

# Clare Parish Council



## Annual Parish Report 2011-2012



*Clare Parish Council*  
*The Old School, Callis Street, Clare CO10 8PX*

*clerk@clare-suffolk.org.uk 01787 277 559*

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1<sup>st</sup> May 2012

# Chairman's Report

Welcome to the first edition of Clare's Annual Report. In a move to communicate more widely with parishioners, we have decided to produce a written Annual Report which goes into much more detail than we can ever hope to give you verbally at the Annual Meeting. As you will see, in addition to the Chairman's Report, there are separate sections on Finance and all the committees of the Parish Council as well as reports from community groups which we fund and a number of other important community organisations.

We hope you will find the Report informative and that it may stimulate you to become involved with community groups or as lay members of Parish Council committees. Please contact the Parish Clerk for further information on how you can get involved.

Since our last Annual Meeting we have been pleased to welcome Margaret Godwin, Phil Gryce and Gayle Mallows as new councillors. Melanie Evans took up a full-time post in Cambridge and we are very pleased that Claire Ebeling has taken up the role of Parish Clerk, where she has made an excellent start. We now have a strong, balanced and engaged group of councillors, well supported by Claire and Sharon Benson, our Finance Officer.

In order to become more pro-active in managing the priorities for Clare your councillors have created a **4-year Development Plan** to run until 2016. The outline of the plan has been delivered to every household in Clare to ensure we have your views on the priorities for Clare. Building on the Community Plan, the main themes are:

## **Sustaining a thriving yet traditional Town**

planning, supporting businesses, affordable housing, education

## **Improving our Infrastructure**

parking, highways, utilities, access for the elderly, disabled and pushchairs

## **Protecting and Enhancing the Environment and Amenities**

Country Park, Library, green spaces, re-cycling

## **Supporting Community Involvement**

Youth and elderly provision, community groups, events

The Parish Council's role will be that of facilitators and enablers, acting as a catalyst to help get off the ground initiatives that people support. Real progress can only be made on a number of these issues if individuals and groups step forward and commit to making the Town's plans a reality.

**The Parish Council's finances** remain very sound with a shift in funding to give more support to Clare's community groups as they are seeing their grants from County and Borough Councils cut.

**Planning:** We have contributed strongly to the Rural Vision 2031, produced for consultation by St Edmundsbury, to ensure appropriate housing development in Clare. We continue to be insistent that due regard must be taken of the infrastructure shortcomings in Clare (water, sewage, transport etc) before further significant development can take place.

We still await the planning application from BT for wind turbines at Leys Farm. The Parish Council's stance remains that we support the increase in renewable energy with small turbines for private use, but that large-scale, commercial development should not be sited closer than 2km from residential properties.

**Clare Castle Country Park** – The recent parish survey showed that 86% of respondents support the Parish Council's vision for the Country Park. With this strong mandate from parishioners, and with the benefit of a detailed condition survey on the buildings, we have now engaged with SCC to find a sustainable basis on which the ownership of the buildings can transfer to the Parish Council. The management of the green spaces and the car park is now under management by St Edmundsbury Borough Council.

**Clare Library** - no decisions have yet been made about the future location of the library although we understand that the default position will be for the library to remain where it is. The library service in Suffolk will be transferred from SCC to the newly formed Industrial Provident Society on 1 June and we will continue discussions with the new management.

**Châtillon:** Last summer over 50 parishioners and local students visited Châtillon again for the 14 July celebrations and in November we received over 20 visitors from Châtillon for Remembrance Sunday and the re-dedication of our war memorial. There is the possibility that our local schools will visit Châtillon again this July.

**Communications:** We hope that all parishioners are finding our new-style newsletter Chevron to be informative and helpful. We plan for this to be a monthly newsletter so that news is always current and we are looking at ways to improve delivery.

And finally ..... after much debate, the Parish Council has resolved to change its status to **Clare Town Council**. There is no additional funding that comes with the new name, and we have decided against the paraphernalia that can accompany a Town's elected representatives. What this change will do, however, is confirm Clare's aspirations as a thriving and dynamic community and hopefully add weight to our proposals when dealing with local and central government.

Your Parish, now Town Council has had another very busy year and 2012-13 looks to be holding some significant challenges for Clare with which we are well equipped to deal.



