

Ixworth Annual Parish Meeting

The minutes of Ixworth Annual Parish Meeting held on Wednesday 24th May 2017 at 7.00pm at Ixworth Free School

Present were Cllr Ben Lord, Chairman of the Parish Council, C Cllr Joanna Spicer MBE & 16 residents.

Also present were representatives from Ixworth Free School, Ixworth Village Hall, F.O.I.L. and Ixworth & District RBL

It was agreed by all present that the role of clerk for the purpose of recording the minutes of the meeting be undertaken by Mandy Adlington.

Minutes

The minutes were duly signed as a true record of the previous meeting held on 15th June 2015.

Apology

Cllr Lord, the Chairman of the Parish Council welcomed all present but apologised that the notices that were displayed on the notice boards had the incorrect date on them. However, the correct date had been published in the magazine.

Report from Chairman of the Parish Council, Cllr Ben Lord

Good evening everyone and welcome to the 2017 Ixworth Annual Parish Meeting hosted by Ixworth & Ixworth Thorpe Parish Council.

Tonight's proceedings are relatively informal since this is not a parish council meeting and provide an opportunity to not only hear what's going on within the various tiers of local government but also what is going on amongst the different community groups within the village.

On the subject of local government, I'd like to begin by welcoming our County Councillor, Joanna Spicer, and extend our congratulations to her on having been recently re-elected to serve as our County Councillor and thank her for the ongoing wealth of support to both the Parish Council as well as to the wider Ixworth community.

Furthermore, we as Parish Councillors could not do what we do without the support and backup on a vast range of matters offered by our Clerk, Mandy Adlington so my thanks go to her as well for the great job she does for the Parish Council and indeed for Ixworth.

- **Changes within the Parish Council**

A year ago, we found ourselves with a vacancy on the Parish Council and for the first time in many years, we found ourselves in the surprising position of having a couple of handfuls of people willing and eager to get involved with the governance of the village. After a round of interviews that proved pretty difficult for us to select one candidate, we were delighted to welcome John Rowe to serve as Parish Councillor alongside the rest of us through to 2019.

The past twelve months have brought a varying and fulfilling range of issues for the Parish Council and I'll now give a synopsis of what we have been getting involved and dealing with:

- **Planning Applications – Persimmon Crown Lane / Access Roads**

Just as in the previous two years that I have given this report, our Parish Council meetings have been dominated by the ongoing and increasing momentum towards the land north of Crown Lane that has been earmarked for development. A year ago, we had just been informed that against all opposition and a refusal from St Edmundsbury Borough Council, an appeal to the National Planning Inspector saw the overturn of the decision made by the planning authority enabling the developer to deliver access into this new development from a ghost-island junction off the A1088 between the current northern roundabout and the end of the Thistledown/Coltsfoot development. At the time, an application was still awaiting determination that would see the northern roundabout become a 5-arm roundabout and deliver the option of access into the new development from the roundabout as it does on the southern roundabout into Micklesmere. However, shortly after the appeal was granted, this was withdrawn by Persimmon Homes whom currently seek to deliver access into this development from a junction that would create a huge traffic hiatus onto a 60mph road that has not had any speed reduction conditions imposed on it. We continue to lobby and campaign strongly for a safer alternative to be delivered off the 5-arm roundabout which the original concept masterplans and statements have always proposed. 5 weeks ago, the Parish Council held a dedicated planning meeting to receive representations from the public on two new planning applications – for a new

access road and for 90 homes on the first phase of land to be developed. Whilst we have known for well over a decade that development is coming to Ixworth, something which we have never been in opposition to, we have always maintained that we need to ensure Ixworth gets the best deal out of any development infrastructurally. With that in mind came the surprise that the access road application seeks to reopen Walsham Road that has been a dead-end since the opening of the bypass 30 years ago. This is probably the greatest concern that both residents and we at the Parish Council have and given this, stand shoulder-to-shoulder with the community in vigorously campaigning for Walsham Road to remain a dead-end road given the very valid safety concerns that have been tabled in the event it was to reopen as a two-way road. Given our opposition to the access road layout, we felt we had no choice but to also oppose the housing application in its present fashion on the basis that you can't determine one application without the other due to how intrinsically they are linked. Notwithstanding the road issues, we also had grave concerns over the lack of affordable housing that was totally absent from this application. Given the size of such proposed development, this application will go before the Development Control Committee at St Edmundsbury Borough Council which is expected to happen in the next few months. Beyond this, we continue to try and lobby the developer, Persimmon Homes, to acknowledge the needs of the village by way of safe access into development in the hope that public safety commands their next move rather than going with an unsafe ghost island junction simply because it is cheaper than expanding the 5-arm roundabout. We are also in consultation with the land owners, Bypass Farm Partnership, as part of a wider masterplan they have commissioned for the whole site which we hope to see a draft of in the coming weeks.

