

Fornham St Martin cum St Genevieve Parish Council

Victoria Bright, Clerk, 3 Scott Avenue, Mildenhall, Suffolk, IP28 7LT

Tel: 07712 232920 Email: fsmsgpc@gmail.com

Annual Parish Meeting of Fornham St Martin cum St Genevieve Held in the Village Hall, at 7pm on THURSDAY 11th MAY 2023

Minutes

Present Parish Council: Cllr. J. Borrett, Cllr. P. Borrett, Cllr. M. Collier, Cllr. P. Butler & Clerk, Vicky Bright.

Also Present: Rebecca Hopfensperger – WSC/SCC. Sarah Broughton – WSC. David Yates & Revd. Dr. Andrew Miller – St Martin's Church.

3 Members of Public were in attendance.

1. Cllr. John Borrett is to preside as Chair of the meeting.
2. **Approve the minutes of the last Annual Parish Meeting held on 26th May 2022**

Resolved APM23/05/2.01

The minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on 26th May 2022 were adopted as a true statement and signed by Cllr. John Borrett.

ANNUAL REPORTS

3. **Report from the Parish Council Chairman (Cllr. John Borrett)**

This Annual Parish Assembly is for parish residents and is not for the parish council, the annual parish council meeting follows this Assembly. We start with a report from the current Parish Council Chairman.

The Parish Council has had a fairly busy year with a number of matters to deal with again and I offer personal thanks to my fellow councillors for their valued contributions and well considered opinions on all PC business undertaken, and for their help and support.

We are losing three Councillors for the coming year as Simon Eley, Frank Stennett and Peter Forster are all standing down, for different reasons. Whereas Frank and Simon have been on the Pc for a relatively short while, Peter has been a Councillor for some 20 years, somehow it seems much longer, and his contributions to the PC are too numerous to mention; he will be sadly missed.

I would like to say many thanks to our Clerk, Vicky Bright, for all her hard work and dedication throughout the year, we do rely on her for helpful and knowledgeable advice, delivered with her confident enthusiasm, that's code for 'necessary bullying'.

I am pleased to be able to congratulate our two district councillors, Sarah Broughton and Rebecca Hopfensperger on their re-election. We are grateful to them both for their help through the past year – particularly Rebecca for her welcome advice and support and for her assistance in finally getting drainage works done to reduce flooding in Thetford Road, for example, and many other things she has helped us with.

As Trustees the PC has responsibility for the King George's Playing Field, and this year we have renewed 40 cubic metres of play-grade chippings to the relevant exercise areas. When I say we did this, I literally mean that Parish Councillors, and David Randall, of course, physically carried out exhausting work. We know further work is needed in the children's area, Trim Trail and playing field generally and we will be looking to do some of that this year. Following the arrival of 'travellers', who occupied the field for a few days in July 2022, the Parish Council have installed a further metal gate and an overhead barrier to hopefully ensure we don't have a repeat of the mayhem caused. Most of the fruit trees seem to be doing well, despite some damage, I think mainly caused by miss-kicked footballs, but some vandalism too.

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The PC has purchased a further VAS machine, with more generous financial assistance from both district councillors. We are now able to have all three machines installed in separate fixed locations in the village, meaning they won't have to be relocated periodically. Without doubt they definitely help reduce traffic speeds. Matthew Kemsley has taken over the charging and care of the three VAS machines from Mike Collier and Peter Forster. Matthew is also our village Historian and we offer our thanks to him for volunteering to take all this on. We are hoping to have a further post installed on the North side of Barton Hill, a little way up from Thetford Road, with the intention of moving one of the VAS machines there occasionally and hopefully purchasing another if funds allow.

An unwelcome expenditure is the replacement of broken glass in the Barton Hill bus shelter, somebody seems to have taken a dislike to two panes now.

As always, we are very much indebted to David Randall for keeping a close eye on weeds on the Trim Trail and for planting-out flower tubs in the villages and for looking after the new fruit trees, amongst other things

Our thanks to Brandon Mahon and Simon Loughe for maintaining the Defibrillator equipment each week.

