

Ixworth Annual Parish Meeting

The minutes of Ixworth Annual Parish Meeting held on Wednesday 22nd May 2019 at 7.00pm at Ixworth Free School

Present were Cllr Ben Lord, Chairman of the Parish Council, C Cllr Joanna Spicer MBE, B Cllr John Griffiths & 21 residents.

Also present were representatives from Ixworth Free School, Ixworth Primary School and Neighbourhood Plan Working Group.

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.

Councillor(Cllr) Ben Lord had contacted the Parish Council clerk to inform the meeting that he was running late. In Cllr Lords absence Cllr Pam Shelton opened and welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Minutes

The minutes were duly signed as a true record of the previous meeting held on 6th June 2018.

Report from County Councillor Joanna Spicer MBE

I would like to thank the Chairman and all the Parish Council members for welcoming me to their meetings each month and the continuing work they do for our community. I would also like to thank Mandy, the PC clerk, for her work throughout the year.

I currently serve eighteen villages and there is only one larger than Ixworth. Ixworth can be quite a complicated Parish with responsibilities falling to either the County Council, the Borough Council or the Parish Council. Continuing to work together hopefully we will be able to deliver the best services for the Parish.

I live in Pakenham, so I feel especially close to this Parish.

I would like to update you on some issues within the Parish.

- **Hempyard Bridge** – The repair to the bridge is something the Parish Council and I have been working on for some time. At present there are no finances available for the repairs, but I will endeavour to keep this on Suffolk County Councils (SCC) radar for the repairs to be completed. The bridge is currently safe, and residents can still use it. Hopefully, I will be able to report back next year with better news.
- **Roads** – SCC are still committed to improving roads within the county and are working hard to repair potholes
- **Footpaths** – The Parish is currently poorly served in relation to footpaths. I hope to draw up a map for a new footpath
- **Schools** – This year has been a difficult year for schools due to all the changes in school transport. I would like to thank Ixworth Free School for working with SCC on using the former community centre to use for youth facilities
- **Footbridge** – With help from Parish Council SCC engineers have begun working on possible drawings and designs for a possible footbridge over the by-pass.

If there is anything I can do to help with anything within the Parish my email address is joanna.spicer@suffolk.gov.uk

Report from Borough Councillor John Griffiths MBE

Borough Cllr (B Cllr) was unable to attend and sent the following report which was read by the Cllr Pam Shelton.

Dear All,

I am very sorry to have to give my apologies, and to miss, the Ixworth and Ixworth Thorpe annual Parish meeting this evening.

As luck would have it, it clashes with the first formal annual meeting of the new West Suffolk Council (where the 64 newly elected Councillors will be electing a Chairman, Leader, and various committee chair and vice chairs etc) and I hope you will therefore accept my apologies and this brief written report.

Firstly, may I say how privileged I am to serve and represent you on the new West Suffolk Council. This is both an honour and a big responsibility and I will do my best- irrespective of party politics- to help make Ixworth and Ixworth Thorpe even better places to live, work and visit than they are already.

Secondly may I thank the Chairman and Parish Councillors, as well of course as Mandy, for everything they have done for us over the last year and congratulations on your re-elections.

We are lucky to have such an excellent and active Parish Council. May I also thank our excellent County Councillor, Joanna Spicer MBE as well as the many people, organisations, businesses and others who contribute so much to our life here.

We all face challenges not only nationally and internationally but here - particularly given the proposed residential and other developments currently under consideration. There are however also opportunities to improve things further in, and for, our villages.

Working together with, and supporting our local businesses, surgery, schools, clubs and other organisations I believe we can preserve - and indeed improve - the services, infrastructure, transport, recreational and other facilities we deserve and need here - as well as our safety, environment, and quality of life. In this regard, may I encourage everyone to support the hardworking band of volunteers who are creating the Neighbourhood Plan. This is designed to ensure that what we - the people who live here - would like and need (or would not like!) in the inevitable changes ahead for this lovely area is taken into account by the planners and others.

May I turn briefly to a couple of ongoing matters, namely

1. Persimmon

Further to Julie Barrow's email on 2 May to me and Mandy, our planners are still in negotiations with Persimmon on the scheme. I understand the PC is publicising the latest plans that have been submitted with a view to commenting on them in June.

2. Vertas

The Vertas application at Ixworth (DC/17/2288/FUL) has now been formally withdrawn following the granting of planning permission for an alternative site in Bury (DC/19/0049/FUL). This additional application was submitted following the concerns raised by many and the LPA in relation to the unacceptable highway implications arising from the existing operation in Ixworth.

The entire operation will therefore be relocated to the Bury site in due course and the Ixworth site will not be used by Vertas for a depot going forwards.

West Suffolk's enforcement officer has asked Vertas to provide him with a written timeline which clarifies when they will be vacating the Ixworth site; when he has this information, he will of course let us know so we can update residents.