- **Hempyard Bridge**

We continue to be in dialogue with the County Council as Rights of Way Authority regarding Hempyard Bridge. Because of its continued deteriorating condition, a new more robust structure was installed ensuring that all pedestrian and equestrian movements over the bridge is confined to the centre of the footpath rather than the edges nearest the walls. Whilst that is delivering a short-term solution, the dilapidations of the bridge continue to worsen with a tree coming dangerously close to ultimately hitting the bridge in the next dose of high winds we have. Whilst recognising the ongoing capital budget issues the County Council continue to experience, as do we all, we continue to lobby them through Joanna Spicer to deal with what is fast becoming an urgent situation as soon as possible to avoid the very worst conundrum of the bridge falling into the river.

- **Village Maintenance**

Our village cleaner, Steve Wilson, continues to maintain the streets of Ixworth in his duties which all helps to make Ixworth look as presentable as possible and of course this does vary seasonally. We are very fortunate to have Steve working for us, and ultimately for the village, and I'd also like to thank him for his ongoing efforts, many of which often require quite a degree of tenacity at times when they never seem to show sign of diminishing!

- **Robins Copse**

The wildlife group continue to apply their efforts extensively to the upkeep of this part of the village which continues to be supported by the Parish Council and we are grateful to them for their time and skills which continues to preserve a quiet area of natural beauty within the village.

- **Dog Fouling**

Whilst in previous year it was reported that we had received several complaints on this topic, I am pleased to advise that issues pertaining to dog fouling continue to be on the decline, aided by recent awareness campaigns by St Edmundsbury and our latest information from our village cleaner informs us that they are unusually lower than normal. We hope that this remains the case, particularly with the increased use of dog fouling bins which sees our complaining of late being due to their infrequent emptying rather than the lack of use or fouling itself.

- **Cemetery**

Over the past year, we have continued to undertake an ongoing programme of maintenance to Ixworth Cemetery. Three months ago, we carried out some necessary work to the trees which act as a boundary between the "old and new phases" that have helped make the cemetery feel more open and reduce some of the ongoing tidying maintenance. Our village cleaner has over the past six months undertaken various efforts to keep the cemetery clean and tidy in order that the Parish Council remains steadfast in its commitment to providing the cemetery in the ambience we have become accustomed to in recent years through major renovation that has taken place. We have

recently appointed a steering group of Councillors who are tasked with extending the present drive way beyond the line of cremated burials as well as protecting the lawn cemetery from cars that have been seen parking adjacent to graves.

- **Policing**

We are delighted to welcome our rural police officer, PC Andre de Jongh here this evening whom we are delighted to have re-established a relationship with recently following a void of communication with the police. The past year has seen us have quite some cause for concern with an increase spate of anti-social behaviour within various corners of the village as well as continued and intensifying congestion through parked cars in various major routes within the village. We look forward to maintaining this working relationship and seeing some deterring and preventative measures that we desperately need to help curb problems within the village.

- **S137 Contributions / Locality Budgets**

We have continued to make various charitable donations on a case-by-case basis to local charitable efforts, projects and causes from our Section 137 budget and we are always particularly happy to support village causes. Additionally, we thank both John Griffiths and Joanna for various contributions from their locality budgets they have made towards village causes such as the library, village hall, cricket and bowls clubs; without them we may not be lucky enough to boast the amount of facilities, clubs and organisations that we do.

