

Barking Parish Council Chairmans' Report 2008 - 2009

Barking Parish Council's year has been, as usual, a full one.

There have been **10 meetings** of the Parish Council during the past year; this is 3 more than usual due to the amount of business to be discussed.

Other meetings attended by Councillors were Wattisham Liaison meetings, Parish Liaison meetings at Mid Suffolk District Council and Boundary Committee meetings at Trinity Park, Ipswich and Kesgrave.

The Parish Council was consulted on 16 **planning applications**, 9 for Barking, 3 for Darmsden, 2 for the Lion Barn Industrial Estate and 2 for Baylham.

The Parish Council currently has its full complement of councillors. **Cllr Alison Emsden** as Chairman of the Council, with **Cllr Sue Marsh** as Vice-Chair. **Cllr John Berry** continues to represent Darmsden. **Cllrs Alan Jones and Sue Marsh** represent Barking on the Needham Market & Barking Welfare Charities, **Cllr Michael Bailey** on the Barking Village Hall Management Committee, and **Cllr Sue Marsh** on the Parish Paths Partnership. **Cllr Steve Austin** chairs the Parish Plan Steering Group. **Cllr Michael Smith** represents Barking on the Theobalds Trust and at the Wattisham Liaison Group meetings.

One Councillor attended **training**, as did the Parish Clerk, who attained the 'Certificate in Local Council Administration' qualification in May.

A **new Tree Warden** was appointed in June. Richard Cage is an experienced Suffolk Wildlife Trust volunteer, so is well qualified for the role.

The B1078 was identified for **safety improvements** and several measures have been put in place to hopefully reduce accidents at the site near to Kennels Farm. Due to a high number of accidents adjacent to Stone Cottage, a warning chevron has been placed at the corner and Suffolk County Council is considering other measures to reduce the number of incidents at this site.

Phase 1 of the footway project was realised earlier this year. A new footway up the hill from 'Highfields' to 'Ashford' was completed in April. Further phases will require the council to find some land to replace common land taken by the proposed footway.

The Tye

Income for the next 10 years has been assured with the acceptance of the Tye into both **Environmental Stewardship Agreement** schemes, at both Entry and Higher Level.

An **oak tree** was donated to the Parish by Mid Suffolk District Council and this has been planted along the far boundary.

A full consultation took place during the year as part of the Councils' plan to erect **fencing around the play area** on the Tye. The reason for this is to prevent dogs from fouling near the play equipment. The majority supported this action and the Council is now looking at the process involved to apply for permission.

The Parish Council now holds **Registered Title** to the Common. This was a fairly straightforward but lengthy process and will make dealing with easement applications much easier.

It was hoped that the new Bye Law signs erected last year would encourage visitors to the Tye to comply with the Bye Laws, but the Parish Council seems to be constantly asking people not to park on the common. **Mole hills** continue to be an annual problem, so these once again received attention in early spring to reduce trip hazards to users of the amenity area and to make the grass cutting easier. **Litter** on the Tye and throughout the parish remains a constant issue. Darmsden appears to be a target for **flytipping**, so this is being carefully monitored. There are now **3 litter pickers** employed by the Parish Council, Claire & Peter Bate, and Dick Nash. They do an excellent job and the costs are reclaimed from Mid Suffolk District Council by way of a Cleansing Grant. Barking is once again entering the **Village of the Year Competition**, to try to retain the award won 2 years ago, so it is hoped everyone will make an extra effort to keep Barking tidy and litter free during the summer and beyond.

Our **Village Caretaker**, Dick Nash, has continued to maintain parish assets such as the play equipment and wooden benches, he regularly cuts the grass to the rear of the village hall, picks up litter and empties the bins on the Tye. A **new play bridge** was installed to improve the multi-play equipment to the rear of the Village Hall and a **new seat** for one of the swings on the Tye. Full grant funding has been obtained to erect **picket-style fencing** around the amenity area to the rear of the Village Hall. This will provide a safe and secure area with the added benefit of excluding dogs.

The Parish Council funded and arranged for **new signs** for the Village Hall, **manholes** in the car park were repaired and the car park was regularly swept by the **Community Payback Team**.

The proposed **Boundary Change** affecting the Lion Barn Industrial Estate and 3 residential properties has now taken place and these are all now within the parish boundary of Needham Market with effect from 1st April 2009.

The **NATS Consultation** attracted much publicity throughout the year and yet another consultation is now expected on alternative proposals.

The Council has continued its policy to support local organisations and **donations** were given during the year to St Marys Church, and the Four Parishes Magazine. Other requests were re-directed to the Needham Market and Barking Welfare Charities.

The Parish Councils' **Easement Policy** was finally agreed. It is hoped this will ensure consistent approach to easement applications in the future.

A full **Financial Risk Assessment** was conducted to ensure all risks to the Council and its finances have been identified and measures taken to either reduce or eliminate the risks. An **Employment Policy** was adopted, to ensure a consistent approach to employment issues. Also, a **Freedom of Information Act Publication Scheme** was adopted. This lists all information available to the public and the associated charges.

7 **Welcome Packs** were given to new residents during the past 12 months and were well received. These are updated regularly and only printed out when needed.

New updated **Parish Footpath** leaflets were designed and printed. These were funded by the Barking 100 Club, which is no longer in existence due to changes in the Gaming Act.

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 Plan Steering Group** has now printed the Questionnaires . There are 4 questionnaires - Youth, Business , Household and General. These will be distributed shortly. It was hoped that the resultant Action Plan would be ready for this year's Annual Meeting, but the process has been much more complicated than originally anticipated. The target date for completion is now July 2009.

The Future

The Budget for 2009/2010 was set at £14,651 which resulted in an increase in the Precept to £8,362 to ensure that the Parish Council has sufficient funds to meet its' day to day expenses. It was felt prudent to take into account a possible 50% increase in energy prices. Funding will be sought for special projects as and when needed.

We will soon know more about the restructure of Local Government and which **Unitary Authority** we will be working with. **Community Boards** are being piloted by Mid Suffolk District Council, with Barking being represented by nominated Councillors within this Division.

Alison Emsden
Chairman
Barking Parish Council
14th May 2009