



WESTLETON NEWSLETTER

KEEPING YOU POSTED

New Parish Council Clerk Nick Rees attends his first Committee meeting.



New clerk
Nick Rees

Parish Council Chair
Arlette Smith

Parish Council Vice-Chair
Roy Swindell

The Chairman Arlette Smith introduced the new Clerk, Nick Rees to all the Parish Councillors and members of the public attending the January 23rd Parish Council meeting. She reported that the selectors had an excellent choice of candidates to choose from and they were very pleased when Nick accepted the offer of the Clerk's role. Nick has a good background in finance, and is able to operate the PAYE return for himself, an obligation which the Council would otherwise have had to outsource at an additional cost. She asked everyone to help him settle into his new role.

The Parish Council Chairman writes:

Rather belated good wishes for the New Year from the Parish Council and apologies for the delayed newsletter. As many of you are aware we have had a change of Clerk and felt it appropriate to wait until we could supply his details. We were all very sorry to learn of Chris resignation, he will be a great loss to both the village and the Parish Council. During his time as Clerk he worked endlessly on our behalf to get all our affairs in order and he was able to hand everything over to our new Clerk fully up to date. Our new clerk is Nick Rees from Halesworth, he has had considerable financial and planning experience and we feel he will fit into the role very comfortably. It will obviously take a while for him to acquaint himself with all the new faces and little idiosyncrasies of the Parish Council so please bear with us. Nick will be pleased to take your calls if you have anything to report or query (contact details on back page).

Westleton Precept set for 2012.

There was considerable discussion at the January Parish Council meeting about the setting of the 2012 precept. The 2012 budget was considered, and the proposed total expenditure of £12,080 was agreed as being realistic and necessary, this expenditure includes an extraordinary sum of £500 as a contribution to village celebrations for the Royal Jubilee. It was noted that only a minimal sum had been allocated against the likely maintenance cost for the village mower, which has a heavy usage.

Vice-Chairman Roy Swindell declared that the proposed £500 increase in the precept to a total of £12,000 represented only about 4 pence per week extra for each household, but the Committee members were very sensitive to the fact that if the increase is considered as a percentage of the current precept this is a 4.35% rise. The Committee finally agreed unanimously that the precept should be set at £12, 000.

COMMUNITY FIELD AND FACILITIES COMPLETED AS PLANNED

The development of the Community Field approved at the village open meeting in the Village Hall in the Autumn of 2010 is now complete after the recent erection of the practice cricket net (see photo right) and the finishing of the small football field. Both these final items were funded with a 100% grant from Suffolk Coastal District Council Outdoor Playing Space Funding Scheme. Also complete is the landscaping funded by the Play Builder grant. The Parish Council would like to acknowledge with thanks the support of Sue Townsend, who planned the layout, obtained the trees, shrubs and plants and took a very active role in the planting.



Recent decisions and actions initiated by Westleton Parish Council



Re-planting of Compartment 7 North of Westleton Common

Replanting of the area was carried out as agreed by The Common Management Committee and The Parish Council after consultation with immediately adjacent local residents, who have subsequently expressed their satisfaction with the work. The replanting had been carried out by Antony Clough, and The Parish Council gave him a vote of thanks for his excellent work.

Mr Clough reported that the planting had been carried out below the budget allocated, and he proposed to use the small sum left, plus £90 from a donation to buy and plant three standard thorn trees in the area. The Parish Council approved this suggestion, and the work is now completed.

IMPORTANT ISSUE: The planned future management of Westleton Common

The Parish Council organised a second public meeting in the Village Hall on October 13th 2011, to hear possible options for the future management of The Common, when the current arrangement comes to an end in September 2013. Partners with Westleton Parish Council in the current arrangement are the Suffolk Coastal District Council, who provide advice and up to £700 worth of services per annum.

The Parish Council had set up its own sub-committee to look into the options, and these were presented at the October public meeting by Ivor Murrell with an indication from Tony Ingram of some of the sources of possible funding. The meeting was told that there were three alternatives after September 2013:

- 1) Do nothing, which was quickly rejected as an option as The Common would quickly become overgrown with gorse and scrub, which defaults on the Parish Council's obligations for the site.
- 2) Apply for a Higher Level Stewardship (HLS) scheme, which if gained could produce a funding of around £3600 per annum for ten years to carry out work as agreed by the funding body, Natural England. (This option is being urged to the Council by John Davies of SCDC, with a recent suggestion by him that a decision for HLS needs a prompt application.)
- 3) The Parish Council to take full control of the management of The Common, which will only be possible with active village support for work party tasks (as currently undertaken by some volunteers) and active lobbying for alternative funding input, as outlined by Tony Ingram.

A very detailed visual presentation of the sub-committee findings was given, the key the points of which were that the funding of an HLS scheme would greatly assist with the work requirements of a management scheme. However, Natural England through HLS would have a very strong input on what work, particularly what vegetation clearance was to be done. HLS funding would only be given to The Common as a 'Lowland Heath', and therefore would carry the proviso that at least 80% of the existing trees and scrub would have to be cleared, to enable heather to regain the heath.