- **Schools**

The Parish Council have continued to enjoy a great working relationship with Ixworth Free School that continues to go from strength to strength it seems. We will be hearing a little later on about how life is at the Free School. More recently, we were concerned to hear about the findings from the recent Ofsted inspection at Ixworth Primary School and wish to extend our support as community leaders to the staff and governing body of the Primary School whom I have every faith will address the issues highlighted in the report and return the school to the standards we have all seen it achieve in years gone by and we look forward to liaising with them on that over the coming weeks and months.

- **Community Engagement on Current Affairs**

As I stood here last year, the country was fast preparing for one of its biggest decisions at the polling station in living memory. Whilst the result of the EU referendum was highly controversial, it was really refreshing to see topics of current affairs being debated in a community debate. With the General Election now two weeks away, Ixworth will be welcoming the Conservative Candidate for West Suffolk for an audience with residents on Friday 2nd June at 6pm here in the Village Hall which I hope many of you will come along to.

- **Stow Road Improvements**

One of the more frequent topics from the public forum at meetings has been ongoing issues along the full length of Stow Road. Most of these issues require the involvement of Suffolk County Council as the local highways authority and we are actively working with them on various solutions including cosmetic improvements to the southern bypass roundabout, new signs welcoming the public to Ixworth along with additional speed reduction measures to complement other measures being taken. Over the coming weeks, you will start to see the results of this ongoing commitment which we thank Joanna for her co-ordination in making this happen.

- **Remembrance Day Commemorations**

It was again a huge honour to join members of our village's branch of the Royal British Legion and other village organisations, in leading our annual remembrance commemorations. Year on year, the number of Ixworthians joining the commemorations grow and grow and it really does make me feel very proud to be a part of this community which is epitomised on occasions like this so long may this continue. Unfortunately, despite friendly calls for some co-operation, we didn't achieve the co-operation of those parking in the High Street to park elsewhere for a short time whilst the commemorations take place which will help the parade march down the High Street without having to weave in between parked vehicles and so the Royal British Legion have enquired as to the possibility of invoking a full road closure similar to what we see for the annual cycle races thus ensuring a clear High Street for this poignant occasion.

- **General Issues**

In addition to some of the issues I mentioned earlier, we continue to observe, and receive concerns of a plethora of issues within the village including:

- - Speeding / Adverse Highway Conditions
 - Parking Problems / Congestions / Anti-Social Behaviour
 - Trees and Overgrown Hedges
 - Communicating with the Community

Taking each one of those in turn:

- Following representations made 12 months ago, I am delighted to advise that as part of our commitment to helping reduce excess speeding within the village, the Parish Council helped commission a new Community Speedwatch Scheme that has very recently been established under the “watchful” eye of Rachel Waite and her team of volunteers. Having undergone the necessary training by Suffolk Police as well as identifying a handful of locations that meet the criteria to undertake sessions at, the Parish Council along with contributions from the locality budgets of John Griffiths and Joanna Spicer have funded the equipment required and we are looking forward to seeing the results of how this, along with other measures mentioned earlier, have delivered a reduction in speed on key routes within the village.
- Where possible, we provide advice on measures to ease parking problems within the village and again, this is pertinent in some areas of notoriety, including the Commister Lane/High Street junction and the presence of parked cars on double-yellow lines either side of the junction and parking obstructions are also very evident in Stow Road as well as Crown Lane during the school day’s start and finish times. The past year has seen no sign of this reducing and having brought this to the attention of Inspector Matt Dee last year, we only appear to have had one visit from the police to undertake any parking enforcement which unfortunately did not occur in the areas of the village that most needed attention. Having recently re-engaged with PC Andre de Jongh, we are told that we can expect to see more action taken to reduce what, at peak times, can often be intolerable levels of congestion along key routes in the village. In instances where this is prevalent on local estates, we continue to work in partnership with other local partners such as Havebury in exploring and delivering solutions to what often are dubbed trivial issues!

Unfortunately, the past year has also seen a rise in anti-social behaviour which has occurred largely around the Village Hall and High Street where mindless actions along with verbal abuse at times have been disturbing and intimidating. As a community, we will not tolerate this kind of behaviour and although the laws of enforcing against it have at times seemed tedious, our steadfast determination has prevailed, and we are again grateful to Andre de Jongh and his team of PCSO’s for their efforts and tenacity in helping us eliminate this problem which has no place in the nice, warm-spirited village that we pride ourselves on living in.

