

Chairman's Report for the Annual Parish Meeting 23rd April 2015 on work undertaken by Barking Parish Council 2014 - 2015

The Parish Council currently has its full complement of 7 members. The **Local Elections** take place on 7th May, after which, if there are any vacancies, the Council may co-opt members to bring it up the full number. It is important that the Council has its full complement of 7 members to ensure fully democratic decisions are taken that are truly representative of the whole Parish.

Cllr Michael Smith continues to represent Barking on the Needham Market & Barking Welfare Charities, and the Theobalds Foundation, **Cllr Craig Eagles** is the Wattisham Liaison Group representative, **Cllr Michael Bailey** represents the Council on the Barking Village Hall Management Committee, and **Cllr Alex Smith** is the liaison for the Barking Footpath Group.

There were **9 meetings** during the past year, 3 of which were extraordinary meetings.

The Parish Council was consulted on 4 **planning applications**.

Highways – the long awaited repairs to the railings near Barking Hall Nursing Home were repaired following persistent lobbying by the Parish Council, together with ditch and bridge maintenance work at the same site. At the same time, footway from Barking to Needham Market was cleared of encroaching vegetation, again at the request of the Parish Council. The road closure was an inconvenience but necessary. This road closure, together with communications works for Wattisham, and the numerous water mains issues led to a miserable few weeks for motorists.

The Parish Council is currently in discussions with senior managers at Anglian Water regarding the **frequent burst water mains** we are experiencing. It is anticipated that a long overdue upgrade to the system is imminent.

Temporary portable speed cameras which encouraged motorists to keep to the 30mph limit through the village, were present for a short period – never to be seen again. Once again the Parish Council is lobbying Suffolk County Council for regular repeat visits. It is understood long term sickness of the one employee is the reason for the non-appearance of these signs. There is no **Community Speed Watch Team** in Barking at the moment. Anyone interested in volunteering should contact the Parish Clerk.

The Tye continues to be cut by the Eastern Facilities Management Solutions Ltd, as we have been very pleased with the level of service provided during the past four seasons. Income from the **hay crop** was very welcome but this may not continue for much longer, unless a buyer can be found. **Moles** have been a major problem this year, but hiring professional mole catchers is very costly. The Parish Council purchased some mole traps and has done its best to keep the numbers down. Now the grass is being cut again and the water table is dropping, the number of mole hills should reduce. **Sky Lanterns**, which are a hazard to animals, crops and buildings will be banned from use on the Tye. Existing Bye Laws will be reviewed with a view to banning some drones on the Tye.

Litter Pickers continue to be employed by the Parish Council. There has been a change in personnel - Martin Pryke replaced Cameron Bate in September. They do an excellent job and the costs are still being reclaimed from Mid Suffolk District Council by way of a Cleansing Grant. Our thanks to Cameron who kept the village clear of litter for several years.

Our **Village Caretaker** - Dick Nash, has continued to maintain parish assets such as the wooden benches, he regularly cuts the grass to the rear of the village hall and is once again keeping the footpaths clear across the Tye. He also picks up litter and empties the dog bins on the Tye.

The **play equipment** is still in good condition. Minor repairs have been authorised to ensure it is kept up to the required standard. The goal net purchased last year is now in place.

The **grit bins** were topped up in October, but were not needed again due to the very mild winter. Craig Eagles, John Boyle and Mike Bailey are our nominated 'grit spreaders', but their services were not needed this winter.

The Council has continued its' policy to support local organisations and **donations** were given during the year to the Four Parishes Magazine, St Marys Church for grass cutting, and to the Royal British Legion . The recipient of the profits from the 2014 Barking Calendar was the Suffolk Accident Rescue Service. The donation to the Royal British Legion is in exchange for the **poppy wreath**, which was laid at the site of the War Memorial on the Tye, as it is every year.

The installation of the **Intelligent Lighting System** on all 10 street lights in Barking, has resulted in significant savings to the annual street lighting bill. The Council budgeted to replace all the bulbs with new LED lanterns, and has now authorised the work on the remaining 8 which haven't yet been

replaced. These energy efficient lamps will reduce the street lighting bill even further.

The Council has taken advantage of a grant from the Police and Crime Commissioner for Suffolk to purchase two new **Neighbourhood Watch Signs** for the village. We are currently waiting for Suffolk County Council Highways staff to erect them for us at an agreed point on the Battsford Road, and adjacent to Moat Farm. There will now be signs at all 4 entrances to the village.

An annual requirement of the Auditor is that the Council undertakes a full **Financial Risk Assessment** and a **Review of the Internal Audit Process**. These were both completed.

The **Budget for 2015 - 2016** has been set at £28,822 - this includes £1,000 towards the Village Hall Extension Project. Due to the prudent management of the council's finances, the Precept has remained unchanged @ £8,488. In addition to the Precept, a Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme Grant of £129.50 will be made by Mid Suffolk District Council as a continuation of the agreement entered into last year. Funding will continue to be sought for special projects as and when needed. The Parish Council is managing the finances for the **Village Hall Extension Project**, which included securing funding from various bodies such as Mid Suffolk District Council, Suffolk County Council, the Needham Market & Barking Welfare Charities and the Barking Community Council. Our grateful thanks to all those organisations for giving the grants needed to enable us to deliver Phase 1 of the Project.

An amendment to the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 gives the public the right to film, photograph, record or report on full council and committee meetings. The Council therefore **adopted a protocol for the reporting at meetings, and Standing Order 3L has been suspended to allow filming at meetings in line with the new 'right to film and report'**.

Revised **Financial Regulations** were adopted in May and a revised **Suffolk Code of Conduct** adopted in July.

Deeds of Grant of Easement for vehicular access across the Tye were granted to another 2 properties.

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 Parish Council can also be followed on **Twitter** and **Facebook**.

The Clerk attended 4 **training sessions** at the Suffolk Association of Local Councils.

And finally In February, the Parish Council nominated the Barking Fox for listing as an **Asset of Community Value**. We have just received confirmation that this nomination has been accepted and the Barking Fox has now been added to the list of Assets of Community Value effective from 1st April 2015. In practice this means that a local land charge has been made and a restriction placed at the Land Registry. Should the owner wish to dispose of the property in the future, other than by way if one of the exemptions as defined in the Regulations, they will be required to inform the Council in writing at which point a moratorium period will be triggered before a sale can take place - the Council will be given the opportunity, and time, to put together a bid to purchase the property. Registering the building as a Community Asset also means that the use of the building cannot be changed without planning permission.

The Future

- The new **Transparency Code for Smaller Authorities** means that Smaller Councils are now subject to a new requirement to publish information on websites such as draft minutes and all expenditure over £100. The Council publicises much of its work already, but the Government considers that publication of the items covered by this Code will provide the local electorate and ratepayers with a clearer picture of the activities of these smaller authorities.
- Consideration is being given into the possible acquisition of a **defibrillator**.

Stephen Butler
Chairman
Barking Parish Council
23rd April 2015