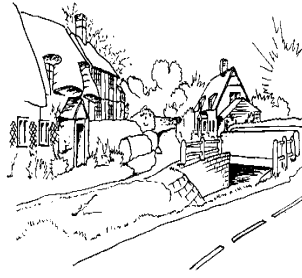


ARKESDEN PARISH COUNCIL



MINUTES of the ANNUAL PARISH MEETING held in Arkesden Village Hall on

Wednesday 27th April 2011

Those present: 3 Parish Councillors, Clerk to the Parish Council, District Councillor Jan Menell and approx 30 residents.
Rod Higgins in the chair.

1. Apologies for Absence: Robert Patmore, Satu Lawrence and Chris Coady

2. Minutes of the meeting held on 22nd April 2010. These were agreed and signed

3. Matters Arising: There were no matters arising.

4. Neighbourhood Watch – Presentation by Alan Johnson

Uttlesford is the safest area in Essex with only 7 crimes a day and because the district is geographically large the level of policing is accordingly sparse. Essex introduced the idea of “Neighbourhood Policing” and Arkesden falls within the Clavering “Neighbourhood”, with the neighbourhood police team consisting of a sergeant, a police officer and a support officer. We suffer our fair share of anti social behaviour (a.s.b.), as this type of problem tends to rise up where crime levels are low. Half of the calls received by the police are for a.s.b. incidents. Crimes at the moment are generally committed by people not in the area; with good access to the M11, burglaries are on the increase but Farm Watch is up and running.

Neighbourhood Watch (NW) can help with crime prevention, assistance to the police and to help bring communities together. Fear of crime is people’s perception of crime levels – often generated by the media. The police are not good at letting people know the result of a crime but are keen to become better communicators. Information can be tailored to specific areas and then cascaded down through the NW coordinators. A NW group would consist of a leader and several NW coordinators, each looking after 20-30 properties. There would be membership packs and a news letter 3 to 4 times a year. NW signs would be put up at entrances to the village and everyone in the area becomes a member (no fees).

Questions and answers

1. Q: Does street lighting have any effect on crime levels?
A: No; in Saffron Walden crime levels actually fell when street lights were switched off.
2. Q: Would it be better to have the information in the press?
A: No: Neighbourhood Watch gets the information earlier.

5. Chairman’s Report

The Chairman thanked Mr. Johnson for his talk and added that he would be gathering names of possible NW coordinators in order to press forward with a NW group for Arkesden.

The Chairman outlined the work of the Parish Council over the last year:

- a) Affordable Housing – This is reported later under agenda item 9.
- b) Planning Applications – Eleven in the year with only one contentious one. Many letters and an on-site meeting had failed to get any alteration to the height of Violet Cottage.
- c) Litter Pick – Another successful event with over 40 volunteers collecting 30 bags of rubbish plus assorted articles!
- d) Stream Clearance – Thanks to the helpers and this year the houses in the centre of the village will all be contacted as some people felt left out last year.
- e) Notice Board – The PC has financed from the budget (with no grant funding from UDC) a replacement notice board outside Hill House.
- f) Welcome Pack – This has been put together by the PC following suggestions in the Village Plan, and will be ready within the next couple of months.
- g) Telephone Kiosk – this has now been acquired by the PC and we are awaiting the removal of the equipment by BT before it is converted to a “book swap”.
- h) Highways – Due to cuts in the highways budget, the annual parish visits have been cut and consequently only priority jobs are undertaken.
- i) Amenity Land – The Parish Council has been actively seeking land for allotments and to this end wrote to all possible landowners. Only one possibility came forward, which was the land at 10 Acres. The Parish Council had the land independently valued and then proceeded with an offer to purchase all or part of the 5.25 acres available. This offer was insufficient for the owner and we are still in the process of justifying our price to the owner. To finance the purchase the PC would be looking for gifts/donations for the majority of the money and then finance any shortfall through a government loan scheme – more of this under agenda item 8. The PC feels that the purchase of this land would be a major asset for the village and could provide allotments, conservation area and a community orchard. The purchase would also prevent any unauthorised development.
- j) Councillors and clerk had attended various meetings throughout the year ranging from “Allotments” to meeting UDC’s new Director of Planning and including as always the North Area Forum meetings.

The Chairman thanked his fellow councillors, clerk and district councillor for their help and support throughout the past year and noted that due to changes in the recent electoral review, Arkesden will be looking for 6 councillors in the forthcoming elections. This led the Chairman on to a “thank you” to retiring councillor Kate Barwood:

Kate has served as a Parish Councillor for 35 years after joining the council for the first time in 1974. On the agenda at her first meeting was the precept agreed at £180, the clerk’s salary agreed at £20, the position of the telephone kiosk (even then) and water (still) running down Church Hill. The main decision taken was to hold monthly meetings due the increased number of planning applications. This meant that Kate has attended over 400 Parish Council meetings and 35 AGMs and we believe she is Arkesden’s longest standing female councillor.

Kate’s greatest assets to the council were her fantastic memory, in great detail, for long past events and her strength of opinion, especially against the trend! When asked “What makes a good councillor” she replied “to always remember that you represent the people of the village”. The well used phrase “Been there, done that” certainly applies to Kate in her time on the Parish Council.

The Chairman then presented Kate with a small gift in appreciation of all she had done for the village over the last 35 years.

Kate thanked the Chairman and the meeting for their gift and said that although she was retiring as a councillor she would still maintain a keen interest in all matters relating to the village.

