

Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting of the Beeston with Bittering Parish Council held on **TUESDAY 29th APRIL 2014** in Beeston Village Hall at 7.00 p.m.

Chairman: J. Farrall.

Councillors Present: B List, T Townshend, R Sharpin, J Perry prior to co-option.

County and District Councillor M Kiddle Morris
9 Members of the Public.

APOLOGIES

Apologies had been received from County and District Councillor M Kiddle Morris, the Brownies as it is Wensum Canoe Training Night, Jenny Harris-Chair of Governors of Beeston School.

MINUTES

The Minutes of 30th April 2013 had been circulated but could be read out if requested. No request was made. Councillor Farrall proposed and Councillor List seconded the adoption of the minutes and these were duly signed as a true record.

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT APRIL 2014

Councillor Farrall read out his report as follows:-

The Parish Council (PC) met 11 times in 2013-4; there were 10 ordinary meetings and one special meeting on 18 September 2013 to consider Reserved Matters for the redevelopment of land at The Ploughshare. The main issues have been: -

- | | | | |
|---|---|---|--|
| 1 | Representations to Norfolk County Council (NCC) and Breckland Council (BC) on (i) Planning Policy and on (ii) Planning Applications | | |
| 2 | Broadband | 3 | Representations on NCC's Budget for 2014-5 |
| 4 | Highways in and around Beeston | 5 | Speed Watch |
| 6 | A Budget for 2014-5 | 7 | Open Space Maintenance Contract |
| 8 | Beeston Website | 9 | Membership of the Parish council |

1 Representations to Norfolk County Council and Breckland Council.

i Planning Policy.

Norfolk Minerals and Waste Plan

The PC sent a representative to the Public Local Enquiry to ask for the proposed quarries to be far closer to the main areas (near Thetford) to be developed in Breckland, which would have put a lower priority on gravel extraction in Beetley. The Inspector made no changes in his recommendations to NC in October 2013.

Breckland Local Development Framework (LDF)

BC has introduced a requirement of £60 per square metre to be contributed from new house building to a fund to secure improvements in open spaces and play areas.

BC has introduced a strategy for PCs to identify and support 'Community Assets', which may come under the threat of closing; the PC has asked BC to put 'The Ploughshare' on the list of Community Assets in Beeston.

BC will shortly publish a timetable for the review of its LDF, although the new version is likely to have a different name. This would bring into effect the intentions of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), which seeks essentially to simplify the control of Planning Applications as the critical means for improving the economy. The new district-wide plan is intended to provide certainty to developers and local areas over land for new housing and economic growth up to 2031. Consultations are due to start in autumn.

ii Planning Applications

NCC has approved a new access for lorries from the C222 to an existing quarry in Litcham Road. Its effect would be to close the existing access from Watery Lane and improve the landscape setting at the entry from Litcham Road. Both would be advantages to the area but realistically may not be implemented because the proposed access would not be remunerative

without further mineral extraction, now unlikely because NC did not support developer's request for an extension to the present quarry. The PC was among the organisations and individuals who opposed the proposed extension.

NCC has a S106 Agreement, which required contributions to off-site footpath improvements with the previous developer on the quarries in Bittering. The improvements agreed at the time do not now look as if they would be the ideal investment and the former landowner who was a party to the Agreement is known to be in favour of diverting the fund to other highway improvements in the 3 Parishes with an interest in the application. The Agent acting for a new developer has informed the PC that he is soon to make a new application to NC, which would amend the timing and some details of the earlier consent. This may give the 3 PCs some leverage in reviewing the works to be done.

The volume of new house building and extensions to existing houses is now exceptionally low. The PC made representations to BC on the details to be determined in the application (by then already approved) for 2 new houses on land at 'The Ploughshare'. Work has not yet started. BC gave Ben Burgess approval for a range of improvements to its workshops, some of which were deliberately aimed at saving energy in the existing building.

Bernard Matthews applied for consent for a range of small energy-saving buildings in the turkey-rearing buildings.

BC gave permission for 2 further micro-generation wind turbines and a series of minor changes to the Dudgeon Offshore consent.

2 **Broadband**

British Telecom has gone ahead with improvements to the local telephone network; but it appears that the work will not lead to a significant improvement in speed.

