

PARISH NEWS



Clare
Parish Council

ISSUE FIVE - JUNE 2009



Clare and Châtillon Forge Links between the communities.

The special guest speaker at the Annual Parish Meeting was Michel Hétroy, Mayor of Châtillon-sur-Indre in the Loire Valley region of France. Accompanied by his partner Geneviève and former UK Fire Chief Chris Coombes, Michel attended the Annual Parish Meeting at the invitation of Clare Parish Council.

Michel described his community and town supported by a pictorial presentation, his role as Mayor and the similarities of our two communities. Châtillon is a town with 2,900 residents, castle dungeon ruins in the centre of the town and a history dating back to the 12th

century. With the castle having been built by Henry II Plantagenet, there are even royal family links to the historical families of Clare: Joan of Acre (who married Gilbert de Clare) was Henry II's great-great granddaughter!

The French local government system is however very different to our English approach. In addition to the responsibilities of our own Parish Council, the Châtillon Council is also responsible for the schools' infrastructure, welfare services, police and fire services. Michel is himself a retired fire fighter.

Community Fire Services instrumental in new links.

In spring 2008 the Community Fire Fighters from Châtillon were looking for further training opportunities to extend their capability. Chris Coombes, former Leicestershire Fire & Rescue Service Chief Officer, and now resident in Châtillon, contacted his former colleague David Johnson, currently Chief Officer of Essex Fire & Rescue Service and who lives in

The Belchamps. David arranged for the Châtillon fire fighters to visit the Wethersfield Training Establishment and also arranged accommodation for them in The Red House and Ships' Stores in Clare. They were so impressed with the hospitality offered throughout Clare that they returned to Châtillon determined to forge links between the two towns.

Initial contact between our two communities arose from Châtillon Fire Fighters staying in Clare in the spring of 2008 whilst visiting Essex Fire & Rescue Service. Mayor Michel Hétroy was very keen to return to Clare to thank the town for their hospitality and hopes that links can develop from there.

Michel and Geneviève were welcomed to Clare by representatives from the community at an informal get together to enable the special guests to meet and get to know Clare residents. The next day the couple toured Clare, visiting the schools, places of interest, businesses and meeting community leaders.

As a result links have now been established between the schools of both communities and Clare Businesses are looking at ways of forging commercial links. It also hoped that cultural exchanges will develop and as an initial step an invitation has been extended to Châtillon's 50-voice choir to perform at one of The Society for Music in Clare Church's concerts in the near future.

CPC Chair, Keith Haisman said, 'Michel and Geneviève were very welcome visitors to Clare and we have made a start to creating what I hope will be lasting and meaningful links between our two communities. Whilst stopping short of actual twinning which has many pitfalls, we believe there are many advantages to developing cultural, education and commercial links between our two communities that will benefit our whole communities and we shall be working on those during the coming year.'

The very informative meeting was rounded off with an informal get together and a glass of wine from Châtillon.

Don't forget to visit the Clare website at www.clare-uk.com

Record breaking attendance at Annual Parish Meeting.

A very pleasing number of Clare residents and organisations attended the Annual Parish Meeting in the Community Halls on Tuesday April 21st with a record breaking attendance of more than 60.

The meeting was opened in the traditional manner with a welcome address from the Chair of the Parish Council, Cllr Keith Haisman. Cllr Haisman greeted an audience made up of the electorate, various community groups and special guests, the Mayor of Châtillon-sur-Indre Michel Hétroy and his partner Geneviève.

Cllr Haisman told the audience 'I am hugely encouraged to see such a turn out for this meeting which I think reflects all the good things that are going on in Clare with an enormous amount of work being under taken by various organisations and individuals.'



Parish Council sets best practice.

The Parish Council Chair, Cllr Keith Haisman, paid tribute to parish councillors for their endeavours and diligence throughout the year. He thanked former Cllr. Roger Gee, who had stepped down earlier in the year, for his contribution and welcomed on board Cllr Beryl Sutton, who was co-opted onto the council last week.

The Chair also thanked and acknowledged the service given by former Parish Clerk, Ailsa Jobson who was head hunted away by the NHS and welcomed Sharon Benson into her expanded role from Finance Officer to that of Parish Clerk & Finance Officer.

The work undertaken by the Parish Council was outlined by Cllr Haisman and included matters such as, improvements to Clare Town Management services, Parish Council performance and standards, supporting a new secondary school in the town, campaigning for a West Suffolk Unitary Authority in the Boundary Review process, engaging with young parishioners, contributing to the Local Development Framework Plan and the Clare Community Plan.

