

Dedham

Parish Council

Minutes of Parish Assembly held on 12 May 2010

DEDHAM PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of PARISH ASSEMBLY held on

Wednesday, 12th May, 2010, in the Assembly Rooms

Present: In the Chair: Cllr. R. Laverick

Councillors: R. Appleby, Mrs. A. Cannon, R. Cannon, M. Dempsey,

B. Hindley, Mrs. K. Spencer, S. White

County Councillor Mrs. Anne Brown:

Parish Clerk: Mrs. J. Flewin

PCSO: Mark Hibben

Local Electors 3

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE received from Cllrs. Stock, Ward Cllr. Garnett and C.Cllr. Mrs. A. Brown.

2. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING were read, signed and approved.

3. MATTERS ARISING None

4. CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

The Chairman delivered the following report of the year's activities:

"As always, the work of the Parish Council over the last year may be summarised as that which is routine, and those matters that only confront us on a

one-off or intermittent basis.

*On the routine front, we have continued to try to ensure that the Parish **footpaths** are well maintained and complement the superb scenery of the Vale. During the year, with the significant assistance of Essex County Council's Parish Paths Partnership and volunteer help, we have continued the policy of replacing stiles with gates, thereby making the paths more accessible to older users. In an attempt to publicize our path network the year has seen the release of an internet-based footpath guide. It is sad to report that dog-fouling, which has always been something of a problem, seems now to have reached epidemic proportions, and in an attempt to address this anti-social unpleasantness the Council is striving to ensure that "dog poo bins" are readily available at key locations, and particularly in the area of the Mill Lane Car Parks.*

The year has seen a renegotiation of the financial support provided by the PPP and this involved a significant amount of work to provide a "cutting schedule". At the moment it looks as if we should be able to continue our previous standards without any charge to the precept, and we thank the Dedham Footpath Group for their assistance in this matter.

*Much time has been devoted to ensuring that the **recreation ground** continues to be maintained to a high standard. Besides ensuring that the children's equipment is professionally checked on a regular basis to ensure its safe condition, the year has seen initiatives to:*

- Replace ageing play equipment with new rides (which were purchased from our Section 106 development fund);*
- Apply replacement bark to the play area and prune the trees beside the footpath;*
- Provide improved railings for the Sports Pavilion steps, thereby reducing a potential fall hazard;*
- Install new signs that more correctly reflect the policy of the Parish Council with regard to dogs in this area.*

Work has also been progressing on the acquisition of a "Fitness Trail" for the Recreation Ground. Most of the funding for this project is now in place, and installation should follow soon.

As always, during the year, the Parish Council has tried to ensure that the appropriate authorities are

kept "up to speed" in their duties towards **road maintenance**, and despite the adverse conditions that prevailed for much of the winter, this routine work has progressed well. It is disappointing to record, however, that formally requested enhancements (such as the extension of double yellow lining in Crown Street) do not seem to have advanced at all, and there is clearly a need to progress these matters with more vigour.

During the year **vehicle activated speed warning signs** were introduced in Ardleigh Road and at the Dedham Heath cross roads, and it is hoped that these will provide a significant contribution to road safety.

On the Planning front, **the Planning Sub-Committee** has dealt with 48 applications (down from 60 last year). The Counsellors involved in this activity have now enjoyed several years experience, allowing them to perform this task in an efficient and even-handed manner. Important contacts have been established with Colchester Borough Council (whose planning officers now confer with the Planning Sub-Committee on a quarterly basis) and with the Dedham Vale Society, whose input on planning matters we greatly value. The trend towards replacing small- or medium-sized dwellings with large ones continues unabated, and we are concerned that the scope for down-sizing within the Parish is becoming ever more limited.

During the year much time and effort has been devoted to identifying a suitable site for **allotments**, and we believe that the land offered by the National Trust at Bridges Farm admirably meets the requirements of the village. Considerable time has been spent in meeting neighbouring residents, and in trying to ensure that their objections are adequately addressed. It is disappointing to record that although various concessions were made by the National Trust in an attempt to meet the objections of neighbours, there are still several residents who are not happy with the outcome. I understand that the lease with the National Trust has just been signed, and we offer our congratulations to those involved at this exciting time. Now that work on implementing the allotment scheme is due to start imminently, the Parish Council will be carefully monitoring that the undertakings given by the Allotment Society during the negotiations are adhered to.

Work has commenced on our **Parish Plan**, a government-sponsored initiative to ensure that the views of residents are identified, and feature in local government's on-going aims and aspirations. The strong Team who are progressing this matter (which includes non-councillors) are to be commended on

their excellent progress.

