

Chairman's Report for the Annual Parish Meeting 14th April 2011 on work undertaken by Barking Parish Council 2010 - 2011

There have been **11 meetings** of the Parish Council during the past year; 4 of which were extraordinary meetings convened to discuss planning applications.

Other meetings attended by Councillors were Wattisham Liaison meetings, Parish Liaison meetings at Mid Suffolk District Council and a meeting to discuss the Community Speed Watch Scheme.

The Parish Council was consulted on **19 planning applications**, 3 of which were for Darmsden, 2 in Needham Market and 1 in Baylham.

The Parish Council currently still has its full complement of councillors. **Alan Jones resigned in October and was replaced by Stephen Butler**, by co-option. **Cllr Sue Marsh is Chairman** of the Council, with **Cllr Michael Smith as Vice-Chair**. **Cllr John Berry** continues at the moment to represent Darmsden. **Cllrs Sue Marsh and Michael Smith** represent Barking on the Needham Market & Barking Welfare Charities, **Cllr Michael Bailey** on the Barking Village Hall Management Committee, and **Cllr Alex Smith** on the Parish Paths Partnership. **Cllr Michael Smith** also represents Barking on the Theobalds Trust and at the Wattisham Liaison Group meetings.

3 Councillors attended **training** during the year, as did the Parish Clerk.

Following a site meeting at the end of March 2010, due to the continuing high **number of accidents adjacent to Stone Cottage**, various road safety measures have been implemented which included the replacement of the Barking Village sign to the parish boundary, and additional road signs. The site continues to be monitored. We thank County Cllr Julia Truelove for a contribution from the Quality of Life Budget to fund these works.

The new **Community Speed Watch Scheme** is now up about to begin, with 5 volunteers from Barking coming forward to form the Barking Team. Barking has entered into a partnership with Somersham and Great Bricett Parish Council and the funding was provided to purchase the kit by County Cllr Julia Truelove from the Locality Budget, and from Mid Suffolk District Council.

Signs have been erected on the Tye near the play area to remind dog walkers to keep their dogs away from the play area and to pick up after their dogs and to use the bins provided.

The grass cutting contract has this year been awarded to the County Grounds Service. Although the service received from MSDC was quite satisfactory, the fact that MSDC removed the 50% subsidy had had been applied for several years, resulted in their tender far too expensive. There will be a shortfall this year between the amount of income received from DEFRA for the Environmental Stewardship Scheme and the cost of grass cutting, but income for the hay crop last year and a payment from BT for placing a cable underground last month, has made up this deficit.

3 litter pickers continue to be employed by the Parish Council - Claire & Peter Bate, and Dick Nash. They continue to do an excellent job and the costs are still being reclaimed from Mid Suffolk District Council by way of a Cleansing Grant.

Our **Village Caretaker**, Dick Nash, has continued to maintain parish assets such as the play equipment and wooden benches, he regularly cuts the grass to the rear of the village hall, picks up litter and empties the bins on the Tye.

New play bark has been placed at the play area to the rear of the village hall. This was largely funded by a grant received by the Barking Pre-School, with the Parish Council making up the shortfall.

2 Grit Bins were purchased last autumn, one for Barking and the other for Darmsden, both largely funded from County Cllr Truelove's Locality Budget, for which, once again we are very grateful. The proviso under which these were funded is that only nominated people can spread the grit onto the roads. This also ensures that their actions in doing so are insured under the Suffolk County Council Public Liability insurance. Our thanks to Dennis Eaton and John Berry from Darmsden for volunteering to be our nominated 'grit spreaders'.

The Council has continued its policy to support local organisations and a **donation** was given during the year to St Marys Church towards the upkeep of the church yard. Also benefiting was **Help for Heroes** which received the profits from the 2011 Barking Calendar sales. Other requests were re-directed to the Needham Market and Barking Welfare Charities. A wreath was also laid at the site of the War Memorial on the Tye, as it is every year.

As it is every year, a full **Financial Risk Assessment** was conducted to ensure all risks to the Council and its finances have been identified, and measures taken to either reduce or eliminate the risks. Also a full review of the **Internal Audit Process** was carried out as required by the External Auditors.

The Budget for 2011 - 2012 has been increased to £19,825 to ensure that the Parish Council has sufficient funds to meet its' day to day expenses. However, the Precept remains at £8,362 for the third year running. Funding will continue to be sought for special projects as and when needed.

4 Welcome Packs were given to new residents during the past 12 months, which is 6 fewer than last year.

The Barking Parish Web Site continues to be maintained by the Parish Clerk and is a good source of information about the Parish and the various community groups and organisations.

The Rural Coffee Caravan made 3 visits to Barking throughout the past year and hopefully will continue to do so this coming year.

Your Council was consulted on several issues, including the **future of the library service**. The Council encourages all residents to respond to this very important consultation before the deadline on 30th April. Also, if we don't make better use of the mobile library which visits Barking, we may lose it.

Deeds of Grant of Easement for vehicular access across the Tye were agreed for 5 properties and more are anticipated.

The **Parish Plan Steering Group** has now produced the Final Report. A copy will be given to key stakeholders and decision makers as well as each Parish Group and organization, as will a copy of the resultant Action Plan. I announced last year that the target date for completion was June 2010, but the Steering Group lost 2 members which only left 3 to complete the big task of pulling together the Final Report and Action Plan. The Parish Council fully supports this very important project and will annually monitor the Action Plan to ensure key actions are followed up.

The Future

The **proposed footway** through Barking is still on the Parish Council's radar and will be pursued. Funds have been allocated in the Budget, plans have been drawn up by Suffolk County Council, but the hurdle still to overcome is the common and the need to either find a piece of land to swap or obtain permission from the Secretary of State. This alone could cost £4,000 simply to apply for permission.

The impact of the **Community Speed Watch Scheme** will be followed with interest and it is very much hoped that speeds through Barking will be reduced. This was one of the main concerns highlighted in the Parish Plan.

The Parish Plan will be a very useful document which will guide Parish Council decisions in the future. It should influence other key stakeholders and decision makers on the future of Barking and Darmsden and the services we receive.

And finally **2011 is election year** for your council. The nominations are in and, although there will be no poll, there is one vacancy. The Council has a short period during which it can co-opt without the customary need to advertise – if anyone is interested in joining the Parish Council, please speak to our Clerk as soon as possible. The first meeting of the new Council will be on 19th May.

Susan Marsh
Chairman
Barking Parish Council
14th April 2011