3 **The NCC Budget for 2014-5**

In September 2013 NC consulted other local councils and interested individuals on their spending plans for 2014-5, due to a general reduction in the Treasury Funding to Local Authorities. The PC objected only to proposed cuts that would directly bear on its interests: - plans to reduce spending on highway maintenance; 'bus travel for school students; a large reduction in the mobile library service and some other details. In the event the proposed cuts were reduced and The Treasury has since approved an increase in highways maintenance to defray flood-related costs incurred last winter. However, NC has since decided to withdraw from a proposed contract with an outside contractor to provide and operate an 'Energy From Waste' plant in King's Lynn and the Secretary of State for Communities has overturned a proposed annual grant of £6,000,000 related to a reduction in landfill charges. These two measures imply that other savings may later have to be made.

4 **Highways in around Beeston**

Conditions for pedestrians on the west side of Dereham Road near Dairy Drift, where there is no dedicated footpath within the 30 mph restriction, continue to be dangerous due to bad drainage. Elsewhere NCC's contractors keep reasonably up to date with repairs to potholes and maintaining visibility on bends and at junctions. Work is soon to put in hand to improve safety for pedestrians on the west side of Dereham Road near the school, which may require further consultations with the adjoining landowners.

5 **Speed Watch**

The PC's intention to organise this scheme has been temporarily delayed. One gap in the personnel may need to be filled, after which the proposal should go ahead.

6 **The 2013-4 Financial Position and a Budget for 2014-5**

In 2013-4 the PC had an income of £6,317 from its precept and made grants to a range of local charities:-

	£
Beeston Playing Field Committee	580
Beeston Village Hall	1,500

British Legion Poppy Fund	40
Dereham and Holt CAB	75
Beeston Church Grounds	300
Bittering Church Grounds	100

At the time the PC set its Precept for 2014-5 it appeared that BC would not renew its habit paying a Support Grant to PCs. Accordingly, Beeston with Bittering PC set new Precept of £7,250 to overcome this prospective shortfall and to compensate for inflation over the past few years. In the event BC decided to support its PCs at a similar level to that set in the past. When the PC comes to set its Precept for 2015-6 it will be necessary to refer to the decision taken in the current year, in case this or other circumstances lead to conditions that would justify an inflation-related change.

7 Open Space Maintenance Contract

The PC decided to renew its contract with the contractor appointed in 2012.

8 Beeston Website

Paul Marchant continues to service the website, the PC thanks him for his time and effort in this task.

9 Membership of the Parish Council

There was one further resignation and one further co-option in the year, leaving two vacancies to be filled. The PC has the authority of BC to fill these by co-option.

Julian Farrall 29 April 2014

FUEL CHARITY ACCOUNT

The Clerk reported that 49 parishioners received £20 from the Beeston Fuel Charity, of which 1 has not been cashed. The balance as at 31st March 2014 is £339.77. The rent review has been completed and agreed with the tenant at £1500 an increase of £400 per annum on the previous rent. The first payment under the new terms had been received in October 2013.

REPORTS FROM LOCAL ORGANISATIONS

1ST BEESTON RAINBOWS AND BROWNIES

Report for Annual Parish Meeting 2014

The Rainbows and Brownie units have had a busy year.

The Rainbows have completed their world roundabout and are currently working on their seasons Roundabout. They had a sleepover at the village hall in Nov 2013, attended remembrance Sunday in Beeston, taken part in the Beeston Carol Service. Rainbows has also seen a change in leadership since October 2013 when 'Rose' Caroline Chant took over the unit. This change was celebrated with a day of special events at Hunstanton Sealife centre. In February we celebrated Thinking Day with a look at where our food comes from and what the equivalent to Rainbows do in the various countries, and in the afternoon we visited Mike the Butcher and made sausages and burgers and we extend a big thank you to Mike for this event. Currently the unit has 7 members (12 is our Max) but a very healthy waiting list of prospective members too young to join at present.