The October 13th public meeting voiced strong concern about seeking HLS funding. It was thought that the resultant physical clearance of The Common was most unlikely to be acceptable to villagers. The situation at Sutton Heath when large numbers of trees were felled was referred to. The Parish Council Chairman declared that it was important that all villagers had a chance to have an input into this important issue, and she asked all present to publicise this issue and the need for a decision to assist the Parish Council.

Ivor Murrell and Tony Ingram offered to give the presentation on the options to any groups in the village that would like to hear it - the Women's Institute has already asked for the presentation at their May 1st meeting.

A village questionnaire on the options was suggested, and is being drawn up, to give feedback to the Parish Council.

The Community Field

As well as providing us with the front page update on the Community Field, Roy Swindell also reports that *The Funday* referred to in the earlier News Letter was a great success and raised £317 towards maintenance of the field. It is intended to run this again this coming summer and details will be announced later. Equally successful has been the contribution box and users have been generous in donations equalling very nearly half the equipment insurance premium.

The boundary hedge that was planted three years ago is now outgrowing the plastic guards and there will be a call for volunteers to remove the 1300 guards in the spring. Please keep a lookout for the announcement and help if at all possible.

Two actions arising directly from requests in the Westleton Parish Plan

Westleton Housing Needs Survey

There was a strong indication in the Westleton Parish Plan that there is a need for affordable housing for local people in Westleton. Following a presentation made in July 2011 to the Westleton Parish Council by a Suffolk ACRE Community Support Officer, it was agreed that a steering group of the Parish Council be set up to decide if a Housing Needs Survey should be carried out. At the October meeting of the Parish Council it was agreed that a survey should be carried out.

The survey document was prepared by Suffolk ACRE, with a few minor alterations made by the Parish Council. It was delivered to all households in early November 2011, with the replies to be sent to the Suffolk ACRE offices by the end of November. There was provision made for the survey documents to be provided to anyone with a connection to, but living outside Westleton.

One hundred and three replies were received by Suffolk ACRE representing about a 35% response, which is what is normally expected. Ninety-three of the responses from residents indicated they did not personally have a need for affordable housing in Westleton. Eight residents indicated a need, and two respondents from outside Westleton also considered there to be a need.

Suffolk ACRE are carrying out the analysis, and it is hoped that the final report will be available to be presented to the Parish Council by Suffolk ACRE at its March 2012 meeting. If the report shows a need for affordable housing, the Parish Council will then be involved in the next step which would be to find a suitable site if at all possible for a small development; any houses built being for local people only. As we only have a small population, these houses will always stay as affordable homes and will not be able to be sold on. Many developments of this type which have been built in other parishes have proved a real success in keeping the community alive and helping young families and those on lower incomes to stay in the village with family and friends.

Westleton Film Club

Westleton Film Club was initiated following 45% of the respondents to the question in the Parish Plan regarding which activities they would like to see in Westleton indicating they would support a film club.

The Film Club is run under the auspices of the Westleton Village Hall. Any film shown to a paying audience must pay a licence fee and a very generous donation from the Barrel Fair allowed the club to hire films from the major licence holders and the necessary equipment to be hired. The first film was shown to an audience of 46 on 5th March 2011. It was the re-mastered version of the 1969 film *The Italian Job*. Since then five films have been shown to an audience ranging from 32 to 52. The number of attendees needed to cover the cost of showing a film averages out at about 35, so we are just about holding our own. There is a bar at the shows and ice creams are on sale which helps make the Club more financially viable.

The Film Club does not run during the summer months. The Village Hall was successful in obtaining a grant in July 2011 from the Lottery, which allowed them to buy audio visual equipment thus saving the collection of the hired equipment from Suffolk Digital Cinema Network in Halesworth. At the same time the Westleton and Dunwich WEA paid for a superb new electrically operated screen. This equipment has to date been used not only by the Film Club, but by the WEA, the Gardeners Club, the WI and the Parish Council to make presentations.

The forthcoming films are *Water for Elephants* on 4th February, *Capote* on 3rd March, *Johnny English Reborn* on 7th April. The final film to be shown this season on May 5th will be *Distant Voices, Still Lives*, which has a local interest as one of the leading roles was played by Freda Dowie, known in Westleton as Freda Thompson.

The programme for next season is now being put together, and one film already selected for showing is *Akenfield*. Watch out for further details.

For information about Westleton Film Club please contact the organiser, Alex Alexander on 648854.

Shown left: Freda Dowie in *Distant Voices, Still Lives*.



Thanks are due to Roy Swindell for his initiative in entering Westleton in *The Suffolk Village of The Year Competition* in 2011, and managing its entry. Westleton won 3rd place and £100 for Parish Council projects. The decision was based on community spirit, Parish Council actions, the village appearance and any special achievements.



THE VILLAGE SPEEDWATCH WILL RE-COMMENCE SHORTLY — MANNING VOLUNTEERS NEEDED.
Full training will be given.
Anyone interested in helping please contact Arlette Smith on 648378