Many thanks are also due to Donna and Laurie Pott who have continued their dedication in keeping our village roadways, and the park, free from litter.

We have a new compiler for the Bugle who is starting to try and improve and expand it and we are grateful to Meral Ahmed for all her hard work so far. We also express our gratitude to Peter Forster, who continues to collect and sort the Bugle's ready for distribution, and the team of volunteers who deliver them to all the homes in the village; Barbara & Anna Scarfe, Hanna Currey, Mike Clark, Francis Harpley, Mrs. Collard, Mike Collier, J Fulcher, Dawn Butler, T. Rockett and Colin Hilder.

We have successful clubs and societies based in the villages and we owe a debt of gratitude to all volunteers who contribute their time.

The village hall has again been well managed and maintained with the smart new windows and blinds helping to make the old place much cosier; our thanks go to those on the management committee for their efforts.

Also, I would like to offer gratitude to the residents who take the time and make an effort to get involved in matters by writing letters of objection or support for various planning applications or TPO abuses or who attend PC meetings or planning meetings or appeals, to have their voices heard. The old adage of 'if you don't ask you don't get'...it is important that as Parish Councillors we get to see and hear those voices to help guide us in our deliberations.

Looking forward to the coming year...no doubt there will be more controversial planning applications and TPO problems to deal with, and we look forward to seeing new village gateway signs installed and, who knows, miracles happen, more attention will be given to flowing and footpath widths and we may even get a pothole filled in, temporarily of course.

Since our last APM we have had the Queens Jubilee, celebrated by the PC with a new picnic table in King Georges field, and of course her sad passing and the Coronation of a new King – long may he reign.

4. Report from County and District Councillor, (Cllr. Rebecca Hopfensperger)

Suffolk County Council

*See attached Annual Town & Parish Report 2023 (Appendix 1)

West Suffolk Council

I think we can safely say that this past year has been fairly busy with planning applications dominating our time and agendas.

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Whilst we were successful in preventing lodges being placed at the All-Saints golf club, unfortunately the applicant was successful in getting the planning authorities recommendation overturned by the planning inspectorate. This was indeed disappointing and now we must ensure that there are adequate conditions in place to protect the community and lessen the effects of the placement on the lodges on the area.

Retrospective planning application – Outside Gym

Again, we were hugely disappointed that an outside gym was built and the adverse impact this had on the environment and neighbouring community. We were successful in getting the retrospective planning application refused in April and are now taking advice on any stop notices to prevent the activities continuing to adversely impact neighbours, plus where we stand with regards to enforcement.

Highways

The drainage work at the bottom of Barton Hill appears to have been successful and I am pleased that this work has been.

Drain – Russell Baron Road

An order has been put in to cut the roots and we are waiting for the contractors to programme the work.

ROW Signs

I've chased ROW for replacement signs and am awaiting dates for their replacement.

Speeding

I know there are still some concerns over this, I do feel that the additional VASs are having an impact. But what we need to know do is look at the data from the signs to look how we can use this data to gauge how effected they are with a possibility to use the data should to give evidence to have further improvements made.

Licence – New Entry Gates

I know the parish council has applied for a street furniture licence this will assist in getting replacement gates along the street and will assist in the placement of new gates, new measures to assist with speed mitigation.

Manner's Road Resurfacing

I've managed to get Manners Road onto the re-surfacing programme, but it is still not a priority so will let you know when I have a date. In the interim I've ensured it's on a regular inspection programme to enable work to be carried out when the deterioration of the road surface meets the intervention criteria.

Potholes

I know this is the bane of everyone's lives including myself and the state of the roads is not acceptable. We now have the perfect opportunity with the change in the highways contract to look at how we can better deal with the potholes by firstly doing a better first-time fix and also doing all potholes in one area irrespective of whether they meet the intervention criteria.

I managed to get the Culford Road potholes completed as this stretch of road was particularly bad.

We need to continue to report them and I can continue to escalate.