- As in recent years that tree and hedge overgrowth is more and more visible and in various corners of the village, which has been problematic to residents in Thistledown Drive and Walsham Road. Whilst we are not the statutory authority here to look after trees, we will always listen to concerns from residents on whatever their individual issues are. Many in the past have flippantly said that we as a Parish Council don’t do much or don’t listen to individual concerns. Through one particular example over the past six months, I can vouch that we absolutely DO listen and will always act where we can. It may not be as you would like but even if it’s just by lobbying those who can, we will do that for you. Towards the end of last year, I was invited into the garden of some residents in Thistledown Drive where I was astonished to see a long-standing problem over the past decade was resulting in their daily lives being impacted upon as a result of lethargic action that should have been otherwise taken. Through our lobbying and troubleshooting with our Borough Councillor, John Griffiths, and with the local tree officers, we have helped deliver a group of residents with a solution that has seen day light restored to their gardens which was previously darkened through intense tree overgrowth and can now enjoy the peaceful surroundings of their own back garden. On the subject of trees, I would also like to thank our village tree warden, John Sharpe, for his ongoing voluntary assistance to the Parish Council in all matters tree-related

- **Neighbourhood Plan**

I mentioned last year that these topics which seem to change depending on their individual natures, are just some of the regular issues which we hope to be able to better address by renewing the Parish Plan which was last carried out back in 2005. Just over a year ago, the Parish Council decided that a new plan was required, and the definition of a Parish Plan has changed considerably over the past decade to when the last was put together. Now known as a Neighbourhood Plan, the concept seeks to engage with residents to obtain feedback on both current issues and what your vision is for Ixworth into the future. From this, we can identify what you, the residents, want us to pursue and enhance to make Ixworth an even better place to live. The construction of a Neighbourhood Plan is no small undertaking both in its compilation and whilst will be led by the Parish Council, will require the involvement of a wide range of input from across the village which is why we have established the Neighbourhood Planning Forum. This forum seeks to bring together all those within the community that want to play an active role of some kind in bringing together the key stakeholders that will be needed to form this crucial document through to the point it is adopted by the planning authority. The cost of this project is significant, and probably in excess of £20,000 and the Parish Council have carefully considered how this will be undertaken and see this commitment as an investment to meet the future needs of Ixworth given the level of new developments that will be coming our way. We intend to fund this from our own reserves which has formed part of our budget for this coming fiscal year, as well as obtaining grants from various areas of local funding that are available to us. Neighbouring Parish Councils in Barningham and Great Barton are also commissioning their own Neighbourhood Plans and we've been engaging with them to share in knowledge and contacts to help piece this together to ensure that within all tiers of local authority and by ensuring that as development occurs within the village, the appropriate infrastructure requirements are met and funded through the appropriate levy's and planning conditions. As daunting an undertaking this currently seems to many of us, it's existence will be vital to securing the well-being of our community for the next 15 years and beyond where Ixworth is likely to see the greatest amount of housing development for a generation.

- **Budget Cuts**

We are all continuing to endure the various measures of austerity and in this current financial year, we have received a further cut by St Edmundsbury to our parish grant of £3,474. The Parish Council felt that it could not reduce its budget by the same amount without jeopardising the services we carry out within the village which is why by keeping our budget the same as the 2015/16 fiscal year there was a small increase in council tax this year.

Before I conclude on my report for this year, and following a recent event, I would just like to take this opportunity to pay a special tribute and vote of thanks for the legendary unprecedented service and dedication offered to the whole community over the last 35 years by Dr John Cannon whose time at Ixworth Surgery has unfortunately come to an end. Throughout his tenure, GP services at Ixworth soared to such a high standard that we were one of the leading GP surgeries in Suffolk, renowned by local hospitals throughout East Anglia. Our community owes a huge debt of thanks to John for his selfless *raison d'être* and his outstanding clinical excellence will be etched in our minds and thoughts for an incredibly long time to come.

Whilst we as Parish Council have interests and ideas on how to make Ixworth a better community and place for us all to live in, we always welcome any other ideas, issues or are happy to hear of any concerns that you, the residents, would like us to look into. Some of them may be possible for us to explore and work through, others may not; there's no guarantees but if there are things you want to see addressed, be it positive or negative, please do come and reach out to us, be it tonight at this meeting, or any other of our monthly meetings – it would be great to see more of you interact with us and get involved in community matters!

