

**Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting of Clare held in Clare Town Hall, Clare  
on Tuesday 6 May 2014 at 7pm**

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

1. **Apologies** – County Councillor Richard Smith, Revd S Mitchell (Chairman of Clare Combined Charities), Mr and Mrs Bray, Mr and Mrs Dunningham, John Collecott, Sarah Pugh

Cllr. Haisman welcomed all and thanked them for their attendance.

2. **Minutes of previous Annual Parish Meeting held on 8 May 2013**  
The minutes were proposed as correct and approved unanimously.

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

4. **Town Council Chairman's Report**

Cllr. Keith Haisman raised a vote of thanks to his fellow councilors, the Clerk, RFO, Cemetery Management Officer and the Street Wardens for their contributions this year and thanked Peter Phillips, who left the council recently, for his valued contribution as a councillor in tackling some of the most difficult issues such as HGVs. Cllr. Haisman welcomed Loveday Perceval-Maxwell as a new Town Councillor.

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

**i) Sustaining a thriving yet traditional town**

- a. Hastoe affordable housing project on the site behind Lutus Close for people with close links with Clare
- b. Vision 2031 – neither strategic nor visionary
- c. LEOG flooding and conditions – thanks to some assistance from Cllr. Evans, there has been some improvement to the parking and flooding issues.

**ii) Improving our Infrastructure**

- a. Rain, storms – power outages – more work to do
- b. Road resurfacing begins on Market Hill and Nethergate Street on 19 June
- c. Fight re HGV's survey – where to stop?
- d. Wind Turbine components – Cllr. Evans provided an update.

**iii) Protecting and enhancing the environment**

- a. Clare Castle Country Park – see item 9.

**iv) Supporting Community Involvement**

- a. Continuing wide support despite cuts
- b. Magna Carta – Kate Terry, Head of History at SVCS reported on plans to celebrate the anniversary of the signing of the Magna Carta.

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

A written income and expenditure statement for year ending 31 March 2014 and a balance sheet were circulated. (Copies are available from the RFO). These were presented by Cllr. Derek Blake in detail. Expenditure for 2013/14 totalled £112,779 with a total income of £126,563. Reserves remain healthy and within recommended limits at £193,375. The precept for 2014/15 is £101,786, a decrease of 1.6% on last year.

Cllr. Blake summarised the areas of expenditure as staffing, supporting community organisations, the running of the cemetery, looking after green spaces and trees in Town Council ownership and

sundries including insurance, telephone and IT equipment, printing of Chevron and annual report, subscriptions, training. He emphasised that the Town Council makes the money it receives work incredibly hard on behalf of the people of Clare. For further details see the full Annual Report. The final accounts were proposed, seconded and approved.

#### 6. **Presentation from Clare Combined Charities**

Nigel Partridge, Vice Chairman, presented a summary on behalf of Chairman Rev'd Stuart Mitchell who sent his apologies:

Clare Combined Charities is an amalgamation of several charities, the last of which was updated in 1965 by order of the Charity Commission. The Charities has responsibility for the Almshouses in Church Lane, the common, the allotments and Goosecroft which is a parcel of land just past Poslingford Corner on the right hand side. Trustees are appointed by Clare Town Council on the recommendation of the existing Trustees and serve for a period of four years before becoming eligible for reappointment. There are two subcommittees to cover the Almshouses and the land holdings.

During the past year, the roof and drainage for the Almshouses has been repaired and brought up to date. For the next twelve months, all the external woodwork will be painted.

The most progress made during last year concerns the allotments. Every plot is now numbered and an up-to-date plan, with a list of tenants, has been drawn up. The intention is to manage the allotments with a much more hands-on approach. Site visits have been carried out and tenants not abiding by the rules of tenure have been contacted.

The Trustees administer the common on behalf of Defra, English Heritage and the Dedham Vale and Stour Valley Trust. Responsibility for the Common entails (amongst other aspects), seeking tenders for grazing cattle, maintaining the hedgerows and ditches and ensuring that the gates onto and off the common are secure and safe both for cattle and humans!