The Brownies camped last July at Helleston and took part in Archery. The leaders bag packed at Morrison's raising money towards our Hautbois stayaway to celebrate 100 years of Brownies in 2014. Like the rainbows we attended Beeston Remembrance services and laid wreaths at the Church and the American Memorial. We learnt to drum and played the drum carol at the carol Concert in Beeston. We have completed our Writers, Hostess, designer interest badges to name but a few. We celebrated thinking day along with the rainbows and also made friendship bracelets to send to Sangam our World centre in India to raise money for new doors and to fund local projects in India. The winter fayre and the leaders pack packing marked the end to 2 and half years of fundraising to raise enough money to pay for our Big Brownie Stayaway at Hautbois House the regional activity

centre for Girl Guiding in Coltishall, which is this coming weekend so we are all very excited (the rainbows are coming over night too) Brownies currently has 16 members with 3 new members due to start next term.(20 is our Max) Daffodil (Kim Chant)continues as our leader in charge with Bluebell (Maxine Brown) as her assistant

Caroline Chant
Kim Chant

BEESTON PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL

St Mary the Virgin Beeston

Parochial Church Council report to Beeston Parish Council, for year ended 31st December 2012

Secretary's Report, Beeston APCM 28 April 2014

There have been six PCC meetings held during the year.

The pattern of services continues as previously, with Eucharist being observed on the second Sunday of the month, Rev Martin Joyce officiating, Matins on the fourth Sunday and no service on the third Sunday. On the first and fifth Sundays, joint services in the benefice are held.

Special services included Easter, Harvest, Remembrance, and Christmas services. At the Carol service, we were joined by the Brownies and Rainbows, complete with very large drum!

To a packed congregation, the children of Beeston School once again shared their Christingle service with us, which also included their wonderful interpretation of "A Christmas Carol".

There were 0 Christenings, 0 weddings and 3 Funerals.

Fundraising events included Lent Lunch, Mini Fete, Norfolk Churches Trust "Ride and Stride", Harvest Lunch and Bonfire BBQ.

We received a one off easement fee from Dudgeon Offshore Wind Farm to trench across PCC owned land.

We would like to thank the many people who loyally volunteer their time, often year after year, to clean, polish and freshen up the church interior.

We are also very grateful to the Parish Council for their financial contribution which enables us to employ Mr Peter Cross and his team, who maintain the large area in the churchyard adjacent to the roadside hedge.

We are especially grateful to Peter Carter for the path upkeep and hedge-cutting and to Rodney Walthew for grass cutting and mole catching in the remainder of the church yard. There have been some difficulties when using the grass cutter in the area around recent, unlevelled graves. Thanks must also go to those who tend graves and often tidy around adjoining grave areas. Visitors often comment on the neat appearance of Beeston churchyard.

FRIENDS OF BEESTON SCHOOL

No report was received.

BEESTON NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH

No report was given.

BEESTON CRICKET CLUB.

Brian Parke presented the report.

The club last year put two teams into the West Norfolk League with the first team finishing mid table in Division 3 and the second team finishing one off the bottom in Division 4. The 2nd Team contained 5 boys under the age of 16 for every game, with at least three of the boys coming from the village. The club ran junior coaching every Thursday evening throughout the season. The club will again be running 2 teams and hoping to arrange fixtures for the junior team.

BITTERING PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL

The reverend Robert Marsden presented the report.

Bittering Parva SS. Peter & Paul

Annual Report for 2013

The Rev. Robert Marsden is the Priest-in-Charge.

- Churchwardens appointed for 2013 were Dr. Jack Leggett & Miss. Jane Napier-Wilson.
- Members & Officers of the PCC duly elected to office in 2013 were:- Lay vice-Chair & Building & Fabric Officer : Dr. Jack Leggett. PCC Secretary: Jane Napier-Wilson. PCC Treasurer & Minutes Secretary: Mrs. Pat Baldwin. Deputy Warden: Mrs. Pat Hall. Electoral Roll Officer, Deanery Synod Representative & "Friends of" Chair: Mrs. Barbara Marsden. Other PCC members:- Mrs. Janet Leggett.
- There were 6 names on the Church Electoral roll at the APCM in 2013.
- Bittering Parva St. Peter & St. Paul co-operates with all the constituent parishes of the Gressenhall Group to further Christian ministry in its parishes, and through Parish Share contributes to the wider costs of the Church's mission.
- The parishes co-operate to provide weekly, and varied, Sunday Worship during each month. Regular monthly worship at Bittering Parva SS Peter & Paul is possible only through the faithful ministry of its Clergy, its Readers, its Wardens, our Accordionist Mr. Dick Hall, and its people.
- On average 8 people attended normal Sunday worship (on last Sunday of each month)
- Attendance at the Major Festivals:- Harvest 23: Christmas Carols 41: Easter 5.
- Our grateful thanks go to all who so generously contribute their gifts to the life of our parish church; esp. those who faithfully clean & decorate our church.
- The Children & Young People Protection Policy & Vulnerable Adults Policy are both under the oversight of Rev. Kevin Blogg.
- Bittering Parva SS Peter & Paul meets its own direct costs of ministry, including maintenance of its church building; and it gave £10 to Norfolk Churches Trust.
- Bittering Parva generously contributes to the Benefice expenses of its full-time priest.
- Parish Share for 2013 was £500 of which the PCC was able to pay 90%. £135.12 remained in General Funds (not including Building Fund) as a working balance.