The reason temporary repairs are completed is because of the road management needed for permanent repairs may take longer to organise and also depends on how much material the truck can carry.

We have had a particular hard winter for the road with lots of salting that has affected the roads, to put the number of defects (potholes) into context there are around 1,800 in the system with 125 being added on a daily basis. The government recognised that potholes are a national issue which is why SCC got nearly £5million for pothole repairs, this is why first-time fixes are important to ensure that the money is spent in the most efficient way.

Benches

I had an update of the bench on Russell Baron Road to say that the budget has been agreed and I should get an update tomorrow on the date for work to be done.

Report from District Councillor, (Cllr. Sarah Broughton)

West Suffolk Council

It has been 4 years since the coalition of FHDC and St Edmundsbury DC. £640,137.00 from Locality Budgets has been distributed across the villages; including contributions to the village hall windows, bench etc. Potholes is a national issue, with extra money being given by Government.

5. Report from St Martin's Church (David Yates)

We are pleased to say normal services resumed during 2022, after all the Covid Pandemic restrictions, with the fortnightly Sunday services, alternating with Tuesday services. Also, the Thursday Services at

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Fornham House have resumed on the first Thursday of the month, as they are popular and appreciated by the residents, their families and staff, especially the carol service last November when it was packed. Two wedding services were held, always a joyous occasion, as well as 2 baptisms and 4 funerals. All these combined services were attended by 1308 people, including 56 children, an increase of 413, 46%, over the previous year 2021, which is very pleasing.

We were pleased to see the Parish Council at the Remembrance Service, held outside at the War Memorial, and hope this will encourage others to come to this important service in the nation's heritage, and remember the 15 fallen from FSM in the Great War of 1914-1918. The two ceramic poppies from the Tower of London exhibition a few years ago, from the families of Cecil and William Feakes; whose names appear on the War Memorial, remain a central focal item in the displays on the day.

Revd Dr Andrew Miller our Team Rector, with his wife Revd Alison as Team Vicar, for nearly 2 years now, since the end of August 2021, form the principal ministry team, with part-time Team Vicar Revd Val Gagen at St Georges, for our enlarged Lark Valley and North Bury Benefice Group of 10 parishes. Andrew and Alison live in the Rectory at West Stow and regularly take services here at FSM, as well as our resident priest Revd Sylvia Bareham.

As you know Andrew has updated the church section of the Village Welcome Guide, which I regularly distribute to new residents. These continue to be very well received.

Beryl Dykes, our joint churchwarden with me for the last 5 years, left FSM at the beginning of this year to live nearer her family in Surrey.

During 2022 we had many visitors, both local and from UK and abroad, including Bedford, Oxford, Edinburgh, London, Stornoway, Brighton, Cardiff, France and Holland, to mention only a few. Already this year we have welcomed the great, great, great grand-daughter of former parishioner Alfred Bullen whose memorial plaque hangs next to the organ as the Organ Blower and Ringer 1888-1924. So, the church remains a strong focal and historic place for many former residents and parishioners who supported the church, with all its historic heritage of nearly 700 years.

The church continues to be well cared for thanks to a small team of cleaners and handymen and women, with favourable comments often heard by visitors from near and far, but we would always like a few more to lighten the load. We also have a small fabric group who arrange to maintain the building and make improvements where feasible, practical and viable, under the strict guidance of the Diocese Authority, whose appointed Architect carries out detailed inspections every 5 years, the next in 2024, and whose report makes recommendations for regular maintenance and repairs, which we have to pay for.

As part of the Bells Project, to refurbish and tune the 6 bells, to be supplemented by 2 more which have been donated, and replace the old defective oak supporting bell frame with a new steel one, steel lifting beams have been installed above the bells to facilitate their lowering, and the 50 stone steps in the tower have been repaired and made level due to being considerably worn after some 560 years use, it being a later addition to the original building. Nearly £52,000 has now been raised for the Project from fund raising, personal donations and some grants, including Suffolk County Council and West Suffolk Council thanks to Beccy Hopfensperger and Sarah Broughton. We are now on target, after 6 years, to take down the 6 bells in October, to go to specialist Bell Hangers, Nicholson Engineering, in Bridport, Dorset. Grant applications are progressing to raise the remainder of the budgeted cost of some £93,000, with help and support from the Suffolk Guild of Bell Ringers, particularly Neal Dodge, Public Relations Officer, in Culford as well as fund raising from events like the regular Book Sales and concerts.