The Trustees are aware of the very popular use of the common and will do everything to enable this to continue. Dog-fouling is the biggest issue both on the Common and on the allotments. Where it is necessary to conduct repairs, such as to the gates, it may be necessary to remove certain points of access from public use until repairs are completed.

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

Cllr. Pugh presented the following report:

St Edmundsbury has kept council tax frozen while completely changing the way almost everything is done. I am constantly working to assist the Town Council on planning and other matters and my primary purpose is to get Clare a strong voice at the St Edmundsbury table. I am now also part of the Cabinet with responsibility for Economic Growth and Development and have been instrumental in getting Clare recognised officially as one of the six towns of West Suffolk and appears prominently in the new West Suffolk Six Point Plan for jobs and growth.

Cllr Pugh introduced Lizzi Cocker, a council officer from St Edmundsbury who is the locality officer for Clare and explained their roles:

This is a new initiative to meet the Council's objective of working for families and communities. Lizzi and I operate together as community supporters. I have just been given a modest annual budget of 2.5 k to spend in Clare. The principle is that we can invest in community capital. It's like the parable of the talents. If we start with a small amount the aim is to try to get it multiplied in some way. So to use the first request that has come to me by agreeing to fund the installation of Broadband in the Town Hall it is expected that this will make it more attractive to hirers and increase the benefit to this Clare charity.

We have written a locality action plan and have some project ideas already. We want to meet as many Clare organisations as possible over the months ahead. Some of the other ideas for example include setting up residents' associations where they might be useful and Lizzi is here to help with such things.

## 8. County Councillor's report

Cllr. Mary Evans presented the following report:

My first year as your county councillor has been a challenge as it has been a steep learning curve. I have very much enjoyed it not least because it has been such a pleasure to get to know the Clare Division communities better. Thank you for being so welcoming.

It has been a challenging year for the county council too and I feel very strongly that in several key areas we must do better in the next 12 months.

School attainment is improving but not quickly enough to push us back up the league tables yet. Ofsted inspected the county's education service earlier in the year and were critical. It was unfortunate as we were attacked for not having a strategic improvement plan in place yet Ofsted knew the plan was to be finalised within weeks of their inspection.

Results are getting better but I am glad I serve on the Education Scrutiny committee so we can keep an eye on our schools performance and call the education team to account.

Another area of challenge is our new highways contract. It has not been a happy story to date but again performance is improving. Councillors, with the support of the staff working on the ground, have been calling for changes in the way the contract is managed. We have had more staff recruited to the area offices. We have streamlined a bit, but probably not enough yet, the way the contract actually operates.

The county council is working this year to a budget with savings of £38m. We are not increasing council tax because we don't want to penalise you. However there are more cuts are to come. Our grant has been cut by government and we have to look long and hard at what we do and how we do it.

In my role as assistant cabinet member for roads and transport I am chairing a cross party panel reviewing speed limits. We have issued a report setting the criteria for 20mph schemes and are now looking at the higher speed limits. I am also chairing a group looking at the problems of accessibility to public transport

Locally I have continued to press for measures to reduce heavy Lorries on the A1092. Highways have agreed to conduct an origin and destination survey to ascertain whether all the heavy traffic that comes through Clare is undertaking deliveries and collections in the area or whether, as some strongly suspect, they are taking the short SatNav route from Felixstowe to the motorway network rather than taking the A14. Currently we are facing a challenge to find a safe site to use for the survey.

I have been working with highways and Clare Town Council to make sure we get some improvements in the town when the re-surfacing work is undertaken in June – for example the ghost island on Stoke Road is being eliminated, bicycle racks will be placed outside the chemist's shop on the junction with the High Street to stop people parking on what is effectively spare highway, and we will get bollards installed along the pavement in Church Street to protect pedestrians from HGVs mounting the kerb.

SCC highways wrote to residents living around Well Lane last year announcing the re-surfacing programme and asking people to let them know if they had cellars at the front of their properties – only two people replied. Repeat letters are being sent out – I urge you to make sure that you reply and encourage friends and neighbours to reply too

I have been working with your town council and some of my other parish councils to put our case against the proposals relating to the wind turbine at Chilton Street.