There are of course many other things going on here, but I am sure the Chairman and others present will cover them.

With my apologies again for having to miss your meeting tonight, and my thanks and best wishes to you all,

Report from Ixworth Primary School

I have been the headteacher for the school for 1 year now and the year has gone very quickly and has been very enjoyable.

Ixworth Primary School is about to celebrate being 50 years old. A celebration is going to take place on Friday 12th July. An article has been placed in the village magazine encouraging anyone who may have old photos etc to take part in the celebrations.

The school took part in the Annual Remembrance service at the War Memorial on 11th November as well as the Harvest Day Service at St Mary's Church. The school also formed a choir for Christmas.

The scaffolding has finally been removed from the roof.

The school looks forward to working with the community over the next year.

The school has also been working with the Neighbourhood Plan Working Group (NPWG) and some of their work can be seen on the displays that the NPWG have on show this evening.

Cllr Lord arrived and took over as Chair of the meeting.

Report from Ixworth Free School

Mr Mark Barrow the Head Teacher of Ixworth Free School gave the following report.

The school has 60 more pupils this year and we are now beginning to feel very established within the community.

As a school we feel personally involved in each student not only with grades but with their personal goals also. I am incredibly lucky to have a very dedicated staff to help achieve the aims of the school.

The school is changing and developing with various projects such as a media centre, an all-weather pitch and development of a new sports centre.

I am proud of our school and end look forward to another successful year.

Report from Neighbourhood Plan Working Group (NPWG)

Looking back at my report from this time last year it is clear that the Neighbourhood Plan has come on quite spectacularly! We had set up the group and were about to make our first contact to the Parish via a flyer.

Since that time so much has been achieved:

In August we announced our presence to the community via a double spread in the Community Magazine and a Flyer. The latter was designed, and the Neighbourhood Plan "look" came into being thanks to the artistic talents of Sarah Chandler. The leaflets were hand delivered by Alf Percival, our Clerk

In August, Debra Reay took over as Chair to the NP Group with Tessa Stonehouse taking more of a support role as Vice Chair.

We decided the most effective starting point to canvass community views was to write a questionnaire and distribute these to Ixworth and Ixworth Thorpe. The deadline for completion was the 21st of December and the results were analysed over the Christmas Holidays by me with the help of Mike Dean whose excellent IT talents were used to report back to the community via the Ixworth Magazine in February

The response to the questionnaire was relatively low, but despite this some very positive outcomes resulted. We obtained a broad understanding of what people valued about the Parish and what people felt would be needed to ensure that the community continued to thrive as the population doubled in size. This would form the basis for more in depth discussion when we set up drop in sessions later in the year

Areas of concern were also highlighted...in particular our failure to engage with the younger members of the community. This led very quickly to establishing a presence on Facebook and a renewed effort to get our web presence established. We also started attending village groups where we were able to talk to younger people about the Neighbourhood Plan and appeal to them to take an active part.

At this time, our then NP Clerk, Alf Percival sadly resigned due to other work commitments and Steve Wilson was appointed in his stead. Steve has brought a renewed energy and drive to the Group and has been particularly effective in helping us to achieve a very successful third stage: the drop ins and community workshops. The two drop-in events were held on two successive Saturdays in March with people given the opportunity to show their views on issues that came up through the questionnaire. In addition, there were large maps showing where proposed development would be and also maps showing rights of way and public paths in the past with another map showing how many of these have been lost in the past 100 years. These two drop-in sessions were followed a couple of weeks later on the 2nd of April with two workshops where the results of the drop ins were further analysed and expanded upon. These were facilitated by our Planning Consultants from Navigus Consulting, and they duly reported the findings from these workshops

Last Saturday, the Neighbourhood Planning Group hosted an exhibition at the Village Hall where people could read the report on the Workshops and the comments garnered from the drop-in events. We were also delighted to be able to show the Year 3 pupils projects that had been produced as a result of our asking the Primary School to get involved in the Neighbourhood Plan. They had explored available green space available in Ixworth and had been decided that the largest space (the playing field) was being underutilised and they came up with their wonderful alternatives.

The next phase in the Neighbourhood Plan is to fill in gaps in our evidence.

We still need more input from the younger members of Ixworth and we are doing this through the Free School with the help of Mike Jones who is going to hold drop-in events similar to those held by us earlier this year. Similarly, we need more input from both the Medical Centre and business in Ixworth.

We are also about to deliver Housing Needs Surveys to the communities of both Ixworth and Ixworth Thorpe. You should receive these the weekend of the 1st and 2nd of June. These can be done either online or in written form (a stamp addressed envelope is included) We have done extensive advertising and we hope that we will receive a good response by the deadline of the 17th of June. We should have the feedback and analysis from the questionnaire by November.