'The new Parish Council core values are a set of measurable values, published in the Spring Edition of the Parish News, that will ensure the council remain focused and accountable'

said Cllr Haisman.. The community can find those core values on the Clare website, www.clare-uk.com, and will be able to determine and challenge Parish Council performance should they fail to meet those standards. The Clare website is now regarded within Suffolk as parish council website best practice!

However the Parish Council is not resting on its laurels, Cllr Haisman advised that tough targets for 2009/2010 have been set, such as maintaining 2008 levels of expenditure, driving the car park issue forward with the District Authority, developing youth services in the community with partners, 'Pride in Clare', tourism, the Community Plan and links with Chatillon-sur-Indre.

Cllr Haisman also emphasised the importance of the improved community partnership relationships that are continuing to develop. He said 'I hope that the co-operative work undertaken with the Clare Business Association, Clare Society, Clare Combined Halls etc will lead members of those associations and groups to stand for the Parish Council at the next election to ensure that the present co-operation continues to flourish.

Prudent & Efficient Borough Council says Borough Councillor Jane Bone.

St Edmundsbury Borough Council is a very prudent and efficient organisation was the claim of Borough Councillor, Jane Bone, as she addressed the Parish Meeting.

The Borough Council's share of the council tax precept will not be increased this year and the budget will be spent on our priorities that focus on street cleansing and waste collection, planning development, conservation, culture and social housing upon which 34% of the budget is spent, said Cllr Bone.

Cllr Bone praised the opening of the new Public Service Village in Bury St Edmunds which incorporates County Council services for the west of Suffolk. She said the centre had 'significantly improved the accessibility and management of public services in the sub-region working from a single and effective unit'.

However one parishioner complained that the public service village was infact inaccessible if you did not have a car. Cllr Bone reassured the meeting that a bus service now operated from the Bury town centre linking other public transport routes to the Public Service Village.

Pre-Election Report from County Councillor.

County Councillor, Jane Midwood, presented her last report to the Parish prior to standing for re-election in the June 4th. However her report contained little to encourage parishioners' hopes of service improvements.

Cllr Midwood stated that she believed that Suffolk County Council [SCC] is a radical council and at the forefront of best practice in terms of cost effective delivery. She reported that the council had saved £60m during the last 3 years and aimed to save £12.5m this year. However SCC has increased their share of the council tax burden by 2.4% whilst the Borough Council has not increased their share and the Parish Council has pegged their budget at 2008 levels.

Adult and Child Care Social Services was an area that SCC were intending to prioritise. £1.6m is set to be invested in improved West

Suffolk County Management Services and the giant incinerator site near Ipswich were cited by Cllr Midwood as examples of SCC innovative policies.

When asked by the Parish News how Cllr Midwood would assuage parishioners' concerns in light of this statement when adult and child care services are being withdrawn from rural areas, she replied 'That is a matter for the Primary Care Trust not SCC'.

Cllr Midwood reported that the Boundary Committee recommendation on the how local government should be re-organised in Suffolk had been further delayed until July 10th. She said 'however I believe that the SCC proposal for a 'One Suffolk' remained the most robust and cheapest option for Suffolk'.

The state of rural highways remained a matter for serious concern said Cllr Midwood. She had been arguing for priority repairs in her ward despite, as she revealed, that the area was at the bottom of league for such repairs. However Cllr Midwood said 'I have managed to change that position with some minor repairs having already been achieved with more on the way'. When asked by a parishioner when that money for repairs would actually be available she said 'very soon!'.

A parishioner asked Cllr Midwood where was the school issue now going and Cllr Midwood replied 'it is going to be two tiers and improve'. She congratulated the C.L.A.R.E group, and all other sections of the Clare community for the quality of their campaign and the tenacity they had shown during the long drawn-out process.

WATCH OUT – THERE'S A PLANT THIEF ABOUT!

Suffolk Police advised the meeting that they consider themselves fortunate that the almost non-existence of crime in Clare means that sometimes the police presence in the town is not always at the level that public would like to see. That is because the police resources are being directed to other areas less fortunate than us in terms of the levels of anti-social behaviour and crime that some communities have to endure.

Parishioners will be able to reassure themselves in terms of the level of crime in the area as monthly crime statistics for each parish are now reported to the 'Suffolk Safer Neighbourhoods' website.

Nevertheless at the moment a 'tree thief' has struck in Clare and well as in other surrounding areas. The thief, believed to be a lady, strikes in the small hours and has apparently a particular attraction to Cherry Trees. 'Clare in Bloom' recently lost one such tree from a planter outside the Town Hall. Parishioners out and about in early hours of the morning are asked to keep a look out and advise police if they see anything suspicious.

A police spokesperson said 'we would appreciate any information that the public can provide to help us stop the theft of what are very expensive items, however please don't be

tempted to intervene yourself, call us on 999 immediately and we will get there asap'.

Local officers are continuing to visit Clare and issue parking tickets for parking and highway obstruction offences. However the officers are acutely aware that whilst they have to discharge their duties without 'fear or favour' the enforcement action is having an impact upon businesses and residents in the town centre.

Focus at the moment is upon breaches of the time limit permitted parking areas in the hope that will free up some availability. However Suffolk Police hope that an early solution can be found for the provision of a car park to relieve the situation.



PC finances in good shape and able to cope with recession.

The Parish Clerk & Finance Officer, Sharon Benson, reported that the council had remained within budget during 2008 and had managed to improve services. Financial assistance and support had been also been provided to various organisations and charities in the town, and a reserve of £106,000 had been achieved to cope with the challenges of the recession. The Parish Council is keen to ensure that regular and much-loved events in Clare, such as the Christmas lights and Clare in Bloom, should continue regardless of the availability of funding from other sources.

Clare Business has bright future.

Clare is an exciting place to do business and the Clare Business Association [CBA] intends capitalise upon that position for the benefit of the overall community, Deputy Chair of the CBA, Alaric Pugh told the Parish Meeting.

Mr Pugh recognised that, as a Key Rural Service Centre, Clare had a vital role in sustaining not only the parish itself but those of our neighbours whose 8,000 inhabitants rely upon the services provided. The fact that there are 63 different, thriving business premises in the town reflects the importance the business role in the community.

However the CBA are not resting on their laurels. Mr Pugh announced enthusiastically a programme of co-operative partnership work that CBA has begun or is working towards

with the other vital public organisations with the Key Rural Service Centre's catchment area. As an example he announced that the Chair of the Parish Council will now become an ex-officio member of the CBA to ensure that common aims achieve the utmost for the town and surrounding area.

On the back of recent and established successful co-operative programmes such as the car parking survey and support for the Christmas Lights the CBA are looking forward to continuing to contribute to the Community Plan strategy. For example 'supporting initiatives such as attracting greater tourism interest in the area for the benefit of our economy will be one of our priorities' said Mr Pugh.

Clare First Responders now operational.

Matt Lovejoy, the Clare First Responders Co-ordinator, confirmed to the Parish Meeting that the First Responder Team was now operational with members providing good cover with more members soon to be trained by the Ambulance Service.

The responders, equipped with portable cardio defibrillators and oxygen therapy units, financed by CLASP, provide immediate care and relief for those suffering with an apparent cardiovascular event or respiratory distress symptoms until an ambulance arrives. Immediate treatment of this kind does save lives and the reassurance provided by responders to those unfortunate enough find themselves in this situation does reduce the impact of the shock upon the casualty which in itself can be a life saver.

However please be reassured said Matt, 'if you should find us turning up when you have just had a fall it doesn't mean you have more serious problems'. 'It is just that falls can sometimes be the outcome of other issues and the Ambulance Service errs on the side of covering every eventuality, especially if the patient has knocked themselves out in the process of falling, so they dispatch us as well just in case'.

Despite this successful launch we still need more volunteers, said Matt, especially in the surrounding parishes around Clare. Matt can be reached on 01787 278223 if you would like to find out more about being a First Responder.



OPEN

Improved access to your Parish Council ...

To improve parishioner access to the council, The Parish Council Office, situated in the Old School Community Centre, will now be open three times a week.

Parish Office Opening Times

| | |
|-----------|-----------------|
| Monday | 8.30am - 1.00pm |
| Wednesday | 8.30am - 1.00pm |
| Friday | 8.30am - 1.00pm |

HELP

ADVICE

Are you looking for help or advice?

The Citizens' Advice Bureau will be in the Old School Community Centre on Monday 6 and Monday 13 July from 9.30 - 11.30 am



Clare
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Email parishclerk@clare-uk.com

Don't forget to visit the Clare website at www.clare-uk.com