

WESTHALL PARISH COUNCIL
Minutes of the Annual General Meeting
followed by Annual Parish Meeting

Held in the Village Hall on Monday 9th May 2016 at 7.30pm

Members Present: Mr J Lickman (Chairman); Mr P Langford; Mrs L McTaggart; Mrs E Clark; Mrs L Studd and Mr K Studd.

In Attendance: Mrs M Rogers (Clerk)

Public Members: None

Prior to the meeting Mr Lickman notified the council that due to unforeseen circumstances Mrs Palin had resigned.

1. **Apologies for Absence**

Mr T Goldson. (SCC)

2. **Minutes of the Previous Meeting**

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held 11th May 2015 were approved and signed. Proposed by Mrs Clark, seconded Mr Langford.

3. **Matters Arising** – Mrs Studd enquired with regard to comments in the Chairman’s Annual Report relating to ‘unelected council’. Clerk pointed out that this had been discussed after the Annual Report had been presented and agreed that Councillors were nominated people and were uncontested and unopposed and as such were elected.

Mr Studd also commented on the Pleasure Ground Committee, were these trustees? Chairman stated that historically Parish Councillors had been the trustees, the committee was instigated in case anything controversial occurred.

4. **Agree and sign - Annual Accounts, Car Park Accounts and Annual Accounting Statement on Annual Audit Return for 2015.**

Mr Studd had internally audited both the Annual PC Accounts and Car Park Accounts and a meeting had been held with Clerk/RFO to identify any changes. After presentation of Annual Accounts and Car Park Accounts to the council, Mrs Studd proposed seconded by Mrs Clark that both be accepted and signed. Annual Accounting Statement had been verified, Mr Langford proposed seconded by Mrs Studd that this be signed.

5. **Annual Report by the Chairman**

The council has had two main ventures for the year, car parking and the Wind Turbine Community Fund.

With regard to the parking, Mr Goldson had identified several safety related tasks within his ward and in our turn the parking had been costed and we are now awaiting a date for work to commence. With the help of council tenants we applied for a grant towards the price from WDC.

The Wind Turbine Community Fund, meetings were held with the Norfolk Foundation, Bernard Matthews and members of the parish councils of Sotherton and Holton. A committee has been formed and it is hoped to have the first meeting in October.

The Parish Council have been considering a Neighbourhood Plan after councillors attended a meeting with WDC Planning Officers from Lowestoft. WDC Local Plan is being updated to the year 2036. WDC highlighted the need for housing and development and we were told a NP would allow us to have a say on the type of housing, the number of houses we would like to see should a developer buy land

within the village. After asking the opinion of around 50% of the residents and having put up notices in the usual places (Tony's Stores, the Community Hall and the pub) and highlighting the issue in the Community News only a few replies were received – all except one against development in the village, the PC decided against going through the long process of a NP especially as there is a general lack of infrastructure within the parish and perhaps because of this developers would not look favourably on the village.

I have been attending Tony Goldsons Parishes meetings where the chairmen from a number of parishes exchange information, highlight problems and gather ideas for the future. At present they are dealing with speeding cars and have set up VAS equipment in problem areas. Mr Goldson was able to negotiate a good price with the company making the equipment.

Telephone lines and broadband continue to be a problem in the outer areas of the parish and the possibility of a phone mast was being looked at, but as Tyneholm has already placed a mast on their grain silo, this is on hold for a while.

In an issue of road safety and the possibility of a bad winter a number of grit bins were purchased. Most problem areas are now covered.

I would like to say a special thanks to Mr Bob McTaggart for his work within the village. He generally keeps an eye on the village and especially his work on hedges and grass cutting.

6. **Treasurers Report (Internal Auditors Report)**

Treasurer position will now be known as Internal Auditor.

Mr Studd gave his report for 2015/16

The Parish Council's total income for the 2015/2016 financial year was £2,796.46. As usual, the precept was the principal source of funding, contributing £2,497 (88%) of the total. The balance was made up of allotment rental receipts of £177.00 (15% higher than the previous year) and a VAT repayment of £122.01.

In 2015/2016 the Parish Council's total expenditure exceeded its income by £244.80, and we spent £406.39 more than in the 2014/2015 financial year. This was attributable mainly to (1) non-annually recurring items such as allotment maintenance and council election costs, (2) increased charges for grass cutting (a 50% increase on the previous year), and (3) the purchase of 3 additional grit bins which, while they were not called upon during last year's exceptionally mild winter, means that the Parish is now better provisioned for less temperate weather in future.

Most of the Parish Council's recurring items of expenditure other than those mentioned above saw no or negligible increases on the prior year, as detailed in the accounts. Based on the year's expenditure, we expect to receive a VAT repayment in 2016/2017 of £167.09. We expect allotment rental receipts to remain broadly stable.

As of the end of the 2015/2016 financial year the Parish Council held cash totalling £3,064.22, comprising £2,038.09 in its current account and £1,026.13 in its Business Premium Account. The balance in the latter is interest-bearing but in the current low interest rate environment, the interest accrued in the financial year amounted to a mere 47p.

The precept for 2016/2017 will be £2,571.91, which is a 3% increase on 2015/2016 and represents a rise of approximately 25p per parishioner. This is consistent with prior year-on-year increases and reflects the Parish Council's desire to maintain a cash reserve sufficient to meet its ongoing and reasonably foreseeable additional expenses for 2016/2017, as well as to keep a contingency fund available to meet any additional costs that may accompany the devolution of existing responsibilities of Suffolk County and /or Waveney District Council to local parishes. The Parish Council will continue to seek to minimise expenses so as to maintain the precept at as low a level as possible.

7. **Allotment Inspection – half year.**

Mrs Clark had carried out an interim inspection of the allotments, a full inspection will be carried out in October prior to the Annual Allotment meeting. There are no issues at the Cox Common area. At Mill Common all is in order with the exception of plot 10 which is again overgrown. At Locks Road there are no issues with those plots in use, those vacant plots must be kept tidy and grass mowed. All paperwork is in order and payments are up to date. Thank you to Bob McTaggart and Shaun Darch for grass and hedge cutting.

8. **Pleasure Ground Committee.**

Whilst the committee was mainly made up by parish councillor's clerk explained it was an advantage to have members of the public in order to be unbiased. Mr & Mrs Studd asked that the committee be addressed at the June meeting.

9. **Neighbourhood Plan.**

In order to ensure the PC has considered whether a NP is needed by the village this agenda item will be discussed each year at the AGM. This year WDC is in the process of updating their Local Development Plan to 2036 and the possibility of Westhall having a NP has already been considered and the village residents consulted. Following a poor response from the village the PC have decided against a plan this year.

10. **Any Other Business.**

The Chairman gave a vote of thanks to all councillors and clerk he said he would be retiring as Chairman from now.

10. **Date and Time of next AGM/Parish Meeting** – due to May bank holidays 8th May 2017 at 7.30 in Village Hall. (To be confirmed)

PARISH MEETING

There were no other public members.

The meeting closed at 8.15.