

**Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting of Clare held in Clare Town Hall, Clare  
on Wednesday 8 May 2013 at 7pm**

Present: Cllr. Keith Haisman (Chair), Claire Ebeling (Town Clerk)  
and approximately 34 parishioners

1. **Apologies** - Patrick & Heide Daniels, Revd J Mitchell (Chairman of Clare Combined Charities) and Nigel Partridge (Vice-Chairman of Clare Combined Charities), Jane Midwood.

Cllr. Haisman welcomed all and thanked the WI for their assistance with the refreshments.

2. **Minutes of previous Annual Parish Meeting held on 1 May 2012**  
Derek Blake proposed the minutes as correct; seconded by Gayle Mallows and agreed unanimously.

3. **Matters arising from minutes of the previous meeting**  
None.

4. Cllr. Keith Haisman presented the report which gave a summary of Town Council activities over the past year against the 4-Year Development Plan:

**Planning matters:**

- Clare Town Council have been liaising with St Edmundsbury Borough Council and the developers of the Charles Church development regarding the Section 106 negotiations and have protested successfully and are now included in S106 discussions.
- A successful consultation recently took place by Hastoe Housing regarding 10-12 affordable housing dwellings which will provide housing for people with families/ties in Clare. The houses will be behind Lutus Close and will have access through Westfield.
- Clare Town Council has written to St Edmundsbury regarding the Planning Committee decision on the Wind Turbines. Cllr. Haisman thanked Cllr. Margaret Godwin for her paper which provided the content for the letter approved by Clare Town Council.

**Community matters:**

- Clare Town Council engaged with Suffolk County Council to find a sustainable basis on which the ownership of the buildings can transfer to Clare Town Council. There has been slow progress as the decision making process at Suffolk County Council is much longer than expected. Cllr. Haisman requested a show of hands in favour of Clare Town Council paying for the surveyor rather than Suffolk County Council. No hands were raised.

Geoffrey Bray explained that the Trustees vision for the park is not to fundamentally change it, but to ensure that the park can be enjoyed as a quiet and tranquil environment that can be left for prosperity as a lasting memorial. There is frustration with the time delays but the Trustees have started to put together some plans for when things do get moving. Volunteers are needed but on the basis of two key principles – that they only offer their time and assistance with things they are interested in and that they can afford to commit to.

Cllr. Haisman added that negotiations are under way with Suffolk County Council for the youth club to use the Visitors Centre during the school summer holidays.

**Improving infrastructure:**

- Clare Town Council continues to support the HGV campaign group. There has been success following liaison with the Co-op, who have reviewed the size and frequency of Co-op lorries delivering to Clare.
- Councillors have also been active by visiting Culina and hauliers whose lorries travel through Clare.

**Protecting and enhancing the environment and amenities**

- Leslie Warmington was thanked for his commitment to the role of Cemetery Officer, from

which he recently retired. The administration of the cemetery will now be managed by the Town Clerk and RFO. A new Cemetery Officer will be announced in the near future. Thanks also to Keith Mison for his continuing work to maintain and enhance the cemetery and its green space.

- The dispute between Mr & Mrs Knight and the Environment Agency over the sluice gate remains a concern to Clare Town Council and we have written to both parties to encourage them to find a resolution for the good of the river, flower and fauna and ultimately, Clare Country Park.
- Concerns have been raised about the discrepancy between the work carried out on the castle and the original plans. Objections were also raised about the flag, which was erected regardless.

#### **Supporting community involvement**

- The Jubilee celebrations were successful, despite the weather; and Clare Town Council also contributed to the provision a new planter outside the Co-op and a Diamond Jubilee tree has been planted in the Nuttery.
- Clare Town Council have supported the new Clare Community (Treble C) Choir, who sang a several community events this year including the Jubilee luncheon and the Christmas Lights switch on.
- Clare Swimming Club will be opening the swimming pool at Stour Valley Community School for 4 weeks during the school summer holidays, starting on 23<sup>rd</sup> July.

#### **5. Annual presentation of Clare Town Council accounts**

A written income and expenditure statement for year ending 31 March 2013 and a balance sheet were circulated. (Copies are available from the Clerk). These were presented by Cllr. Derek Blake in detail. Expenditure for 2012/13 totalled £105,527 with a total income of £113,106. Reserves remain healthy and within recommended limits at £137,208. The precept for 2012/13 is £103,479, an increase of 0.55% on last year. This very small increase reflects the continuing commitment to community initiatives such as Christmas Lights and the Youth Club that have faced withdrawn funding from larger councils. For further details see the full Annual Report.

The final accounts were proposed, seconded and approved.

#### **6. An update on the future of Clare Library**

Phil Gryce reported that the library will remain open but that help will be required and funds in the sum of £900 will need to be raised.

#### **7. Borough Councillor's report**

A voice for Clare at the West Suffolk table. That, in my view, is the main task for your Borough Councillor. The Town Council, as we have seen, does very well dealing with the most local of issues and then the County Council has statutory duties with regard to education, social care, highways, emergencies, strategic planning and strategic economic growth. Everything in between is the concern of the Borough Council and it is very important that someone stands up for the interests of Clare when it comes to:

- building development
- housing
- waste collection and recycling and perhaps most importantly of all
- real regional and local economic growth and job creation

In respect of these this year at St Eds we have:

- firstly, begun to redesign the planning service to be more holistic in its approach, to improve the quality of new developments such as the one in Clare - which we rejected until residents were happy with it
- secondly, we have also worked to increase the amount of affordable housing that is built in the borough in future
- thirdly, we have improved recycling rates again and delivered one of the most cost-effective waste services anywhere

Lastly, we have upped our game when it comes to economic growth and are taking much more responsibility locally. The great example nearby being the support we obtained to make the Haverhill Science Park happen which could deliver jobs for young people here in Clare.