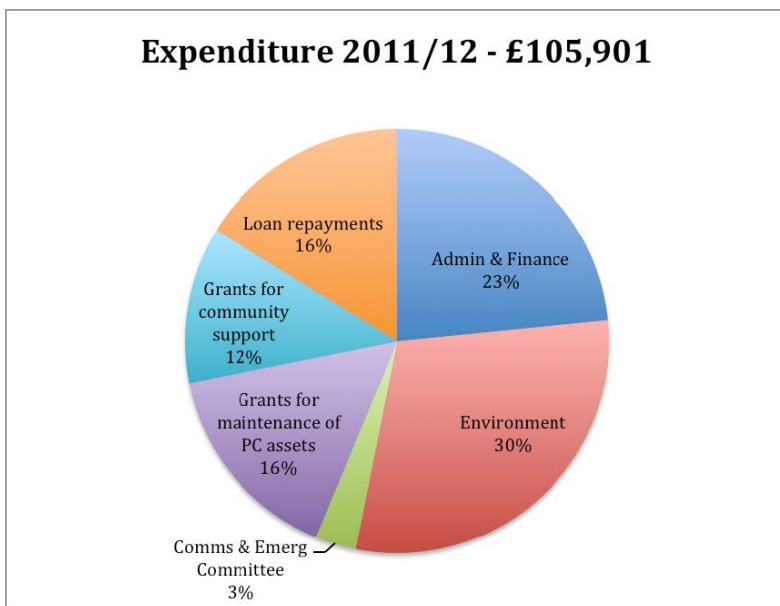
Keith Haisman

Chair of the Parish Council

# Finance Committee Report 31 March 2012

## 2011/12

General income for the year ended 31 March 2012 was £115,955, whilst general expenditure (excluding £9358 from earmarked reserves) totalled £105,901. 84% of our income (£98,942) comprised the Precept (the element of Council Tax paid for Parish services) and 8% (£8,945) was grant income for the war memorial and Christmas lights. Remaining income comprised cemetery and market fees, interest on deposits and miscellaneous. We received three exceptional items: £18,381 as the final insurance settlement in respect of the cemetery chapel fire, £1,383.50 from CHOC in respect of the Town Hall sound system and £1,220 to be held on behalf of the Youth Club. The various categories of expenditure are shown in the pie chart below.



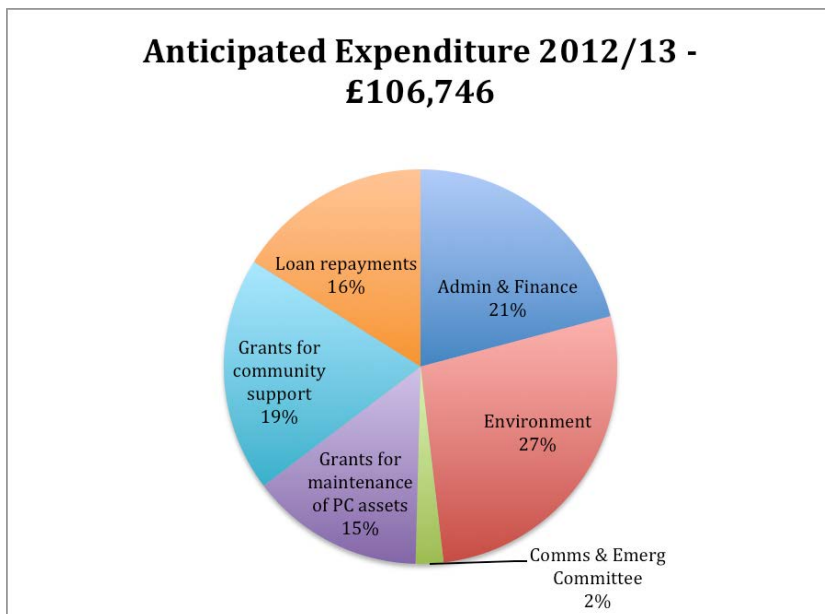
## RESERVES

As a result of the year's activities Council reserves increased by £18,447 to £173,962, represented by a general reserve of £127,763 and earmarked reserves of £46,199. The National Association of Local Councils recommends that Parish and Town Councils hold an amount equal to 100% to 150% of annual expenditure in general reserve: our figure currently stands at 120%.

## 2012/13

The Precept for the year commencing 1 April 2012 is £102,896 (planned expenditure of £106,746 offset by income of £3,850), an increase of 4.0% on last year. This increase is considered necessary in order to sustain important "whole town" community initiatives such as Clare in Bloom, the Christmas Lights and the Youth Club, all of which faced reductions in their funding from other sources. Other expenditure has been carefully scrutinised and savings made wherever possible. The increase in support for community activities and other changes can be seen by comparing the Pie Chart below with that for 2011/12.

Because St Edmundsbury Borough Council have reduced their "rural grant" contribution to our Precept, the increase shown on Council Tax bills is 6.2%. **For a Band D Council tax payer this means an increase from £100.66 to £106.93 (an increase of 12p per week).**



Further information, including summary sheets detailing income, expenditure and reserves may be obtained from the Parish Office or by e-mailing: [finance@clare-suffolk.gov.uk](mailto:finance@clare-suffolk.gov.uk)

Derek Blake, Chair

# Environment Committee Report

The Environment Committee is responsible for the upkeep of the Cemetery, Nuttery, Churchyard, greenswards, grass cutting & trees, and street cleaning.

In the past year our street wardens have kept the streets clean and safe. The war memorial has been restored thanks to various grants, and the cemetery chapel has been brought back to its former state



after the fire. Thanks to Keith Mison and his band of helpers the cemetery and the Nuttery are well maintained. Trees are inspected annually. Clare in Bloom plant spring flowers around town on the green areas and in tubs which greatly enhances the appearance.

Our **projects for this year** are:

- to organise voluntary Litter picks (This would be sponsored by St. Edmundsbury Borough Council)
- to be more vigilant in our campaign to stop dog fouling
- to explore uses for the cemetery chapel
- on-going maintenance and upkeep of the cemetery grounds
- to have a snow & ice plan in place for the winter to make our pavements safer for residents.

To achieve our aims we depend on assistance from the residents of Clare. Any comments or suggestions to improve the environs of our town are welcome - just contact our Parish Clerk.

Alan Parsley, Chair



# Highways Committee Report

The purpose of the Highways Committee is to recognise how roads, pavements and footpaths are used in Clare and to petition for change as appropriate.

The Highways Committee has no power in terms of implementing change. Our sole purpose is to campaign, petition and to review issues that affect roads, pavements and footpaths. This said we are working with local independent groups such as the HGV Group, to campaign for a reduction in the number of very large vehicles travelling through Clare. In addition we are looking at ways of **improving parking** in Clare with the Parking Group. We are setting up a group to look at ways in which we can upgrade key footpaths that serve our local schools. The purpose of this is to take school pedestrian traffic off the busy roads.

The Highways Committee works closely with Suffolk County Council to improve the roads in Clare and how they are used. Our meetings, like all Parish Council committee meetings, are open to parishioners with an opportunity at each meeting for parishioners to ask questions on highways issues.

The Highways Committee has campaigned for and has secured **disabled access to buses** on the Market Hill. This has been paid for by funding secured by our County Councillor, Jane Midwood. Suffolk County Council is to carry out a survey to establish the need and possible location of a pedestrian crossing in Clare.



Our main aims are to improve road safety and to protect the fabric and working infrastructure of our town.

Peter Phillips, Chair



## Communications Committee Report

The past parish year has been particularly busy in terms of communicating with residents of Clare because of major local issues. These will continue into the next year as the futures of the Country Park and the Library are resolved along with changes in Planning.

Residents of Clare have been receiving copies of **Chevron**, news from the Parish Council, which replaces the more expensive quarterly Parish Newsletter. We are now producing Chevron in the Parish Office, further reducing costs.

We are in the process of creating a new website which will be wholly owned and managed by the parish council. Many sections of it will be hosted on the free service run by OneSuffolk - as are the Chevron and Visit Clare sites which has been live for some months. Groups will be able to change and add to their own pages by themselves. The new main site will be operational in the coming weeks and we will advise details in due course. Overall costs should be halved in the coming year. We expect visitors will be able to log in and request email alerts when key pages are updated. Important documents will be available to download.

Currently each household receives Chevron and other material – particularly concerning the Country Park – through the letterbox. We are looking at different ways of delivering Chevron including by email.

Chevron website: <http://chevronclare.onesuffolk.net/>

Visit Clare website: <http://clarebusinessassociation.onesuffolk.net/>

Phil Gryce, Chair

# Emergency Planning Committee Report

A review of the Emergency Plan has recently taken place and is available to view on **clarepcepc.onesuffolk.net**. Parishioners have also been sent leaflets describing what action to take in the event of an emergency. Essentially each emergency situation will be difficult to predict in terms of its effects. The Old School Community Centre is designated as a place of refuge if people have to leave their home. This emergency plan will be reviewed on a 6 monthly basis.

Clare's emergency plan will be put in to effect in the **unlikely event** of a major incident in our town. Members of the Parish Council will administer a coordinated response if the emergency services are delayed and if it is necessary to evacuate properties in the town. Below is a summary of what would happen in that event.

If you are evacuated from your property, make your way to the Old School in Callis Street CO10 8PX.

If you are elderly or infirm, we will endeavour to provide transport to help you.

We will let you know what is happening via local radio and the internet: **clarepcepc.onesuffolk.net**.

The Old School has blankets, pillows and hot drinks.

The Parish's response will be coordinated from The Old School: 01787 277 559

**REMEMBER - if you are in danger, ring 999**

**Think about creating your own plan!!**

Peter Phillips, Chair

# Combined Halls of Clare

CHOC Trustees have once again had a busy and varied year.

## Work on the Town Hall

- With a grant for 50% from Havebury we have purchased new, lighter tables and have received very positive feedback.
- The foyer, upstairs hall and cloakroom have been decorated.
- With a 50% grant from Clare Parish Council we have installed a new sound system, complete with a hearing loop.
- The kitchen has been deep cleaned; the safety valve on the cooker has been updated
- Some Trustees have completed much needed maintenance, such as clearance of drains and racks built to store the tables.
- Urgent repairs to the boiler.



## Work on the Old School

- The kitchen has been deep cleaned and the safety valve on the cooker has been updated.
- Improvements to the fire door in Hall 1.
- The installation of a projector and screen in Hall 2, receiving very favourable feedback.
- General maintenance and new lighting in the Committee room.

The Trustees, after carefully reviewing the hire charges, are introducing a small increase from this April (2012)

Over the next year our intended projects and improvements are:

- New bar and kitchen in the Town Hall funded from grants.
- New heaters for the Committee room.
- Sanding the Town Hall floor

On Saturday 26 May CHOC will be organising a centenary celebration for the Town Hall, including a variety of activities to demonstrate the facilities and a display following the history of the hall.

Rosemary Warmington, Chair

# Clare Tourism Forum

The Forum is a joint initiative of the Parish Council and the Clare Business Association, to bring together organisations and people in the town that have regard to the importance of tourism for Clare, whether from a management or economic perspective. It has a membership of 25 plus organisations and individuals covering many aspects of community life in Clare. Having published terms of reference and aims and objectives, it meets when needed (usually three times a year) in order to exchange information and make progress on its agreed programme. Its active projects focus primarily on:

1. Communications - improved web visibility and appropriate leaflets
2. Signage - Brown town signs at the entrances to Clare and restored signage elsewhere
3. Walks - raising the profile of walking activities locally and producing maps

In 2011 several of these projects made substantial progress or were completed.

1. An official Tourism Information Point was opened in the library, serviced by the St Edmundsbury Tourism Office; two new information leaflets were created; a re-design of the website is underway; Clare has a Wikipedia entry.
2. Signage has been researched - a proposal has been developed for Brown Signs and is progressing
3. New walks have been developed and leaflets created - with funding secured from the HLF project Managing a Masterpiece

In 2012 - progress will continue on these projects with Signage hopefully coming to fruition, the tourism aspects of the website being fully addressed and even more new walks developed. Support for 'events' in Clare and enhancements to the Clare 'brand' will also be researched.

Alaric Pugh, Chair

# Clare Christmas Lights report

## Review of 2011

This year the Switch-on event was run as a Clare community event rather than a Business Association event as in previous years. We would like to thank all of the **new volunteers** who helped us on the night to make it a success. The format was the same as other years and the lights were turned on by the Mayor of St Edmundsbury with



Magic Olly providing the children's entertainment. This year, due to new regulations surrounding the closure of roads, we altered the route of the procession to prevent us having to close the A1092. This saved us a significant amount of money. We sourced new suppliers which reduced the cost of some elements and we would like to acknowledge Carl and his team at FES for their professional and friendly service.

We have received very **generous donations** from the people of Clare again this year, via collection pots in the shops and on the night, for which we are very grateful.

## 2012

We are planning to hold this year's switch on event at the end of November as usual as we believe that the lights make Clare stand apart from other towns in the area, and that the residents and shoppers appreciate our efforts for the Christmas period. We intend to follow a similar format this year, but we are happy to consider any new ideas.

We have been informed by St Edmundsbury Borough Council that it is likely that their funding will significantly reduce so we are planning fundraising events within the community this summer, as well as continuing to raise money within the community via collections.

Pippa Smith, Chair

## Clare in Bloom 2011 – 2012

In 2011 Clare in Bloom won **Best Large Village** and a Silver Gilt Award in the Anglia in Bloom competition.

In past years we have used a contractor to plant the winter and summer bedding, but to save money we decided to undertake the planting ourselves with the help of additional

The logo for Clare in Bloom is presented in a yellow rectangular box with a black border. The text "Clare in Bloom" is written in a black, elegant cursive script. The box is set against a light purple background that has a vertical gradient.

volunteers. We planted crocuses in green swards in Nethergate Street and between the Cock and the Globe, and daffodils at the entrance roads to Clare. We have increased the number of perennial plants in the containers and in the church border, both to reduce costs and the need for watering.

We had notification from St Edmundsbury Council that the grant given to Clare in Bloom would be reduced year on year to reach zero in 2015. The grant is dependent on Clare entering the Anglia in Bloom competition. At the AGM in 2011 it was decided because of the costs and paperwork involved in entering the competition that we would not enter in 2012. We will therefore no longer receive a grant from St Edmundsbury Council.

We will continue to plant and take care of the flowers ourselves but use a contractor to water. Our fund raising will be on a small scale this year but we plan to organise Open Gardens in 2013. Open Gardens has raised about £2,000 in previous years.

Jane Haisman, Chair

## Clare Swimming Club 2011 – 2012

We were unable to open the swimming pool in 2011 as there were major building works at the school. Again in 2012 the building works will prevent the swimming pool opening.

# **Clare Playing Fields Association**

The Clare Playing Fields Association recognizes and very much appreciates the support it receives from the Clare Parish Council to maintain the fantastic facility which comprises the Playing Fields and the Pavilion. Both are an integral part of Clare. The venue is well known for its hospitality and warm welcome for citizens and visitors.

In 2011 it provided a venue for the adult football teams as well as Charity Cup events with positive requests being made by local leagues to hold Cup Finals here because of the great facilities and surroundings. It is a great setting for the thriving Clare Town Lions Junior Football Club. There are three registered teams at U8, U9, U10 for boys and girls, playing seven-a-side mini soccer. There are coaching events on a weekly basis hosting up to 40 youngsters from the age of 6. Partly due to the facilities but also due to the great volunteers, the club has achieved Chartered Standard status with Suffolk FA. In 2012 we will continue to host the adult and junior football teams. The junior teams will extend to four as they intend to join the Suffolk and Ipswich league which supports 9-a-side. This may require some reconfiguration of the pitches.

As a very safe venue with both buildings and grassland, the Pavilion has become increasingly popular for hire by individuals and community groups; this has significantly helped with CPFA funds. Last year we invested in a marquee which can be hired to extend the attractiveness of the venue. A regular booking is the Pilates Class, but we also host events for young artists and a holiday playgroup for families with special needs; it was a venue for a summer event to welcome the new teaching team at Stour Valley Community School.

One of the most successful events of the past year was the CPFA organised Fun Day, a showcase for all the community groups in Clare, raising funds not only for the groups but also for CPFA. This year, the CPFA will support and host activities associated with the Olympics year, the Jubilee and a possible event similar to the Fun Day. Key dates in the calendar are the two days on which the CPFA and its volunteers manage the car parking for the Clare Priory Craft Fair.

John Martin, Chair



# Clare Community First Responders

The Clare Community First Responders are a group of people who “volunteer” to respond to emergency calls on behalf of the East of England Ambulance Service. The area covered encompasses Clare and the surrounding district including Hundon and Stoke by Clare. During the past 12 months the First Responder group have attended a considerable number of call outs within the area.

There are now **six trained Responders** within the group, all of whom were recently successfully re-assessed by the Ambulance Service. A programme of continuous training involving specific aspects of first aid, treatment and use of equipment is being followed. Experience is gained by accompanying the local paramedics and ambulance crews.

The Clare First Responder group attended the Clare Fun Day last summer where we had an exhibition stall. Together with the St John’s Ambulance Team we participated in a First Aid / Call Out demonstration. At the request of the organisers we ensured a First Responder was on call for the Christmas Lights switch-on event.



Talks were given to local community organisations. We are always willing to talk to local groups to explain our role within the community.

We are always actively seeking to recruit additional volunteers to help with our tasks, particularly from people based in Clare. Volunteers are free to decide what time they are able to give to the group and undergo full training from the Ambulance Service which covers basic life support and the use of a defibrillator and oxygen.

Please contact Roy Draper on 01787 277 747 or our coordinator Martin Lewin on 01787 277 961 for further information.

Roy Draper, Treasurer & Admin Support

# Clare Ancient House Museum

As part of its remit to interpret the history of Clare to its residents and visitors, two Museum Trustees, Jan McNelly and Tom Shaw prepared a **new exhibition** for the 2011 and 2012 seasons, 'Clare in the Agricultural Depression, 1870-1890', which includes a number of artefacts on loan from Neil Catchpole. An informative booklet was written by Jan and Tom, to accompany the exhibition. In June 2011 there was an inaugural lecture on the Agricultural Depression in East Anglia given by Richard Smith. This served as a fund-raising event for the Museum. The Museum collaborated with the Clare Middle School and the Clare Historical and Archaeological Society to promote the 2011 **archaeological digs** which took place on 4 separate days in April and May. These excavations included one pit on the west lawn of the Museum in which a number of Anglo Saxon finds were unearthed. The excavations were run by Carenza Lewis and her team of Cambridge University's Department of Archaeology, funded by the Managing a Masterpiece programme under the Heritage Lottery Fund.



For 2012, the results of the archaeological digs became the focus for a small exhibition, to run alongside the Agricultural Depression exhibition. To fund this, a small grant was awarded by the East of England Effective Museums Programme. An accompanying booklet, 'The 2011 Clare Digs' was produced, written by Trustees Anne Davies and Peggy Smith; this will be given to all participants in the digging, who visit the Museum. The Museum is collaborating with pupils and teachers of Stour Valley Community School in an amateur production of John Barton's **'The Hollow Crown'** to be given on 28 May in the Town Hall. Profits will go to the School.

Richard Smith, Chair

# Clare Liaison and Support Project

**CLASP** has been in existence since 1988 when it was formed to serve the people of Clare; we work very hard to keep up the good work in 2012.

We have a **car driving service** organised by Geoffrey Bray. Called CAR AID, it involves volunteer drivers using their own cars to take people to hospital and doctor's appointments. This has become more valuable than ever at a time when a round trip by taxi to West Suffolk Hospital costs £50! The CLASP minibus has a team of volunteer drivers and shopping runs are organised to local supermarkets. It is available for hire by other charities and is organised by Malcolm and June Smith.



Our **befriending service** is available for people in their own homes and is run by Fel Parsley. On Wednesdays people are brought to the Community Centre by our minibus where they have coffee, a freshly cooked three course lunch, entertainment in the afternoon and then tea before being taken home.

Sadly we said goodbye to Marian Burbridge in December when she retired after 18 years organising and running the Senior Centre with the help of husband David. Her place has been taken by Christine Little, who is anxious to increase the numbers of people attending. Fund raising is organised by Liz Knight. The table sales held in the Town Hall every 2 months are a popular fixture in Clare life.

We are anxious to publicise CLASP so that we reach more people to access our services. We also need more volunteers to assist us in this. We are always short of drivers for CAR AID.

If you feel you would like to help, please telephone Margaret Taylor 01787 277 421

Margaret Taylor, Chair



## Clare Parish Councillors

Derek Blake

Margaret Godwin

Phil Gryce

Keith Haisman (Chair)

Gayle Mallows

Keith Mison

Alan Parsley

Peter Phillips

Leslie Warmington (Vice-chair)

*Claire Ebeling*

*Parish Clerk*

*Sharon Benson*

*Finance Officer*

*Colin Smith*

*Street Cleaner*

*Brian Watts*

*Street Cleaner*

Alaric Pugh

St Edmundsbury Borough Councillor

Jane Midwood

Suffolk County Councillor