Thank you once again for coming out this evening and I will now invite various invited guests to give their reports.

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Report from County Councillor Joanna Spicer

Firstly I would like to thank the Chairman, Members and Clerk of Ixworth Parish Council for their help, support and advice to me over the last year and for always keeping me in touch with issues involving Ixworth & Ixworth Thorpe. Thank you to all residents for electing me and I commit myself to serve this community again.

- The County Council remains very committed to retaining essential front line services – despite massive cuts in Government grants and we expect more cuts to come
- Suffolk County Council has had a very challenging year with so many cuts but high standards had been maintained in the Parish
- The Fire Station is in good shape but is in need of more retained firemen to keep it operational at all times. If anyone is interested please contact Suffolk fire Service.
- An impact day had been held recently with all businesses in Ixworth. Businesses were checked for such things as fire safety and immigration issues. Ixworth had fared very well with no major issues highlighted
- Ixworth Free School continues to grow in numbers and they have a superb new extension and I am pleased they are increasingly engaged with different parts of the Community. Many thanks to the school for hosting this evening and supplying such good refreshments
- Ixworth library is busier than ever with youth member's numbers up. I am full of admiration for the developments at Ixworth Library both with the staff and volunteers. The library has recently been refurbished and looks very welcoming for visitors.
- I have made a grant to the new Speedwatch Group and pleased to say that is now up and running and deterring speeding within the village.
- I am in the process of producing a design for speed reducing measures along Stow Road. A new gateway design has been produced for a new 'Ixworth' sign as well as road markings advising drivers to 'Slow'.

However, the big issue for me during the year and indeed for the year ahead is all related to Persimmon, their access road, planning applications and possible developments of up to 475 houses. I am ready to work with not just the Parish Council but the whole community to ensure that any development is appropriate in size and adds value to the village as a whole. I am working with the current owners of the land at Crown Lane to produce a new masterplan for the area.

If you wish to contact me my email address is Joanna.spicer@suffolk.gov.uk

Report from Borough Councillor John Griffiths MBE

I am so sorry to be unable to be present at your annual meeting (due to a short trip abroad which was booked months ago) so submit a brief written report.

Firstly I would like to congratulate both Ben Lord and Joanna Spicer on their re-election as Chairman of our Parish Council and as our County Councillor respectively. I would also like to thank them, all our Parish Councillors and of course the Parish clerk for all their hard work for, and on behalf of, Ixworth and Ixworth Thorpe over the last year.

Working together, and with our residents, local organisations and businesses I believe we have achieved a lot for our lovely villages.

Much has happened during the last year. As usual there has been a plethora of planning applications and decisions - ranging from new houses and extensions to conservation and trees. And there have been some great local initiatives, not least "Speedwatch" and the refurbishment of the community library. These are just two of many examples showing what can be achieved thanks to the efforts of people who live here working together to make life better for us all.

In this context, I was more than happy to use part of my locality budget to support "Speedwatch", the new cricket facilities (another fantastic local initiative), and some of the ongoing works at the Village Hall amongst other local schemes.

There are of course challenges and opportunities ahead and, perhaps in particular, the current planning applications being submitted by Persimmon Homes. It is so important that everyone has the opportunity to

make their views, concerns, and suggestions listened to as we consider (and seek improvements to) these applications, the outcome of which will - if successful- be very significant for the village and surrounding area. In this context I was very impressed by the many comments made by those who attended the recent meeting arranged by the Parish Council.....and I will of course continue to work with the Parish Council and County Councillor to seek that these, and other concerns, are addressed.

I am also delighted that the Parish Council are now committed to overseeing a "Neighbourhood Plan" for Ixworth and Ixworth Thorpe and will ensure that officers and others at St Edmundsbury will assist in this important initiative for the best possible future for our villages and residents. Again I would encourage as many people as possible to get involved in this.....please note that the next West Suffolk Parish forum should have Neighbourhood plans as the main item on the agenda.

