

GAZELEY PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of Gazeley Annual Parish Meeting Held in Gazeley Village Hall on Tuesday 25th May 2021

Present: Cllr Kevin Grimwood (Chair), Councillors, Ray Francis, Judy Moatt, Pat Spillane, Wesley Heaton and Paul Beard.

Also present: Parish Clerk, Lynne Francis, District Councillor Roger Dicker and 5 members of the public.

Chairman's Welcome and introduction.

The Chairman of the Parish Council, Cllr Kevin Grimwood, welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked members of the public for attending. He indicated the exit points from the building in case of an emergency.

21/APM.1. Chairman's Report

The Chairman noted that the previous year had been a testing time for everyone.

The main issue under discussion during the year was the deteriorating condition of the Blacksmith's Forge. West Suffolk Council has taken control of security measures and the situation is on-going.

During June we discussed the position of the bottle bank in Highwood Crescent but no alternative site for the facility has been found.

The vacant school site has been dismissed for further educational use.

After a period of lock-down, the play area was opened again in July.

Gazeley resident Sarah Lockwood rescued a man who had driven into the pond on Moulton Road.

She managed to release him and stayed with him until the emergency services arrived.

The chairman wished to place on record our thanks for a valiant rescue attempt.

In October a vacancy on the parish council was filled by Wesley Heaton.

The parish council is routinely invited to comment on planning applications and does try to support residents where possible but the applications are ultimately decided by the planning department at West Suffolk Council.

The speed of vehicles travelling through the village continues to cause concern. The parish council is seeking funding to install three sets of white gates, which are installed at the entrance to many villages, and also to purchase an additional speed indication device. Cllr Colin Noble has offered to make a donation from his locality budget and Cllr Roger Dicker has already donated the sum of £1,200 for the purpose. The chairman thanked both councillors for their continuing support.

Cllr Noble also funded the installation of the marker posts that were installed at the edge of the pond following the accident referred to above which unfortunately proved to be fatal.

A lighting unit in Highwood Road, which had been out of action for over a year, was finally repaired.

Cllr Charlene Vandenbroucke resigned from the parish council in April. The chairman placed on record our thanks for everything that Charlene has done for over 10 years and she will be much missed from the council.

The resulting vacancy has been advertised and an election has been called by 10 residents of the village to fill the vacancy. If the election is contested this could cost the parish £2,500 which would unfortunately mean that other plans, like traffic calming measures would have to be delayed.

The chairman thanked all councillors and the clerk for their continuing hard work on behalf of the village.

21/APM.2 Reports from Local Authorities

West Suffolk Council – Cllr Roger Dicker had forwarded a report on everything that the council has done during the year. The report is attached to these minutes.

Cllr Dicker much regrets the recent council tax increases which were due in part to the gradual levelling up of the two local district councils, Forest Heath and St. Edmundsbury following their merger.

12/APM.3 – Reports from Local Organisations

1. All Saints' Church – Simon Gash, Churchwarden

Simon noted that Covid-19 had dominated all our lives during the past year. Rev. Rosemary Rycraft had retired in August and her successor, Rev. Chris Childs, had arrived in January.

Although the church congregation is relatively small for the regular services, the aim is to ensure that it is there to be enjoyed by all and remain central to the life of the village.

During the various periods of lock-down the church has continued to be used for various events, the owls of Hawkeye Falconry, who are coming back again in October; a Concert of Remembrance featuring the Kirby Voices with war songs and poetry readings and an Art Show, with exhibits by artists, sculptors and ceramicists. As there was no Crib Service the church was manned for residents to view the crib and to light candles and some 150 people attended. A concert of early music by the Hexachordia trio was held in church on 22nd May and some 50 people attended.

All these events demonstrated how well the church works for concerts and exhibitions.

Away from the church, a Teddy Bears' Picnic and wildlife events for children were held in the vicarage garden and during Easter week, a trail of Easter-related clues was set round the village which children and their families were able to follow. Approximately 45 children came to the stall in the churchyard to collect their prizes and cakes and soft drinks were served.

The Rural Coffee Caravan will be visiting the village in July and this may become a monthly event if it proves to be popular.

The church has stayed open to maintain its core function. It had been closed only when it had been obliged to do so. Services have been recorded in each church and uploaded to the internet. It has been agreed that services will continue to be recorded at one of the churches in the Kennett Valley group each month.

A Holy Communion service will be held on the second Sunday of each month with a mid-week Holy Communion service on the fourth Thursday of the month. A Family Service will be held on the fourth Sunday of the month. Members of the congregation have helped the Coronavirus Support Group during the year.

The PCC was very grateful for all that Rosemary did during her period of office and despite fears that she might not be replaced, happily the Diocese appointed Rev. Chris Childs who has already been appointed Rural Dean of the Mildenhall Deanery.

Fortunately not much has gone wrong with the fabric of the building during the past year but regular maintenance works have continued as usual.

The Suffolk Guild of Ringers has enabled work to be carried out on the bells and the fourth bell has been made safe. They have also devised a means whereby the tenor bell can be chimed (albeit not fully rung). The bell, which had been silent for nearly 60 years, now sounds prior to every service and has been much appreciated.

Simon extended thanks to everyone who has supported the events and although it may seem that the church is always asking for money, it is a constant struggle to maintain a Grade 1 listed church and also to pay the Parish Share, which this year amounts to £10,000.

2. Site of Gazeley School.

Simon Gash, trustee of the Gazeley Schools Trust, reported that progress is being made on the future of the site but it has been a painfully slow process.

The site is jointly owned by Suffolk County Council and the Gazeley Schools Trust and has no practical use for either institution. The site has now been empty and vacant for four years and unfortunately there has been no interest from anyone in obtaining the site for alternative use.

It is possible that SCC and the GST will apply for outline planning consent to build a small housing development on the site but they are not yet at that stage. Any money received by the GST will be subject to conditions laid down by the Charity Commission and it is likely to be restricted to educational purposes.

3. Gazeley United Charities

Trustee and Clerk to the Charities, Lynne Francis, reported that due to the Covid-19 situation the trustees had not been able to meet as usual during the past year and therefore no payments had been made from funds.

The annual rent on parish lands is the only source of income and it amounts to £1,500 per annum.
Current balance of accounts: £7638.92.

The Chairman of the trustees is Rev. Chris Childs and there will be a meeting of the trustees in June unless the circumstances change with regard to Covid-19.

21/APM.3 Public Forum

As there were no questions from the floor, the Chairman thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting.

Signed.....
Chairman

Date.....