*Of late it has become clear that the condition of the **Duchy Barn Shed** has now deteriorated to an extent where it threatens the safety of those using it, and the public walking by. Accordingly, after exploring various potential courses, the Council has resolved to set up a sub-committee to address the shortcomings. This action has been endorsed by the Vicar (the Church is the freeholder) and we are now ready to start this major project, which is likely to take at least two years.*

*During the year under review the village was allocated a new **Police Community Support Officer** to replace Natalie King, who has moved onto new duties. We welcome Mark Hibben who has made a sound start in the role, and has displayed commendable eagerness to become involved in a range of village activities. We look forward to working with him for the good of the village in the future.*

*The village faces a number of ongoing, seemingly insoluble problems. Our growth into a significant tourist centre renders our **public toilets**, even in their newly-refurbished state, quite inadequate, and Colchester Borough Council cuts have denied us the funds to provide enhanced toilets in the car park area. Given the current economic climate this situation looks unlikely to improve in the foreseeable future.*

*Pressure for **car parking** seems always to be with us, to the general detriment of the village scene. Embryonic moves by Colchester Borough Council to introduce car parking charges is an unwelcome development, and is one that the Parish Council plans to oppose.*

*It is also a matter for regret that we have still not managed to secure signposting at the B1029 junction on the A12 advising of the unsuitability of this road for **heavy lorries**, notwithstanding the limited road width through the village and the formal 7.5 tonne limits at Lamb Corner and the Heath.*

Over the year I have been privileged to work with a group who offer a wide spread of skills, and who represent a diverse range of factions within the village. Everyone on the Council has offered their services enthusiastically and freely to the community, and I thank them all for their involvement, as should the residents of Dedham.

*We much appreciate the excellent service provided by Christopher Garnett, our **ward councillor**, who despite the unpleasantness of a malfunctioning hip*

joint has relentlessly continued to pursue the interests of our village, and we wish him a speedy recovery from his recent operation.

*In closing I would like to thank our **Parish Clerk**, Mrs. Jean Flewin for the invaluable assistance that she has rendered, both in terms of organising the clerical and procedural affairs of the Council, and also in serving as the fount of all knowledge with regard to historical precedent within the village. We have heard with shock and sadness of the problems that now confront her and her husband, and we all stand ready to offer whatever assistance we can at this difficult time."*

5. ACCOUNTS The Expenditure & Income Accounts for the year ended 31st March, 2010, were presented to the meeting and were unanimously accepted.

Having been internally audited these will now go forward for approval by the Audit Commission.

6. REPORT OF BOROUGH COUNCILLOR Not present.

7. REPORT OF COUNTY COUNCILLOR The following report was supplied by County Councillor Anne Brown:

"I am very sorry that I am unable to attend the Annual Parish Council meeting but unfortunately a meeting has been arranged for the Essex County Council Highway Planners to attend Boxted Parish Council to discuss the new A12 interchange and the Park and Ride and I, as their County Councillor, have promised to attend.

This year has mostly been concerned with repairing the roads and ditches after the bad winter. I hope you will continue to keep reporting to the Eastern Area Highways Department any further holes you find. The County still seem to have money in the budget. I understand that the Department are starting to do work from the maintenance list for the year 2010. We can look forward to Princel Lane being resurfaced.

I have written to County Hall adding my concerns, to those of the Parish Council, regarding the speeding of traffic along Crown Street. It is certainly bad at the corner of Coopers Lane, where there have been recorded accidents but excessive speeding along the whole length is getting much worse. I have asked if a safety review has been done recently if not can we please have one.

I have heard nothing more about the withdrawal of funding for the footpaths around the parish. Norman Hume, the Highways Portfolio holder understands the importance of the footpaths to Dedham and has no plans to withdraw the funding. I will continue to watch this issue.

I intend to keep you fully informed of any new policies, affecting Dedham that come from County Hall. May I take this opportunity to thank you all for your help and advice during my first year as your County Councillor.”

8. ANY OTHER BUSINESS Concern was voiced that two shops had gone out of business recently and the fact that high rents and rates in the High Street made it difficult for a small business to survive. This was another reflection of the changing pattern of housing within Dedham and the need to support local shops if the High Street was to survive.

Cllr. Cannon wished to express his thanks to the Chairman, Roy Laverick, for all his hard work and support during the year. This was approved by all.

There being no other business the meeting closed at 9.00 p.m.

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