Summary of Specific Parish News (other information available on request)

- *Church & Village* has been regularly used to better communicate with our village community.
- A copy of this Report will be delivered to each property during the next round of pastoral visiting by Rev. Robert Marsden.
- Various maintenance and works have been done to/in the Church & as well as planting within the Churchyard.
- The PCC is sincerely grateful to Beeston with Bittering Parish Council for its continuing generous support towards the cost of Churchyard maintenance.
- The new Church Building & Fabric Logbook was compiled & completed by Rev. Robert Marsden & Dr. Jack Leggett (Churchwarden), with the kind assistance of Mr. Christopher Codling (Architect).
- We are pleased to report that the long-missing Banns of Marriage Book was found; as were various original documents relating to the rebuilding & re-consecration of the church in 1960.
- Basic Organ repairs, together with re-tuning, were undertaken by Mr. Johnathon White.
- A very popular "game stall" was run at the 2013 Gressenhall Fete, successfully raising £115.
- *The Friends of Bittering Parva Church* made a donation of £310 towards the cost of Insurance.
- Our traditional Carols by Candlelight Service was again very well attended (41), with participation from readers of all ages...
- We again hosted the Group Holy Communion in July. There were no Occasional Services held here during 2013; but 2 Weddings are booked for 2014 !

Bittering Parva SS Peter & Paul is grateful to Mr. Michael Hewkin for conducting an Independent Examination of the PCC books. Records and Annual Accounts.

BEESTON SCHOOL GOVERNORS

Beeston Primary School 2012 – 2013

A report from the Jenny Harris Chair of Governors read out at the meeting.

A great deal of attention has been given to the state of Norfolk schools in both the local and national press over the last year. All parents and their children deserve the best from our schools and this

has always been the focus of the headteacher, staff and governors of Beeston School. Being a small school and also a good school is not easy to achieve within the current climate.

In July 2013 Beeston School was graded as good with outstanding features. The report stated that the headteacher and the governing body direct the school's work well. Pupils make good progress and achieve well. All teaching is good and teaching in some lessons is outstanding. Relationships between staff and pupils are strong. Pupils are extremely friendly and considerate and feel happy and safe in school. Their behaviour and attitudes to learning are outstanding, and this makes a considerable contribution to the good progress they make.

The report also gave recommendations for improvements which would move the school towards an outstanding grade. These recommendations, together with data analysis and knowledge of the school are incorporated into our current School Improvement and Development Plan.

The report also pointed out that Beeston is much smaller than the average primary school. Within the current climate many of Norfolk's small schools are under threat. Earlier this year, schools with less than 50 pupils were asked to consider whether they were still viable and could provide it's pupils with a good education.

At present we have 59 pupils on roll. We have 21 infant children and 38 junior children. Further development In Beeston would/could have a significant impact on our viability going forward and on the wider community in general. Mr Perry is a strong advocate for the future of small schools and has been invited to participate in a "Small Schools Think Tank" being set up by NCC. Governors are also fully aware of the importance of protecting the future of our school.

Beeston School values its links with the local community and with also providing its pupils with links to the wider world. Under the guidance of Mrs Woods, our Y3/4 teacher, each class has a blog on the school website. The children are sharing their learning not only within school but with the wider world. Links to the past are also important to the school. The school continues to remain in contact with the 392nd Bomb Group. Every year they donate £150 to the school which is used to buy new books for the school library. In addition, this year, the school also received an additional \$100. Y5/6 spent last term learning about WW2.