Our overall aim for the coming year is to be in a position by next March that we have gained approval from the community for the pre submission plan with a view to submitting the plan to the Local Authority soon afterwards.

Parish Council Chairman's Report

The Chairman thanked everyone for attending and apologised for arriving late.

The Chairman then gave the following report.

My thanks go to C Cllr Spicer and B Cllr Griffiths for their continued support over the last year. As a Parish Council we 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 for the great job she does for the Parish Council and indeed for the community as a whole.

Almost three weeks ago, members of the Parish Council were re-elected uncontested with just seven members standing out of total eight available seats. We now find ourselves with a vacancy after Trevor Anderson stood down having served 2 four-year terms on the Parish Council and we thank him for all his efforts over that time. With a vacancy around the table, we would be very keen to hear from anyone within the village who are interested in local issues whilst striving to make Ixworth an even better place to live. As some of you will know by now, we meet once a month on the second Wednesday of the month, and we are involved in a wide variety of issues consulted on an ever-growing portfolio of statutory services provided by the Borough and County Councils whilst looking to safeguarding the long-term future of the village. If you would be interested in finding out more, please do not hesitate to speak to myself or any of my council colleagues.

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

Post Office Services

A year ago, I stood here and commented on the intense inconvenience with the unexpected interruption of a post office service being suspended in Chapman's stores. Finally, we were able to see some interim arrangements commence earlier this year through a mobile post office van that features in the Village Hall car park for four hours per week on Tuesdays and Thursdays. Naturally, a more robust long-term solution is required, and we continue to lobby out MP Matt Hancock, for his assistance in working with Post Office Ltd to get their criteria revised thus ensuring that a common sense ultimately prevails. The lack of post office services is not only hugely inconvenience to residents but also contributes to a downturn in economic performance in our High Street, something which has been very apparent following the closure of our café three months ago and that the Parish Council will continue to keep a close observation of in the coming weeks to ensure this is a temporary hiatus and not the sign of times to come.

Planning Applications

Just as in the previous four years that I 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 where progress is really lethargic. To briefly summarise, almost three years ago we had just been informed that against all opposition and a refusal from St Edmundsbury Borough Council, that and 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 the new development from a ghost-island junction off the A1088 between the current northern roundabout and the end of the Coltsford Close/Thistledown 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 who 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. Very recently, landscaping works have begun in the vicinity of where this junction will be cited thus ensuring that the planning consent awarded by the planning inspector on appeal does not lapse. Earlier this year, the Development Control Committee of St Edmundsbury Borough Council unanimously voted to refuse a planning the proposed application for an access road to be delivered off this junction and into the proposed development for a variety of issues but in particular but in particular to the lack of replanting of trees which the proposed

route of the access road would have encroached upon, whilst also echoing our significant and fundamental concerns relating to safety aspects of the proposed access road and ghost junction. Sadly, despite finally, meeting with the developer, Persimmon Homes, in July 2018 our calls for a more pragmatic, community focussed approach with the paramount attention to our safety concerns have gone largely unheard. Thanks to mounting pressure through local press, we have now opened some dialogue with a senior executive at Persimmon. Despite finally achieving this, we are not hugely enthused by the reception we receive so far. Two years ago, we were first consulted on a planning application for 90 homes on the first phase of the site nearest Crown Lane. This was further modified last year to 87 houses and has further reduced to 77 houses. At this stage, the application still awaits determination and no planning consent had been granted for anything other than a ghost island junction. Given the size of the proposed development, it is widely expected that two applications will go before the Development Control Committee at West Suffolk District Council but with some key intricate issues pending resolution, it is unlikely the developer, Persimmon Homes, to acknowledge the needs of the village by the way of a safe access into the development in the hope that public safety commands their next move rather than going with an unsafe ghost-island simply because it is cheaper than expanding the 5-arm roundabout. We remain in consultation with the landowners By-Pass Farm Partnership, as part of a wider masterplan for the site, and also to safeguard land for future cemetery requirements including potential for a new access road into the Cemetery.

Hempyard Bridge

WE have continued to be in dialogue with the County Council Rights of Way Authority regarding Hempyard Bridge. As a result 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 continues to deliver a short-term solution, the dilapidations of the bridge continue to worsen with a tree coming dangerously close to impacting the bridge and a crack that is worsening as time goes by. Unlike a number of other Suffolk communities, Ixworth is not vast in supply of footpaths and whilst we are grateful for measures taken that continue to see our footpath remain open, it is recognised that we continue to be let down by the County Council in of addressing this issue in recent years which now sees tenable cost of any long-term remedial work far exceeding what it would have done had matters been dealt with sooner. In an effort to avoid a disastrous situation from occurring, we have recently obtained a copy of a survey undertaken by the County Council as to the scope of work required in an effort to potentially escalating, and a better value for money, a remedy that sees this matter resolved once and for all.