Four of our regular Book Sales Coffee and Cakes were held during 2022, providing valuable and essential funds for maintenance of the church and churchyard, as well as very sociable and enjoyable events for people to meet over refreshments.

New gardener Martin Richmond has taken over from Sunshine Gardens after their 22 years maintaining the high standards of cutting and strimming the grass around the church and graves, keeping the churchyard neat and tidy and respectful, greatly appreciated by relatives tending family graves.

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We also held a quiz with fish and chips in April, which was popular. There was a concert by Yalda Davis in May, renowned local cellist, a Wedding Festival in July, a concert by Tudor Rose Singers in October, so another busy year, almost back to normal.

Following advice from the Diocese about remaining graves capacity in the churchyard, I need to formally notify the Parish Council that it will eventually be full, and then declared legally as "CLOSED". Its future maintenance would then be transferred to the Parish Council. The legal formalities of this process are shown in The Ministry of Justice Guidance Notes on Churchyard Closures. Our PCC would make an application to The Privy Council who would make an Order in Council to close the churchyard for burials, at the request of the Secretary of State for the Environment, under the Burial Act 1853. When granted, our PCC would then serve a written request to the Parish Council to take over churchyard maintenance, under the Local Government Act 1972, typically giving 1 year's notice. But don't worry it's not full yet! Currently there are available some 29 full grave coffin plots, and 70 burial of ashes plots. The main body of the churchyard could become completely full in maybe 8 – 10 years, similarly with ashes burials as these are now more frequent. This situation is arising throughout the country, and some Councils are anticipating a need for burials within their parish, by obtaining land for use as a cemetery. Fornham All Saints did this many years ago.

Our Annual Meeting to elect a Parochial Church Council (PCC) for 2023, meeting 4 times a year, will be held on 17 May 2023.

Finally grateful thanks to the Parish Council for the annual grant of £500 last year, towards the £2000 annual cost of the churchyard maintenance of grass cutting, hedge, trees & yews trimming, which maintains the churchyard in very good condition and appearance, and is often commented on such by many visitors, certainly compared to many other churches where funds are just not available.

6. Report from the Village Hall Committee (Paul Butler)

Our exciting news is that the old wooden and metal windows have now been replaced with double glazed units throughout the building. A huge thank you to BEK for their hard work in installing these, especially during a very cold spell in December, and fitting in with our bookings. We are hoping that this will contribute to keeping our electricity costs down as well as making our groups feel a little warmer. The Committee would like to thank Councillors Rebecca Hopfensperger and Sarah Broughton for a contribution to the costs of the windows from their Locality Budget. This is very much appreciated.

We have also replaced all our lights with LED ones in order to help reduce the cost of running the hall. Groups have reported that this has made a huge difference to the light levels, especially for the craft groups. Following our required 5 yearly electrical inspection by AB Electricals we asked if they could quote for the replacement of the lights with LEDs and this they did, also fitting them within a month. An excellent job and very much appreciated.

A smart meter has been fitted by Eon. This enables our Hall Manager, Lynne Quelch, to keep an eye on the electricity usage in the hall. We have also been able to negotiate a better rate from our energy supplier. We remain extremely concerned about the high level of the bills and the percentage of our income that this represents. The Committee would like to thank the Parish Council for their contribution to the costs.

There is Wi-Fi in the hall and some groups have been able to make use of this to help them research information for their hobby/interest. We have also fitted a post box beside the front door, this is to comply with the requirement by BT to have our postcode recognised by Royal Mail so that we could have the Wi-Fi installed.

The garden has been spruced up and the bench, storeroom doors and fencing have been painted. Now we're looking forward to warmer days when groups can sit out in this space.

