

Barking Parish Council Chairman's Report 2008

Barking Parish Council's year has been an exceptional one as it was celebrating its Centenary – 100 years since the council of Barking and Needham Market split into what we have now – two separate councils.

Celebrations began on 1st April at a special Thanksgiving Service at St Mary's Church, then on 4th August a Centenary Pageant was held at Barking Village Hall which was attended by all Village groups and organisations. Then in the evening a Summer Party with a hog roast and a live band was held in the garden of the Barking Fox Pub. The round off the year, a Celebration Dinner Dance was held in the Village Hall on 29th December. The overall financial cost of all of these events was £12.23. A Grand Draw took place at the Dinner Dance and the beneficiaries - the Children's Hospice in Ipswich, Stepping Stones in Stowmarket, and Barking's Chestnut Club each received £60.

For some extraordinary reason, we decided to enter Barking for the **Village of the Year competition** in 2007, and the judging took place in June and July. As you know, Barking won the Mid-Suffolk round and was awarded £200 for doing so, plus is home to an impressive Village of the Year sign for two years. Next year we shall have to decide whether to enter the competition again so that we have the chance to retain our title. This year, the competition is for those villages with populations over 500. In addition to the Village of the Year title, Barking was also awarded the Open Spaces Award for the Tye, for which we received £100. We were also delighted to receive the Parish Council of the Year Award, which in our Centenary Year was the icing on the cake. The Award ceremony was attended by the Chairman and Cllr Michael Smith, at Levington, the winners of the overall trophy, where we were given the certificates which we have on display in the entrance foyer of the village hall. A brass plaque followed which is also on display. On top of all that, Barking Parish Council was named **Parish Council of the Year**. We were presented with a hand-made gavel, made by Tony Ward out of the wood from the Yew Tree which was damaged in the 1987 storm.

We have Julia Truelove, our Suffolk County Councillor to thank for the bulk of the funding which enabled us to purchase **new chairs for the village hall**. The order was placed on the 5th December 2007 and the chairs were finally received on 8th May 2008. The first consignment is still sitting in Israel, having been impounded due to paperwork irregularities! The Barking 100 Club generously donated £692 towards the final cost and the remainder is

being made up by the Parish Council, using the £200 Village of the Year Award. The seats are guaranteed up to 150,000 rubs so should last us for many years to come.

A new Local History Recorder for the Parish was appointed – Mabs Harrison and she put on an excellent display of photographs at the Centenary Event in August.

A paper bank was installed at the Village Hall to compliment the bottle banks and this brings in welcome revenue for the Village Hall. For each tonne of recycling we receive £20 for the paper bank, £16.15 for the bottle banks and £60 for the Clothing/Textiles Bank.

The road between Barking and Somersham was dug up for a large part of the year, due to Anglian Water laying a new mains service along the entire length of the road, resulting in diversions through Needham Market and Great Blakenham. Thankfully, the road has now been fully repaired, with just the white lines to be added. The corner of the Tye was dug up to give Anglian Water access to the mains and we have been promised the bald patch will be re-seeded and made good. Although a 3-month notice was served that Anglian Water would need access to the Tye, the Clerk negotiated a payment of £930 from Anglian Water for immediate access plus inconvenience. This money was a welcome addition to the Council coffers.

Under Section 137 of the Local Government Act 1972, the Parish Council can make contributions to local organisations. The Council has continued its policy to support local organisations only and **donations** were given during the year to St Marys Church, the East Anglian Air Ambulance, the Four Parishes Magazine. Other requests were re-directed to the Needham Market and Barking Welfare Charities.

A new 5-a-side football net was provided courtesy of the Barking 100 Club and the goal itself received a new lick of paint which will keep it in good condition for a few years to come.