6. Clerk's Report on Finance

The clerk reported on another prudent year with a significant under-spend in the budget and a small under-spend from the precept. This resulted in a large carried forward balance, which gave the Parish Council the opportunity to maintain the precept at last year's level. Although some areas of next year's budget had been reduced, the PC had been advised to allow £1500 for election costs which resulted in no change to the overall budget figure for 2011/12. The clerk reiterated last year's comments on the excellent financial control that the council had over its budget and that a contribution to the council tax of less than 80p per week for a band D house represented excellent value for money.

7. Report on Village Activities.

The following group representatives gave brief accounts of their activities during the year :

7.1 Parochial Church Council – Peter Shefford

Many thanks to all the helpers that keep the church so well maintained, especially to Peter Finn for 13 years of grass cutting duties.

The church had managed a near normal pattern of services during the interregnum with particular thanks to Maureen Hilson. Attendances were around 100 for Christmas Day, 40 at Easter and approx. 140 for the Christmas Carol Service.

Two fundraising events last year had proved very popular – a concert by the choir of Jesus college and a performance of "Address Unknown". A further "Open Gardens" event is planned for next summer and it is hoped that this will redress the current deficit before the arrival of the newly appointed Priest in Charge – the Reverend Margaret Davis.

7.2 Friends of Arkesden Church – Marion Shave

The Friends organised three events last year – the "Arkesden has Talent" show in June, a "Bridge Afternoon" in September and a "70's Disco" in November. All proved very popular and helped to swell the funds that would go towards maintaining the structure of this most prominent building. Many thanks to all supporters in these and other fund raising projects.

7.3 Arkesden Bell-Ringers – Anthea Boon

The bell-ringers are still managing to ring at most Sunday services despite our small numbers. A quarter peal is planned for the forthcoming Royal Wedding.

Newcomers are always welcome to join us on a Wednesday evening at 8pm.

7.4 Village Hall Committee – Natasha Carter

Thanks to retiring treasurer Nicky Robert and welcome to new joint treasurers Wendy Dyce and Aline Parriaux. I stepped down as Chair but remain as Secretary, and Robin Coady has stepped in as "Rolling Chairman" for the time being.

Three successful events – Wine Tasting, Quiz Night and the Christmas Bash provided enough funds, together with grants from Biffaward and Stansted Airport Community Trust, to complete the refurbishment of the kitchen and to provide new store cupboards for the back room. The hall is now well used and has sound finances. We welcome you all to the Royal Wedding Garden Party this coming Sunday.

7.5 Women's Institute – Chairman

The WI continued to meet regularly on the first Thursday of the month for a varied programme of talks

7.6 Footpaths and Countryside Association – Chairman

The association felt that their work in bringing back the footpaths to good order was now at an end and that the responsibility for their upkeep could be handed over to the PC. This had been agreed with the PC and the councillor taking responsibility for this would be Satu Lawrence. The Chairman thanked the Association for all their good work in the past.

7.7 Millennium Field Committee – Charlotte Turner

Many thanks as always to the Forster family for allowing the village continued use of the playing field. The sports day and camp-out were very popular and both the play equipment and new cricket nets are continuing to get plenty of use by all the children of the village. Thanks to all who help with events.

7.8 Village News – Jane Chetcuti

The Village news continues to be a very important part of village life. Thanks to all who have contributed with articles. I am afraid I will be stepping down as editor this year.

7.9 Cricket Club – Jim Ludden

Arkesden CC goes from strength to strength and this past year has seen new kit, new players, new fixtures and of course new nets. As always the intra-Arkesden challenge proved a very popular day for all.

8.0 Amenity Land

The Clerk presented the meeting with the detailed background to the proposed loan, which would go towards the cost of purchasing the amenity land at 10 Acres.

The PC agreed to apply for a loan of £25000 to be repaid over 15 years. The repayments would be made by increasing the precept, and in the worst case scenario with no income from allotment rents, this would result in a 30% increase in the precept. This amenity land would be a major asset to the village and at a cost of an extra 25p per week for a Band D house, the PC felt that this represented good value. At the end of the 15 year term the land could be producing income from allotment rents, allowing the PC to invest in other community projects. The total of amount of the proposed loan need not be taken if funds could be raised through donations or grants.

The meeting agreed that the PC should continue with this loan application.

9.0 Affordable Housing

The Chairman reported that since the initial sketch proposal put forward by Hastoe at the last AGM, the PC had received a list of concerns from Reeds Cottage – the property most affected by the proposals. The Parish Council shared the concerns of the Shaves and had forwarded them to Hastoe so that changes could be made to the next plan, especially regarding the position and screening of the houses.

A detailed topographical survey had been carried out by Hastoe and had been presented to the landowner for approval in the purchase of the land.

Hastoe's architects are presently drawing up a more detailed scheme of the houses and this should be ready for the PC to approve and modify if necessary in May this year. This would then be presented to the village in June/July for their comments and further modifications. Only when the PC and the village as a whole is satisfied with the plan, will an application be made to Utlesford for planning approval.

The Chairman stated that the clerk, Kate Barwood and he had visited the Hastoe development at Langley for the official opening. They had all been impressed by the quality of the build, which included ground source heat pumps double glazing throughout and high levels of insulation resulting in very low predicted heating costs. He had spoken with the new residents who were delighted with their new homes and all of whom had a strong local connection to Langley.

The Parish Council were looking forward to a similar successful development in Arkesden in the not too distant future.

10.0 Any Other Business None

The Chairman thanked everyone for attending and the meeting closed at 9.45pm

Steve Coltman (Clerk)

Rod Higgins (Chairman)