A huge thank you to Lynne, our Hall Manager, for all her continued hard work.

We are pleased to welcome the return of the Whist Group on a weekly basis on Friday evenings from the beginning of March. Their numbers have increased since then and they are happy to be back. We will

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also be welcoming a new weekly Yoga group on a Tuesday evening. The organiser will be running two sessions, between 1800 and 2015, from 9 May 2023.

Sadly, we had an incident at the hall when one of the groups had an unwelcome visitor. The person stormed into their session, used abusive language, then went outside and spat on a car which they considered was blocking them in. The fact that they, of course, should not have been parking there themselves in the first place seemed to elude them. Our Hall Manager has informed the Police Community Engagement Officer, who has had a conversation with her and will be taking this matter further. Unfortunately, he was unable to attend our recent meeting, but we hope to arrange a time and date which is suitable to him to discuss the next steps. We have suggested to the groups that they may wish to lock the front door when they are in their session, but of course leave the key in the lock for a quick exit to comply with fire safety. It is a sad reflection that we may have to do this but we are hopeful that this has been a rare incident.

At the beginning of August, we are planning our maintenance week, when our Hall Manager and members of the Committee don their old clothes and pick up a paintbrush. We have been fortunate in being able to obtain a tower to help us reach the upper part of the walls. The only real problem area is a small hall, to the left of the main window, where we continue to have a problem with mould. Our Hall Manager monitors this and has dealt with it recently. The warmer weather will help as we cannot afford to put any heating on in that room.

We were really pleased to welcome Nicki Warwick to the Committee, Nicki presently runs the Mother & Toddler group at the hall, but she has agreed to stay on the Committee once her tenure with her group finishes.

The Committee continues with its present members, but we would really like to recruit some 'new blood'.

7. Reports from Local Clubs & Societies:

- **the Ladies Club;**

The Clerk read out a report on behalf of Heather Long;

'The Ladies Club was nearly disbanded last summer with Beryl moving out of the area and a few of the community feeling they were unable to commit any more because of various reasons. One or two of the committee approached other members and a new committee was formed last summer.

We have had a busy and interesting year so far starting in October 2022, Julie Rose who did a facial on one of our members.

November, we had a 'Crafty Craft' evening with Louise making Christmas baubles to decorate our Christmas trees.

December, Christmas Lunch at The Manger Bradfield. 18 members enjoying the Christmas festivities.

January, we welcomed Ian Robertson from the Elveden Estate. Talking on the history of the Estate and the day to day running of the farm.

February, Paige Pope from 'The Dogs Trust' talked about her work with the trust and gave a detailed talk on re-homing of the dogs

March, Enid talked to us about her work with 'St John's Ambulance' this included a demonstration on how to use a defibrillator.

April, 'My London Marathon Experience' Freddie Chenery gave an inspiring account of running the marathon in the early 1980s and running alongside various celebrities.

May, we will be holding 'A Coronation Tea Party' to commemorate the new King Charles 3rd.

June, 'Outing to Fullers Mill'

July, 'Summer Supper'

August, an outing to Cromer to see the 'End of the Pier Show'.

September, will be a talk by Jo Copsey on 'The Street Pastors'

We also had a trip to Cambridge to The Arts Theatre to see 'Fisherman's Friends'.

A new Calendar starts in October for 2023 /2024

We have booked so far;

History Matters - Kevin Boardman

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Turn and Burn
Craft Evening
and more to be confirmed.

In the past year we paid around £40 per speaker per evening. Some of these speakers donate their fee to a charity. Next year we estimate the fee per evening will be around £50 for a speaker. We paid £225 last year to hire the Village Hall for the evening. All outings are funded by our members.

- **the Gardening Club;**
No report submitted, no representative present.
- **the Toddler Group;**
No report submitted, no representative present.
- **the FAS Computer Club;**
No report submitted, no representative present.

PUBLIC FORUM:

No issues raised.

Meeting Closed at 7:58pm

Signed:

Date: