

GAZELEY PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of Gazeley Annual Parish Meeting Held in Gazeley Village Hall on Tuesday 24th May 2022

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

Also present: Parish Clerk, Lynne Francis, District Councillor Roger Dicker and 8 members of the public.

Chairman's Welcome and introduction.

The Chairman of the Parish Council, Cllr Paul Beard, 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.

22/APM.1. Chairman's Report

The Chairman noted that there are still reports of Covid in the district. He thanked Councillor Kevin Grimwood for all his good work as Chairman over the past three years.

The parish council has been very concerned about road safety in the village. A solar-powered Speed Indication Device has been purchased to be installed at various points in the village but unfortunately we are still waiting for Suffolk Highways to install the appropriate posts to carry the device.

Thanks must go to the members of Gazeley Speedwatch who have already been out and about in the village and making their presence felt.

The Chairman thanked the other councillors and the clerk who have all been working hard for the benefit of the village during the past year.

Finally, the Chairman gave particular thanks to Councillor Judy Moatt who completed 30 years service on the parish council this month. Judy has been a key figure in the community for many years, always taking part and showing a keen interest in everything that goes on in the village.

As well as being a councillor, Judy has also been a school governor at Gazeley Primary School, a member of All Saints' PCC, a member of Gazeley Village Hall Committee and also a trustee of Gazeley United Charities.

She has been a long-time supporter of the Forget-me-not Club at Highwood Court and has also supported every fund-raising event held in the village for the benefit of others.

Gazeley has been very fortunate to have Judy as a member of the community and in recognition of that, the Chairman then presented Judy with a Civic Pride Award.

22/APM.2 Reports from Local Authorities

West Suffolk Council – Cllr Roger Dicker reported that the past year had still been dominated by Covid.

West Suffolk Council had stepped up to give support where necessary, especially to the elderly and vulnerable.

The Independent Living Service had been supported by government grants to enable residents to stay in their own homes.

The council had declared a climate emergency and had pledged to be carbon neutral by 2030.

Solar panels would be fitted to council buildings and electric chargers would be provided.

An environmental tea had been arranged to consult with local businesses to see how they can adapt to become more environmentally sustainable.

The Mildenhall Hub came on line a year ago. All council facilities are under one roof. The old council building in College Heath Road will be demolished to make way for housing and the old swimming pool will also be demolished but no decisions have been made about the future of the site.

Several consultations are under way. The life of a taxi may be extended from 10 to 15 years.

As far as boundaries are concerned, there will be no changes in this area but a new housing development will be moved from Worlington to Red Lodge parish.

There will be no changes for Gazeley under the new Local Plan. Cllr Dicker noted that the old school site had not been put forward for consideration.

Suffolk County Council has been trying to rehouse Ukrainian refugees.

Cllr Dicker had donated funds to the parish council for the purchase of the new solar-powered SID and had made a donation to Gazeley Events Committee for the Jubilee celebrations on 5th June.

22/APM.3 – Reports from Local Organisations

All Saints' Church – Margaret Gash

Chris Childs, our vicar, has now completed a full year at All Saints' Church. His enthusiasm, his energy and his ability to relate to everyone is inspirational.

During the year the PCC was sorry to see the retirement of the long-serving organist Margaret Salzmann but they have been delighted to welcome Philip Asher from Kentford to take her place.

As we have emerged from Covid the church has managed to hold virtually all of their regular services.

Congregations are relatively small but they have recovered to almost pre-pandemic levels.

It has been decided not to go on recording on-line services but services are still being live-streamed each week from Mildenhall and the Cathedral.

Sadly they had to cancel the Christmas Eve Crib Service but the church was open and over 50 people came to view the crib and to light candles.

To widen interest for both children and adults they have added some new services and experimented with different styles of worship during the year.

As ever, activities have been dominated by the need to raise funds because the church is not financially supported by the Diocese or the church nationally. The church has to pay £10,000 each year to the Diocese before running costs and regular outgoings are taken into account.

During the past year the church has held 10 events of various kinds and most have been very successful.

Highlights have been the Art Show, the display by the owls from the Hawkeye Falconry and a Quiz Night with a sausage supper.

Unfortunately income for year exceeded expenditure by just £63 and there had been a number of unforeseen expenses such as safety work to the trees and repair of the flint walls. It was therefore disappointing that the parish council felt that they had to reduce the grant that they make to us but we nevertheless remain grateful for their support.

Although some of the fund-raising events have only broken even, and some have actually made a loss, they are regarded as an opportunity to welcome and engage with people who might not normally come to church. In addition to the church activities, members of the congregation have helped to organise other activities in the village such as the monthly coffee mornings in the village hall and the visits of the Rural Coffee Caravan.

Future events will include a third annual Art Show; another display by the Hawkeye Falconry and a Christmas concert by the Kirby Voices choral group.

Planned works include minor repairs to the roofs, gutters and downspouts which, it is hoped, will avoid the need for much more extensive and expensive repairs in due course. More ambitiously the PCC has launched a long-term project to instal toilet and kitchen facilities in the church which will greatly enhance its usefulness for services and other events.

Thanks are extended to everyone who has supported the events or who have contributed financially or in a practical way to keep the church going. The PCC is very conscious of the limits to what can be achieved by the same small band of volunteers and they do not take for granted the continued generosity of their supporters. To all of them, they are truly grateful.

Gazeley Schools Trust

Progress is being made towards resolving the future of the site of the former school but it has been painfully slow. The site is jointly owned by Suffolk County Council and the Gazeley Schools Trust and they reached the conclusion some time ago that it can no longer serve any practical purpose for either of them. It has now been empty and unused for almost five and a half years and in all that time no-one has come forward with any viable proposals for its continued use or for any other purpose that could benefit the community.

SCC and the GST are now preparing to apply for outline planning consent to build a small housing development on the site but consideration is being given to the possibility of first marketing the site as it stands, without planning consent, to demonstrate that no-one else is interested in taking it on as a school. It has been noted that alternative facilities are available in the village for community use, including the village hall, the recreation ground and the Childrens' play area and also the sports field, all of which are currently under-utilised.

The vicar and churchwardens are trustees of Gazeley Schools Trust which is entirely independent of the church here in Gazeley and also of the Diocese and the parish council. How the Trust uses any money that it receives will be subject to conditions laid down by the Charity Commission, which is likely to insist that it must be wholly or largely restricted to educational purposes.

Gazeley Events Committee

Lisa Jennings reported that the Events Committee had re-grouped after the departure of Charlene Vandenbroucke. They are working with the church on preparations for the Queen's Platinum Jubilee event on 5th July.

The committee is grateful for donations of £250 from the parish council and also £250 from Cllr Roger Dicker to help with costs. It is intended that there will be a Halloween party this year and also a Christmas party for the children of the village.

Gazeley History Society – Hilary Appleton

Our year started with an excellent Zoom meeting with Lynette Talbot on Gazeley soldiers in WW1.

We returned to 'live' meetings with our AGM in April - this included a fascinating presentation by Maggie Pugh and Rob Pilsworth about the church roof carvings, and the associated book. ("Myths and Monsters: the unique carvings of All Saints Church, Gazeley", 2021, by Rob Pilsworth in conjunction with Simon Johnson, a visitor and photographer from New Zealand).

We have a programme of speakers booked for the year. (see attached programme).

Given the cancellation of events during the pandemic, and thus no expenditures, our finances are in good shape.

We hope to be able to pick up various plans which had to be shelved, including the possibility of producing a small book about the history of Gazeley.

Our membership continues to be supportive, and we have been very pleased to welcome new members.

Thank you to the members of our committee for their ongoing support, and thanks also to those who look after the running, cleaning and upkeep of the Village Hall.

Village Hall Committee

Tracey Crasall reported that the AGM will be held in August this year and the committee is appealing for new members as there are only 6 members at present. Funds have been raised with a Bingo evening and also a Beetle Drive.

It has been decided to offer free use of the hall for the visits of the Rural Coffee Caravan and to give six months free rent to Twinkle. A new leader is required to run the group.

Gazeley Speedwatch – Alison Mejia

The Community Speed Watch took nearly 9 months to get off the ground with Suffolk Police but we were grateful to have such great interest from the start. We have 16 volunteers in total and are always welcoming anyone of interest. It's not a heavy commitment and the more people we have, the more flexibility and more often we can be

out monitoring the speed through our village. We officially kicked off in March 2022 and have been out about 7 times. The Suffolk Police gently request a minimum of 2 times each month.

There needs to be a team of at least 3 people and we have 3 locations approved by the Suffolk Police. A specific location at either end of The Street and a location at the top of Higham Rd. A team of volunteers goes out for around 1 hr or so and in that time we have caught anywhere between 4 and 9 speeding cars exceeding 34 mph. The highest speed we have recorded was 48 mph in a 30 mph zone.

The Gazeley Community Speed Watch has already proven to be a very beneficial initiative within our community, in terms of promoting traffic to slow down through our village. Not only that, it's been a great way to meet with others in our community and have a social time out while doing something beneficial. Each group that has been out has had a few laughs and found satisfaction in this volunteer role. Anyone interested in joining this team can contact Allison Mejia (Alli DM on the Gazeley FB page).

Gazeley United Charities

The charity is an ancient village trust which has a small income from rent on parish lands each year and is able to make small one-off grants to anyone in particular need in the parish. In the past, the charity has been able to help with travel costs, fuel poverty and sudden emergencies. Applications should be made to Rev. Chris Childs at the Vicarage in writing or by email.

Trustee and Clerk to the Charities, Lynne Francis, reported that the trustees had only held one meeting during the past year and therefore no payments had been made from funds.

The current balance of accounts stands at £12,275.

The Chequers

Pat Spillane reported that has sponsored the renovation of the Three Churches Walk sign on the occasion of the Queen's Platinum Jubilee and it is now ready to be re-hung on the village green.

The pub is doing very well in spite of rising costs and they are selling food at a reasonable price.

22/APM.4 Public Forum

Mrs Gash said that several people had suggested to her that it was a great pity that a single tree couldn't have been planted somewhere in the village to celebrate the Jubilee and that the parish council was best placed to select an appropriate of plot on which to plant it.

The clerk replied that the only land in the village that was owned by the parish council was the village green and unfortunately there was nowhere on the green to plant a tree of any significance.

Question - Who is responsible for the phone box?

Pat Spillane explained that as a parish councillor he took on the responsibility for the telephone box which housed the defibrillator.

BT no longer pays for the electricity so it was agreed that the defibrillator should be relocated to the village hall.

There were plans to renovate the box but they were delayed because of Covid. A village resident has offered to help work on it. Money was originally raised by the Poker Club at The Chequers to purchase materials.

Question – What does the parish council spend our money on?

CLlr Spillane replied that the council has to spend money on a multitude of things such as street lighting for example which is becoming very expensive. The clerk noted that it has recently cost £575 to replace a lamp in a post at Mill View. She also said that a lot of the lamps that are owned by the parish council are getting to the end of their life and we have to set aside money in the budget to replace lamps if they fail.

It was suggested that the parish council buy LED lamps but the clerk said that the cost of updating all our lamps would amount to something in the region of £25,000, as quoted to us some years ago.

The only way we can raise money is through the precept which is a tax on the residents.

The clerk noted that all the details of the parish council's finances can be found on the website or anyone can contact her at any time if they have a question to ask.

Cllr Dicker explained that St Edmundsbury had covered the cost of streetlights in their villages before the merger but Forest Heath had not. Now that the two councils have merged, this is something that has to be sorted out. There were a lot of anomalies between the two districts after the merger and discussions are on-going to resolve them.

Question – What is the current situation with the forge, has it been sold and if so, why is the previous owner still living there?

The clerk confirmed that the forge has been sold but it is still the subject of a demolition order. The new owner has to inform West Suffolk of his plans and satisfy them that those plans are viable.

The parish council has no information on why the previous owner is still living there.

Question – Is it correct that the parish council is planning to charge Mr Wiseman for installing scaffolding on the green?

It was explained that it is in the best interests of the village that the work on the forge is completed as soon as possible. If a charge is levied then it is hoped that this would incentivise the owner to complete the project as soon as possible.

The cost of the rental of the emergency fencing is still continuing to accrue and whilst it is still in position the bus shelter remains unavailable for the use of residents and the grass within the fencing cannot be cut properly.

It is quite normal for landowners to charge a fee for allowing scaffolding to be placed on their land by developers. Going forwards it is entirely sensible to create a licence to allow the developer to access village land when carrying out building work and it is entirely proper for the parish council to have a legal relationship with the owner of the forge.

Question – Why can't the parish council move the safety fencing nearer to the building and liberate the bus shelter?

It was explained that officers from West Suffolk Council had determined the size of the area to be enclosed by the fencing so that if the walls collapsed, as they were beginning to do, then they would fall within the area of the fencing and not on anyone standing near the bus stop.

There were no further questions and the Chairman closed the meeting at 8.45pm.