This year is also the anniversary of the start of WW1 and the school is planning to commemorate it by planting a poppy garden. This idea was put forward by the House Captains. The children will also be learning about WW1 and are hoping to share their work with the local community during an open afternoon. It is also hoped that the poppies will be in full bloom.

We all owe a debt to those who have made sacrifices during war. As an ex- serviceman Mr Perry is also a keen supporter of Help for Heroes, and with the support of the governing body he is taking part in The Big Battlefield Bike Ride in June. The ride covers 400 miles from Brussels to Paris and is the major fund raising event for Help for Heroes.

The school has an active parent group" FOBS" which raises funds towards the cost of transport for school trips. These trips are an important part of providing relevant experiences linked to learning. This year Y3/4 visited Swaffam Museum as part of their Egyptian topic and the Infant class visited Bressingham Steam Museum as part of their transport topic.

Numerous fund raising events have taken place this year. Donations have been made to various charities including Macmillan Nurses and the East Anglian Children's' Hospice.

The school continues to run an Early Starters Club and also a Teatime Club. The Early Starters Club runs every morning and the Teatime Club operates after school from 3pm until 4.30pm, every day except Friday. The Teatime Club enables children to catch up with homework or use the computers, or even just the time and space to chill out with friends.

We have one vacancy on the governing body for a Local Authority Governor. We are always interesting in hearing from members of the community who would like to be governors. As governors we attend meetings twice a term and undertake training. This training has included child protection, performance management, basic finance and protecting public money. Through our School Development plan governors have specific areas of responsibilities and meet with staff on a regular basis.

BEESTON PLAYING FIELD COMMITTEE**AGM MEETING APRIL 2014**

This year has been a little more eventful in that we have finally got the boiler sorted out and the heating is working well. Fiona has been very helpful in organizing engineers and spending time at the Hall in very cold weather while the work was being carried out. The system seems a little complex for a lot of people and they do not always understand the workings of the timer. Unfortunately the settings had been changed recently by someone, leaving the heating on all day every day, which meant an extra oil delivery as the tank was emptied. Hopefully people will read the notices and this will not happen again.

Annie Cross has continued as cleaner and despite poor health this year has been doing a good job. There are always the usual complaints about the state of the floor, but I know she cleans it every week. The problem is that not everyone else leaves it swept when they leave so the next person complains to me! Contents of the bins remain a problem and Wayne had to empty the play area bin which was overflowing and contained a quantity of dog waste and dirty nappies. Not a pleasant job! As before we have found little support for fund raising events and decided the Cricket Day had run its course and we would not organize this in future. We tried car boot sales which had a minimal attendance but are trying again this year, changing the times and dates. So far, no-one has telephoned to book a stall. So, as usual, it will probably be down to committee members. We had hoped to purchase new play equipment but we presume with such lack of support that this is not wanted by the village.

We had a problem concerning trees that were being cut down as they conflicted with the power lines. We had thought it would be a good idea to cut up the wood and offer for logs, to raise some funds. Unfortunately, when Wayne went to the field to start cutting he found that the man next door had pushed his fence up and was taking the wood into his garden as quickly as he could. I went to see him and a very unpleasant confrontation followed. The person in question insisted he could take the wood as the boundary was not defined. He was extremely rude and quite threatening. Finally he told me to leave his property, which I did as I was very shaken by the episode. Jon Loomer informed the police and they came to me to get details. Despite several sessions with Constable Creasy and subsequent visits by him to the person involved the matter remained unresolved and he kept the wood.

The bookings have involved yoga, brownies, jive, dancing, parish council meetings, church events, cricket and occasional party bookings. A Tae Kwando club for children started briefly but soon moved to Litcham School as there was more room. The hall will be used for polling in May. We lost another committee member, Jon Loomer from the pub and despite advertising, recruitment of new members remains a problem. I have decided to retire from the committee and hand over the reins to someone else, although I will keep the diary for another couple of months until someone can take it on. I have been on the committee for eight years and although I have enjoyed most of it, feel it is time for me to go and leave room for fresh input.

Beeston Playing Field Committee - AGM Monday 14th April 2014**Treasurer's Report for the YE 31st March 2014**

Accounts have been prepared, as in previous years, on a cash basis, i.e. cash received and paid - no amounts due included.

Income:

- Hire of hall has remained around the same as the previous year at £2600
- Fund raising through the Race Night, Beeston Entertains and the FunDay/BBQ was an approx. net of £1300 and was paid into the Saver account. The two Car Boot Sales only raised £46 and this was put into the cash towards cleaning.
- The recycling raised £97 but I'm in the process of obtaining collection dockets from Whites to claim any more owed to us.
- Parish Council grant was down as I have only just received a further £750 to bank and this will be seen in the new financial year.

Expenditure:

- The water, heat and light is showing lower than 2012/13, but we have only just been invoiced for the March delivery of oil for £276.15 due to a mistake with the payment made by Pam Ackerley. So true amount is very similar to last year.
I have contacted E.on, our electricity supplier, as prices were going to increase. We were on a 28 Day Notice plan which was quite expensive so I have changed to a Fixed Price 1 Year Plan which they said should save us about £68 per annum. They have now also reduced the monthly direct debit from £33 per month to £24 per month (so perhaps a saving of more like £108 pa).
- Insurance costs have been reduced, thanks to Jon, since August 2013 by £32 per month.
- Cleaning/Maintenance is up this year by approx £1100, mostly due to the boiler repairs and servicing which totalled £736 for the recent work and £105 for work earlier last year.
I have spoken to Viridor Waste recently as we received a leaflet from their competitors Glazewing. They have therefore reduced our prices and we should not be subject to their increases due in April 2014 and also should reduce on last year's costs by around £100.

There is overall a deficit of £672 for the year.

I have had to transfer £1000 from the Saver account to the current account in February to cover the extra expenditure this year and late receipt of the Parish Council grant.

Do we have any indication of the amount of grant for the hall each year?

If you take a rough estimate, not allowing for any unknown expenditure, I feel we would be in deficit next year by a similar amount. If no additional fund raising is arranged we will have to draw on the Saver account again.

Therefore feel we ought to consider some fundraising in addition to the Car Boot Sales, as this only brings in small amounts.

Finally balances as at 31st March 2014 were as follows:

Current account £594.87

Saver account £2132.20

Cash held £50.32

Invoices raised for QE 31/3/14 £505

Fiona Crump

14/4/14

Beeston Playing Field Committee

Charity registration: 268730

**Financial Statements 2012/13 and 2013/14
Year Ended 31st March**

	2012/13 £	2013/14 £
INCOME		
Hire of hall/field	2698	2637
Social/fundraising events	1465	1871
Recycling	104	97
Parish Council Grant	3208	998
Donations	122	35
	<hr/>	<hr/>
TOTAL	7597	5638
EXPENDITURE		
Water, Heat & Light	2062	1800
Insurances/Subs/Licences	1189	1101
Funding Events	352	535
Cleaning/Maintenance	1742	2857
Postage/Stationery	2	18
Donations	270	
	<hr/>	<hr/>
TOTAL	5617	6310
 SURPLUS-/DEFICIT	 1980	 -672
		£
	31/03/2014	Bank current account 594.87
		Bank saver account 2132.2
		Cash held 50.32
	Debtors	505
		<hr/>

Following the presentation of the reports there was a lengthy discussion on the future of the and this will be discussed at a future Parish Council meeting.

COUNTY COUNCILLOR REPORT

County Councillor for Necton and Launditch Annual Report 2013/14

The election of Councillors for a new 4 year term took place in May 2013, since then there has been one bye election (in Thetford) where the UKIP Councillor had resigned; the Division was won by the Labour candidate. Last week (28th February) a Labour Councillor resigned from the Labour group and is to remain as an Independent. The current state of the parties at County Hall is now as follows:

Conservative	40
Green Party	4
Independent	2
Labour	14
Lib/Dem	10
UKIP	14

At the Council meeting immediately after the May election it was proposed that the Council investigate the possibility of moving from the strong leader and cabinet system of governance to a committee system. There are various models that can be adopted under the committee system and this has been discussed at length by the parties. An Extraordinary Council meeting was held on the 28th April to debate the way forward, and a new committee structure was agreed with a review to take place in November this year to "fine tune" the workings of the system in case any problems are observed.

The grant that central government distributes annually to all Councils has been reduced over the last 3 years and will be reduced further in future years; the previous administration made savings of £135m but there are still more savings required over the next 3 years and these amount to £189m. Government funding cuts of £91m and rising demand for vital services account for the shortfall. Despite this the Council agreed on 17th February to freeze Council Tax for this year and to restore £7.1m of proposed cuts to the budget as a result of the "Putting People First" consultation which ended on the 12th December 2013. (£3.1m to consolidate the Safeguarding Children programme; £1m to delay changes to post 16 transport for a year; £3m to restore the well-being element of adult social care personal budgets).

Norfolk has not suffered as much from the extremely wet January and February as other parts of the country and the very low temperatures experienced over the last 4 years have not been evident. Winter highway maintenance (ie gritting) has not been necessary to the same level as in previous years. Potholes have of course appeared as usual but not in the same quantity and consequently have been temporarily filled in short order. The highways maintenance budget has been cut by £1m for next year 2014/15 and it remains to be seen if there is sufficient funding in the budget to cope with another severe winter.

The "Better Broadband for Norfolk" contract managed by BT and funded by the County Council and central Government will enable the majority of Norfolk homes and businesses to enjoy better broadband speeds by installing "fibre to box" and other technologies. The Tittleshall exchange is currently being upgraded to allow superfast broadband connections. Beeston is one of the first villages to have a fibre cabinet installed (on the corner of Mileham Road/Back Lane) and if all goes according to plan connections to superfast broadband should be available by the end of June.

Mark Kiddle-Morris,
County Councillor for Necton and Launditch.

DISTRICT COUNCILLOR REPORT**Breckland District Councillor for Launditch Ward**
Annual Report 2013/14

The Boundary Commission was obliged to review the ward boundaries within Breckland because 2 of the current wards have too many voters. They also indicated that they would assess the number of councillors required to adequately represent the electorate and to provide sufficient members to run the committees. The Boundary Commission considered representations from Breckland and others and their proposals are currently out for consultation until the 14th April. It is proposed that Launditch ward is increased in size by the addition of the parishes of Fransham and Newton by Castle Acre. There is also a proposal to reduce the number of Breckland Councillors from 54 to 49. The Boundary Commission will produce its final report in July and the new warding arrangements will come into effect at the May 2015 elections.

Breckland has frozen Council Tax for this year despite a 25% reduction in the Rate Support Grant (RSG) handed down from central government. The shortfall in RSG, which we anticipate will fall every year, is being partly filled by New Homes Bonus and the retention of part of the Non Domestic Rates paid by businesses. Breckland has invested in a commercial property portfolio which has a gross yield of £2.5m, which is nearly equal to the amount of Council Tax collected. We face substantial budget deficits in 16/17 and 17/18 which will require further savings to be made.

The Breckland Local Development Framework (LDF) planning documents were adopted in 2009 and 2012, we are currently reviewing the LDF planning policies and site allocations to fall in to line with the guidance given in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) which was issued in early 2012. The first stage of the consultation on the new Local Plan will take place near the end of this year.

Breckland are obliged to have enough land identified to accommodate 5 years of house building at the annual rate of around 700 identified in the LDF (about 3500). We have at present about 2.8 years of housing land available which means that we are obliged to pass planning permissions that they are being proposed in locations which are not identified for growth in our plans. This situation will not be resolved for between 2 and 4 years.

The Breckland communities team have over £1m in the communities reserve which is used to give parishes and community organisations grants to create or enhance facilities in their area, the application process is simple and the decision process has been streamlined to enable quick decisions to be made.

Mark Kiddle-Morris

OPEN FORUM.

In the Open Forum a parishioner raised the matter of the closure of the post box at the former post office. It was felt that this had been summarily closed without any consultation. A parishioner had stated that she was happy for a post box to be sited on her land if the box is not going to re-open. The Parish Council will investigate why the box was closed without any consultation. A parishioner also suggested that more information be obtained about those people who are on the War memorial especially as this year is the centenary of the start of World War 1 The Chairman agreed to pursue this.

The meeting closed at 1933