The biggest news though this year from a Borough perspective, of course, is that we were able to deliver budget savings for the seventh year running without increasing the Council Tax for the fourth year nor, we believe, cutting vital services. This is mainly because of our programme to share basic back-office processes with Forest Heath. This, in turn, has brought us the advantage of a larger operational council unit and we can now, justifiably, talk about West Suffolk, and act in the best interests of this whole region.

In addition to keeping the profile of Clare flying high, I have worked on Borough-wide issues and on local matters too. It is great to see that one of the first things I ever pushed for in Clare - brown tourist signs have, with the support of the Town Council happened at last. We have heard mention tonight of the Borough's Vision 2031 document that will soon have its final statutory consultation before going for legal judgement. I am pleased to report that again with the support of the Town Council one of the many changes is the addition of a paragraph that makes reference to work being done to try to secure our area as a site of special landscape character. This comes too late for the wind turbine judgement of course but I hope people will know how hard I have personally fought over that - I was widely reported in the press - and like the Town Council I am still fighting it. If the final, final judgement does come down in favour of it, I have also offered to negotiate with the landowner on the town's behalf in case any improvements or concessions can be obtained. So far the Town Council does not want me to do this but the offer still stands.

Lastly, I have also supported the negotiations on the Country Park, found help on flooding issues, on the river, supported the new library group, the HGV campaign and many individual residents on various matters.

That's why I hold a surgery every first Saturday of the month. Clare has not had these for some years until last year, so I realise that it will take time for this to be widely known about, but I have had residents bring me a number of issues to look at. And I look forward to trying to help more people with planning, housing, recycling, or tourism and business issues in 2013.

#### 8. **County Councillor's report**

Jane Midwood sent a report in her absence:

##### **Council Tax frozen – again**

There will be no increase in Council Tax this year. This is the third year in a row that the County Council has frozen its share of council tax.

In February SCC voted through a Budget for the next 12 months that will achieve savings of £25million – the second part of a plan to save more than £50million over two years.

##### **Schools Organisation Review**

Schools in our area which were part of the first phase to change from three to two tiers have seen huge gains in last year's SATS results at key Stage 2 with up to 19% improvement in some subjects. In Haverhill and Lowestoft, both two tier since 2007, there has been a 12% improvement in writing and 6% in maths.

The Stour Valley Community College has been the most exciting change in local education provision and I send everyone involved my best wishes for the future. I never regretted "jumping ship" and going against my colleagues in support of the project, although it was a difficult decision at the time.

## **Locality Budget**

Since the introduction of the Locality Budget in 2000, I have been delighted to help many villages with their diverse projects. During 2012/13 I had the grand total of £14,781.81 to spend and I am pleased to say that every penny found a worthy cause.

Last year the major part of my funding went to projects to celebrate Her Majesty's Diamond Jubilee. Many villages gave children or households a commemorative Jubilee mug. Stansfield and Wickhambrook received large grants – Stansfield of £2000 for refurbishing the loos at the Village Hall, and Wickhambrook received £5000 for a total refit of the children's play area.

In Clare, I gave the 1<sup>st</sup> Clare Scout group £500 for a fridge/freezer, ropes and pioneer poles and CHOC £500 for refurbishment of the bar/servery in the Town hall.

## **Looking back**

I would not be able to complete this Annual report without taking a look back at my 16 years on the County Council.

There have been enormous changes to the way local government operates and the County Council is very different to when I was first elected in 1997. The change to a cabinet system has meant that there is far less opportunity for back benchers to develop a particular interest or expertise, which is a sad waste of talent. Outsourcing of front line services such as care homes and highway maintenance will bring economies for the County Council but ultimately the responsibility for these areas still lies with the elected members.

The electoral boundary change in 2005, and my election to represent the Clare division, meant hard work with 24 villages to look after but it has been a very happy eight years. I have loved getting to know people and hearing their concerns and learning of the pride they take in their local area.

There have been successes along the way but some very frustrating lack of progress in areas of concern.

Traffic speeds, in particular, are an enormous worry for many villages. I was enthusiastic at the start of the Community Speedwatch programme and put in £1,500 of Locality Budget funding for buying speed cameras and equipment. Sadly, enthusiasm is difficult to maintain and it is a shame that some of the schemes have folded for lack of volunteers.

The increase in size and number of HGVs using our narrow lanes is a common theme through the whole Clare area. I hope that in the future some way will be found of encouraging these vehicles to stick to the larger road network. I was particularly disappointed in SCC's lorry study which appeared to be a count of lorry movements through Clare and along the A1092 for a period of only 3 hours, on a single day.

Farewell, I shall miss you all. Thank you for your support over the years and may the future bring you every success in your endeavours for your local community.

Cllr. Mary Evans reported that she is very happy to be representing Clare and is keen to see things change with regard to matters of concern to Clare parishioners.

There were no further questions and the meeting closed at 8.40pm and was followed by refreshments served by Clare Women's Institute.