As you are aware SCC highways has to approve the travel plan for the transportation of all the wind turbine traffic from Baythorne Bridge through to the site at Chilton Street. Currently highways has rejected the plan because of the weight of the abnormal loads on Baythorne Bridge. Highways assesses the capacity of a bridge by axle weight one arch of the bridge is assessed to be able to take

a maximum of 12 tonnes and another part at 14 tonnes – some of the vehicles have axle weights of 17 tonnes.

The plans have gone back to the developers and they will have to look again. If they can satisfy the requirements for the bridge, highways will then have to look closely at the details of the rest of the plan.

I have enjoyed serving you for the past year and look forward to working with you for the next three years.

Cllr. Haisman thanked Cllr. Evans for her work and support to benefit Clare.

## 9. Update on Clare Castle Country Park

Cllr. Haisman reported that apologies had been received from Mark Bee from Suffolk County Council.

Cllr. Haisman and Geoffrey Bray presented an update on the work carried out over the past 3 years with regard to the possible transfer of Clare Castle Country Park to the ownership of Clare Town Council.

Reprise:

- a. November 2010 – New Direction (failed – Knettishall)
- b. Jan 2011 – 7 page document for groups to express interest in taking on the park
- c. March 2012 - Savills and Castons
- d. 31 July 2012 – presentation to SCC of business cases
- e. 21 December 2012 first offer from SCC
- f. Buildings: Concertus, planning apps, tender process
- g. Green infrastructure survey
- h. Bidwells – planning application, details of work required to buildings
- i. Car park – further delays due to land registry tribunals
- j. River levels meant we could not proceed until a solution was found
- k. Drainage survey
- l. Stability of the motte and future associated costs
- m. Due diligence: Titles, rights of way, contracts etc – at SCC cost
- n. HLF – to secure a grant to enable us to apply for large bids which will be required if we take on the park
- o. 23 April 2014 meeting with SCC:
  - first ever acknowledgement of contribution to green spaces
  - If Brandon, who not Clare? – Cllr Smith quote: *“Brandon Country Park is a fantastic asset to West Suffolk and to the people of Brandon particularly,” Mr. Smith said. “It has always welcomed all members of the public, whether young or old, and offers a wide range of amenities, events and volunteer programmes. I am keen to see this good work continued through the new management.”*
  - Right headings within an offer – VAT, Stamp duty
  - We asked Suffolk County Council what is your Plan B?

Next steps: CTC review, full public consultation, public meeting, confirmation by CTC of decision.

If the park is to be run by the people of Clare, **WE NEED VOLUNTEERS!**

Questions from the audience were invited.

A parishioner expressed concern that planning only 3 years ahead in terms of costs for the park is a short amount of time. Cllr. Haisman responded that this is an example given based on tasks that will be required to be undertaken every 3 years, such as the de-silting of the ponds.

A parishioner asked if it is possible that the National Trust might consider taking the park. Cllr. Haisman responded that it is very unlikely as discussions took place at the beginning of the process and the National Trust had too many concerns, one being that the site is too small.

A parishioner expressed concern that the financial responsibility of the Country Park could overwhelm the Town Council budget. Cllr. Blake responded that is the key risk – there are 2 elements to the funding required – an amount necessary for catching-up with the maintenance that has not taken place in recent years, and enough revenue income to

sustain the Park in good order. The Council would need to be satisfied about these two elements that mitigate the risk to its finances before any decision was taken in favour of transferring the Park to local ownership.

A parishioner stated that it is unfortunate that the parks run by St Edmundsbury Borough Council continue with a £1million budget and yet Clare has no such support.

A parishioner requested that her fellow parishioners express their thanks to the Country Park Trustees elect for their work. This was followed by a round of applause.

A parishioner stated that the park serves the county as a whole – it is an asset that people want to visit and it is unreasonable that Suffolk County Council will not take some of the responsibility and is putting the whole burden on the local community.

Cllr. Haisman stated that the park must be self-financing and cannot depend on Town Council money. It is important to engage enough people so that there is a balance between the budget and the volunteers.

A parishioner referred to Brandon Country Park and asked why Brandon is different to Clare.

Cllr. Evans responded that Forest Heath Council is involved in the running of Brandon.

There were no further questions and the meeting closed at 8.30pm.