Turning to St Edmundsbury and West Suffolk, which the Ixworth Ward is such an important part of, I am (as Leader of St Edmundsbury) currently preparing the annual report for West Suffolk as a whole. This covers many of things which have been achieved, and are ongoing, throughout West Suffolk but is a pretty lengthy document (and still in draft form).

With best wishes, and thanks again to you all.

Report from Village Hall Committee Chairman

Mr Stephen Mann reported the following;

Finance

The financial report and will be found elsewhere, but we have struggled to get to grips with the issues relating to whether the village Hall operates at a profit. At last thank to the efforts of Jan Boyd in introducing a Sage Accounting system we are now a lot closer to doing so. My main concern is twofold: - 1. The running of the village hall needs to be self-maintaining. 2. The excellent efforts of those involved in fund raising should be applied to improvements to the facilities we have rather than to subsidise running costs.

Finally, I would like to express my sincere appreciation to all those who have raised so much in the past year and which has enabled the improvements which we continue to make.

Improvements

Improvement's we have made in the last 12 months include redecorating the Cousins room and toilets. The installation of acoustic sound proofing in the Main Hall which has intern given rise to the advent of the cinema with the library receiving the equipment from the Arts council. Commercial and Art films are now a regular feature of village life.

We have also purchased a complete new set of Chairs and additional tables for the hall the old chairs being stored at Mr Crosses Farm for use at outside events.

The Trustees have also have also instigated improvements to the CCTV and its resolution.

In addition, we have commissioned an architect to design a package of improvements to the Village Hall. These were put before a public meeting at the village Hall these were generally well received and additional suggestions were made. These are now being considered and methods of obtaining grant aid are being investigated.

CIO

At the same time the Trustees have begun a process that will turn the trust into a Charitable Incorporated Organisation. This will mean not change in the Trust for the Village, except that it is hoped Ixworth Thorpe will be included. The effect of the CIO will be that the trust will then operate as would a Limited Company but overseen as before by the Charity Commissioners under the same Trust as before.

Land Ownership

Although the Trust was established in 1939 a review in 1985 led to the trust being operated with a custodian trustee. In this case the Parish Council. Since it would now be the intention of the Trust to Register the Village Hall and The Playing Fields with the Land Registry the question of ownership has arisen. Mr Gary De-Ath a charity specialist at Gross and Co has explained the position to us.

However, the Parish Council acting on advice have taken the view that they "Own" the property whereas the Trustees are advised that the "Title" to the property was conveyed to the Trustees in conveyances currently held by Gross and Co for the Trustees. Clearly there is some confusion here but since I am informed by the Clerk to the PC that "*The PC are trying to find their legal responsibilities and if they should be registering the land and then whether this would then be passed to the C.I.O*". I have, hopefully only briefly, suspended activities on the CIO and fundraising until this is resolved. I take the view that we cannot fund raise or operate without these assets. I trust resolution of this legal problem will not be costly.

Vandalism

The hall has been subjected to a series of attacks by Vandals. The improved CCTV system should help us to reduce this. I am also grateful to PC De-Jong for the assistance he has given us.

Report from Ixworth Free School

Mrs N King thanked all for attending and welcomed everyone to the School. Mrs King then gave the following report;

- **UK Maths Challenge** – pupils who took part were very successful and achieved gold and silver medals and pupils from the school who were the top three percent were invited to a maths summer school
- **Maths Feast at Ipswich** – Pupils from the school took part in this event and came third out of nineteen
- **GCSE's** – Pupils are currently taking their exams. This is the first year the school has held GCSE's and we are hoping for good results as pupils were working very hard
- **Sport** – The school encourages all round sport for pupils. Two pupils took part in a recent cross country event and came 19th & 20th out of 500 entrants. The school was very proud of their achievement. The hockey team made the national final.
- **Charity Links** – The school likes to encourage their pupils to work in the community alongside local charities. The pupils have held various events and have raised the following, £200 from a Macmillan coffee morning, £300 from a book aid event for children in Africa, donated many items to Thetford Food Bank, ST Nicholas Hospice and Make a Wish. The head of the maths department also took part in this year's London Marathon.
- **Community Involvement** – The school have been encouraging pupils to work with various groups within the village and have accepted invitations to attend various clubs and events. The Royal British Legion kindly invited some pupils to attend the visit of 'The Poppy Truck' launching the start of the fundraising for Ixworth's Poppy Appeal. The Bowls Club invited pupils along to play a few games of bowls. Mr Stephen Mann, the village hall Chairman, kindly visited the school and carried out mock interviews to give pupils interviewing experience. The Annual Carol Service was held in St Mary's Church. The school put on a production of 'Joseph', which was excellent.
- **Exchange Students** – To encourage our students to expand their knowledge and become global citizens we have invited back 40 Dutch students on an exchange programme. The last exchange went very well and pupils hosting the Dutch students and the Dutch students enjoyed the experience.