Village Maintenance

Our village cleaner, Steve Wilson, continues to maintain the streets of Ixworth in his duties which 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 would 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 signs 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 years 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 ongoing local awareness campaigns and our latest information from our village cleaner informs us that that 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 the infrequent emptying rather than lack of fouling itself.

Cemetery

Over the past year we have continued to undertake an ongoing programme of maintenance in Ixworth Cemetery. A working group of Parish Councillors oversees the ongoing needs of maintenance within the Cemetery which is proving successful. Over the past year, we have addressed issues including installing a new boundary fence posts to prevent vehicle movements adjacent to graves as well as enhancing the appearance of what is Lawn Cemetery by keeping all of the longer grass in the unused part of the Cemetery to a more aesthetically pleasing appearance. 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.

Policing

We continue to maintain a great rapport with our rural police officer, PC Andre de Jongh whom we are very lucky to have within our community amongst immense pressures with policing. In previous years, one of the biggest issues occurring was with anti-social behaviour which, I am pleased to hear, remains at much calmer

levels compared with previous years I have delivered this report. Although we continue to lobby for police to support efforts to reduce parking infringements in various corners of the village and particularly around safety concerns we have registered in and around our schools, 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/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 S137 budget and we are always particularly happy to support village efforts. Additionally, we thank both John Griffiths and Joanna Spicer for various contributions from their locality budgets they have towards village causes including the Royal British Legion: 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 and have been delighted with the continued and ongoing efforts to see school facilities made available to the community seen recently with the unveiling of the MUGA which has really seen the school embracing opportunities to link with the community and is the beginning of what we hope will continue to go from strength to strength.

Remembrance Day Commemorations

It was again a huge honour to join members of the village branch of the Royal British Legion and other village organisations, in leading what was a particularly special remembrance commemoration last November as we came together to commemorate a century since the end of WW! Last year, as in previous years, the numbers swelled to crowds of several hundred people lining not just the parade route but also the congregation in the church and it really did make me feel very proud to be the lead this community with the spirited ambience that this occasion brought. Sadly, despite our best efforts, we saw vehicles parking in the High Street ignoring yellow 'no parking' cones, as commemorations took place which hindered the parade route down the High Street.

General Issues

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

- Adverse highway conditions
- Parking problems/congestions
- Communicating with the community

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 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 evident in Crown Lane during school days start and finish times where we have some real genuine safety concerns. The past year has seen no sign of this reducing and as I mentioned earlier through dialogue with the rural policing team, we continue to call for more action to be taken to reduce what, at peak times, can be often intolerable levels of congestion along key routes in the village.

It is rare now for us each month to not have residents come and speak to the Parish Council about issues that they have, and we are always available to hear from anyone with any issues they think we can help with. Even if you cannot come to one of our meetings, you can always call or ask for someone to come and visit you as I have done on a few occasions in the past year. We are also looking at the concept of holding Parish Surgeries which we hope will offer a less formal setting than a Parish Council meeting whilst offering better time to listen to and assist in issues raised.

Budget Cuts

As with all local authorities, we continue to ensure the various measures of austerity and mounting pressures on public services. The Parish Council continues to feel that it cannot reduce its budget without jeopardising the quality and level of services that we carry out within the village which is why by keeping our budget the same as the 2017/18 fiscal year there was a small increase in council tax once again. We do not like having to take those actions but feel this is the lesser of the two evils when considering how things would be if we start cutting back on service levels that the community continues to expect of us.

Whilst we, as a Parish Council, have interest 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, other may not; there is 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 of our monthly meetings – it would be great to see more of you interact with us and get involved in community matters!

As I bring my report for this year to close, I would like to take this opportunity to thank my colleagues on the Parish Council for the ongoing, steadfast dedication to leading the community by example on a variety matters; some of which you have heard of this evening. Each of us do what do voluntarily in the hope that we make a positive difference on the lives of our community, and it remains an honour and a privilege for me to lead the Parish Council as its Chairman, which I now begin my fourth year as having been unanimously voted into the position once again at our Annual Parish Council meeting two weeks ago. Despite the hustle and bustle of modern life, we are incredibly fortunate to live in a beautiful part of the country, and no matter how near or far my travels take me, there is nowhere else that feels more home to me than Ixworth; something which I hear said to me by so many, not just living here but throughout the country as well, in itself, a proud testament of our village.

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

Other Business

A discussion was held about concerns over Vertas using the Fordham's garage to park vehicles. The vehicles were causing a lot of noise early each morning.

Concerns were also raised again that there are not enough footpaths accessible from the village for residents to enjoy.

It was suggested that the 2019 Annual Parish Meeting be held on Wednesday 20th May 2020. Venue and time to be confirmed in 2020.

With no further business the meeting closed at 8.10pm.