cause some to give up their voluntary work and discourage others from standing. Government intervention should be risk based rather than indiscriminate.

Nevertheless, my response to those who resign or who have been automatically disbarred by the Code, is to fight from within and put themselves forward again for re-election or co-option. This means reluctant acceptance of the Code. It is an item that can only be resolved by central government and at that level. It is not an item that can be solved by the parish, town, District or County tiers of local government; but we can lobby central government after experience of its use.

Key Decisions

North Norfolk District Council will discuss the Forward Plan and the Key Decisions for the next four months at the meeting of the Full Council in June. I will publish these via the Glaven Valley Newsletter in its August Edition.

Community Strategy

The Local Partners who are North Norfolk District Council (leading), Norfolk County Council, Town & Parish Councils, Norfolk Police, the Primary Care Trust for Healthy Services, local community organisations and the business community have identified, after consultation, a number of Key Challenges for North Norfolk for the next 20 years. Only the order of priority is to be determined.

- Balancing necessary development and progress with preservation and conservation.
- Modernisation without urbanisation.
- Developing the economy and providing better job/career opportunities.
- Improving education, training, skills, and personal development opportunities to support the local economy, making sure that the local economy gets a return on this investment.

Continued



6 Councillor Bernard Crowe Report – Continued

- Protecting and sustaining the environment, including making it ‘everyone’s issue’ rather than a minority concern.
- Improving public transport and the ability to get around the area without widening roads or building new trunk roads.
- Making sure there are high quality, accessible health services, along with efforts to optimise the health of residents, workers and visitors to the area.
- Trying to provide affordable housing for those who want to live in the area, ideally with choices available in terms of where to live and types of accommodation.
- Providing sufficient quantity and quality of shopping, leisure and entertainment opportunities to meet the needs and wants of the population especially younger people and those with families.
- Keeping North Norfolk a safe place to live.
- Making North Norfolk a place that will be as attractive to future generations as it is to this one.

I will provide more information as the Community Strategy emerges.

Strike Date Set

Local Government Unions plan to hold a 24-hour national strike on Wednesday 17 July if a ballot this month shows support for industrial action. The Employers’ organisation has made a final pay offer of 3%, but unions are asking for a 6% or £1750 pay increase.

Jubilee Mementos

I have been asked on behalf of the Blakeney Parish Council to announce that the Jubilee Tea Towels are now available at the Parish Office, at normal opening times, on basis of one per household. Please call in to collect your memento of the very many successful Jubilee events. Our thanks to all those who participated and especially to the organisers and their helpers.

Report from Councillor Derek Baxter

Race Equality Scheme

Public bodies across Norfolk are uniting to launch a new protocol covering the reporting of racist incidents in the county. The new arrangements mean that racist incidents reported to Norfolk County Council, District Councils, Primary Care Trusts and other bodies are to be treated seriously and investigated in the same way.

The leader of Norfolk County Council, Alison King, has approved the Race Equality Scheme as a matter of urgency in order to comply with the deadline set in legislation. The matter will be the subject of a report to Cabinet on 17th June and subsequently reported to Council on 8th July.

Continued



6 R4eport from Councillor Derek Baxter - Continued

Summer Road Surfacing

Many of you will have noticed that the County's annual road surfacing programme of work has started, as part of its routine maintenance service for the roads.

'Surface dressing' as it's called, is a thin layer of bitumen and stone chippings laid on the road to provide essential, cost effective maintenance. It improves skid resistance and keeps water from penetrating the road structure below, which could lead to the road breaking up.

The four month surface dressing costs around £3million and takes place every summer.

In my travels around locally, I have noticed resurfacing at Binham (I'm sure it's not just because I live there!), Wells, Pudding Norton and Holt but there are probably some more that have been done or are waiting to be done).

Wells Field Study Centre

On Thursday 9th May I was asked to attend the presentation of a National environment award for Wells Field Study Centre. It has become one of a few centres nation-wide to become an official EnCams Eco-Centre.

Viscount Coke presented the Eco-Centres Award certificate to the Centre's staff team and children from Salhouse Primary School helped him unfurl the Eco-Centres flag.

All present were shown around the Centre by the children and were given a detailed description of what they did during their visits (including looking after wormeries!).

The award is not easily won and staff have worked hard to achieve it. They have halved the amount of water they use, established an eco-trail around the centre to demonstrate the use of environmentally friendly alternatives to common products, arranged daily monitoring and discussion with students about their use of finite resources and examined their purchasing and considered the full effects of their choices.

It was a really worthwhile visit and I was impressed by the knowledge and commitment of both staff and children.

A bit of demographics

Latest population estimate for Norfolk (mid 2000) is 804,000.

- Aged 0-14 139,000 17.4%
- Aged 15-29 136,900 17.0%
- Aged 30-44 166,500 20.7%
- Aged 45-64 203,900 25.4%
- Aged 65-74 81,000 10.1%
- Aged 75+ 76,100 9.5%

Bus fares to rise

Passengers on bus services which are subsidised by Norfolk County Council will see an increase in fares from 2nd June.

Continued

6 Report from Councillor Derek Baxter - Continued

The increase is the first in over 12 months and is needed to cover the rising price of the Council's contracts with bus operators, who in turn are facing higher costs. Most fares will rise by up to 5% with a few routes seeing increases of up to 10%.

The total bus subsidy provided by the County Council is around £3.6million each year. Fares have been kept as low as possible and cheaper regular user tickets will be available for the first time on some routes.

Six term school year

Along with other local education authorities, the county has started consultations on a six term school year which would mean:-

- a slightly shorter summer holiday period
- a two week break in October
- spring terms no longer dictated by when Easter happens to fall

As well as consulting schools, Norfolk County Council will be getting the views of parents, school governors, churches, the business community, unions and other relevant organisations.

The consultation period will end on 30th June.

P C Ken Durrant

Concerns were once again expressed by Councillors regarding the speed of traffic through the village. It would appear the traffic calming measures have had little effect, particularly with some regular drivers going through the village. PC Durrant asked for any information regarding regular offending i.e. location, day of the week, time of day etc . which would enable him to be in the vicinity at the right time to catch the offender. The speed is now in use and as soon as the appropriate training is complete this will also be in use in the village.

7 A O B

Road Signs The Chairman suggested that larger 20mph and 30 mph road signs would serve as a reminder to motorists that these speed limits apply. Warning hazard signs were also promised on the Wells Road when the road improvements were carried out, these have still not appeared – Councillor Derek Baxter agreed to investigate.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 9.05pm