Finally, this is my last year at Ixworth Free School as I am moving on to another school within the Seckford Foundation. My replacement Mr Mark Barrow is very keen to continue creating links with the community the school serves.

Once again thank you for using the school to hold your meeting.

Report from Ixworth & District Royal British Legion

Mr Ben Lord gave a report on behalf of The Royal British Legion.

Report from Friends of Ixworth Library (FOIL)

I am here to represent FOIL, the Friends of Ixworth Library. The role of the Friends is to raise funds, to support library staff, to assist with and to initiate projects and events and to help to raise the profile of the library within the community.

So far not a single library has been closed in Suffolk. Suffolk Libraries' budget has however been cut by 33 percent since 2010; these cuts are likely to continue. The contributions of the Friends groups therefore become increasingly important. FOIL has raised money through many initiatives. Donations have also been gratefully received from various sources, including Ixworth Parish Council, and Mrs Spicer has kindly allocated Council Grant Money to the library from her Locality Budget. Funds raised and donated have been used to improve library facilities and to finance the recent library refurbishment.

Libraries are not just book stores. They are local hubs for vital community access to information and advice; they offer recreational activities for adults, free children and toddler activities together with access to educational resources. Ixworth Library serves 27 communities in the area providing a focal point, links and interaction within that wider community.

The range of services and resources offered by the library now includes:

Monthly film nights have been organised by the Friends. The projection equipment, which is of a high standard, has been provided by Arts East England who runs a parallel programme of arts films in Ixworth on Sunday afternoons

There is an Art Group; a Book Group and Toptime social sessions aimed at older people.

Through the Get Connected Day's free drop in sessions you can find out about the library's online and digital services

A low cost weekly iPad course organised by the Friends will start on Thursday 8th June. Participants can learn how to use Facetime, Skype, search engines, play games, draw or paint on iPad and much more besides

Most importantly the library provides well supported facilities for children including Baby Bounce and Tot Rock

An annual children's summer reading challenge; this encourages stronger reading ability with all the advantages that that can give. The library manager (Cathy McDonald) is looking for volunteers to help with the 2017 annual summer reading challenge: this runs during the school holidays. If you, or anyone you know, might be interested in contributing to this Cathy would be pleased to hear from you. This project is really important, and it does give the opportunity for additional help to children whose parents might not be able to afford to pay for such a facility.

Suffolk Libraries has introduced a customer survey form seeking the views of library users on its service and on future developments, and a Community Forum was held in Ixworth earlier in the week.

The Library would welcome new Friends, so if any of you wish to join us do please let us know. Thank you for inviting us to participate in this meeting.

Comments from the Floor

The following comments from the floor were made;

Speeding – A resident present complained about the speeding traffic in Crown Lane every evening at the same time. A small discussion took place about speeding in and around the village.

The resident was advised to contact the Police.

Other Issues

- Anti-social behaviour once again happening in the village – Police presence needed to stop this happening

Neighbourhood Plan

Cllr Lord, the Parish Council Chairman, informed resident present that work had started on the Neighbourhood Plan. A meeting was going to be held on Monday 5th June at 7pm in Ixworth Village Hall. Residents were encouraged to attend to have their say on the future of the Parish.

The Chairman of the Parish Council, Cllr Ben Lord, thanked everyone for attending and encouraged residents to attend the Parish Council meetings to express their views on all matters concerning them.

Date of the Next Annual Parish Meeting

It was suggested that the 2018 Annual Parish Meeting be held on Wednesday 23rd May 2018. Venue and time to be confirmed early 2018.

With no further business the meeting closed at 8.40pm.

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Signed

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Date