In June 2007 Mid Suffolk District Council agreed to supply Barking with **three new Bye Law signs for the Tye**, and these were finally installed last week. The old ones will be taken down then the ground is a little softer. The new ones are very smart and feature the village sign. Breaches of the Bye Laws continue to be a problem, so it is hoped that these new signs will encourage visitors to the Tye to comply with them .

The clerk arranged for ditches to be piped and filled in along a length of Tye stretching from Orchard House to Tye Farm, which has resulted in people

being able to walk along on a grass verge in safety, whereas prior to this one would have to jump out of the road to safety every time a car passed by, with only a ditch to fall into! Thank you to David Strawson for bringing the safety issue to our attention.

Barking was host to the **Needham Phoenix Football Club** during November while their own pitch was being repaired. It was good to see the football pitch used again for competitive matches.

The council has agreed its policy for granting **easements** across the common. A potential problem was highlighted by the fact that it was possible that having a 99 year lease to cross the common by motor vehicle to someone's home was not deemed to be adequate assurance for a would-be purchaser. So, a policy has been approved whereby a person who currently enjoys access either by long use, by licence or by lease, may apply for an easement in perpetuity at no cost other than the legal fees. The council debated long into the night on many occasions to come up with a policy that would be fair to everyone. A dispensation had to be sought from the Standards Board to enable this to happen.

The Council adopted the **2007 Model Code of Conduct for Parish and Town Councils** its meeting on 19th July 2007 as per requirements by the Standards Board for England.

Mid Suffolk District Council have been undertaking a rigorous consultation process with parish and town councils for the new **Local Development Framework**. Part of the consultation included the Core Strategy Options which has an impact of any future development within the parish. Due to the lack of services (no shops, no schools, no post office, etc), it is proposed that Barking is categorised at Countryside, which means that there will be no development permitted other than for a proven need for low cost affordable housing. The council held a special meeting to debate its response to that proposal and decided that Barking would want some in-fill if a good case were made.

The Parish Council applied for and received a generous grant of £250 via the Suffolk Association of Local Councils for a **marquee** for the use of the parish. So a new marquee measuring 4m x 8m has now been purchased which has been passed into the safe-keeping of the Community Council.

Elections took place in May and the Council acquired 2 new Councillors – Sue Marsh from Barking and John Berry representing Darmsden. **Cllr Alan Jones** was appointed Chairman in May, with Vice-Chair **Cllr Alison Emsden**. Representatives on outside bodies are **Cllr Sue Marsh & Cllr**

Alan Jones on the Needham Market & Barking Welfare Charities, **Cllr Michael Smith** on the Theobalds Trust, **Cllr Michael Bailey** on the Barking Village Hall Management Committee, and **Cllr Sue Marsh** on the Parish Paths Partnership. Cllr Emsden chaired the Easement Committee, Cllr Berry has represented the parish at the NATS meetings and Cllr Austin chairs the Parish Plan Steering Group.

Two Councillors attended training courses, as did the Parish Clerk, who is eagerly awaiting the outcome following the submission of her Clerks 'Certificate in Local Council Administration' Portfolio. This qualification is mandatory for any council wishing to gain Quality Parish Status.

Regarding road safety, we are very pleased that Suffolk County Council may bring forward its plans to create a footway through barking, with the first phase up the hill from 'Highfields' to 'Ashford' commencing as early as next year. Further phases will require the council to find some land to replace common land which will be taken by the proposed footway. The Council is pressing the Highways Authority to extend the 30mph limit to beyond the Moat farm Barns development that this is proving very difficult due to the low density of housing at that site. It is understood that the Suffolk Roadsafe Board is proposing to erect temporary warning signs at locations which have been identified for safety improvements in 2008/09. These locations are where casualties have been killed or seriously injured. One of the proposed sites is on the B1078 near the boundary with Needham Market, the site of a fatal accident a couple of years ago. The parish Council is also arranging another site meeting with the aim of improving road safety.

The Parish Councils application to SALC for free computer equipment was successful and we have received a **laptop, printer, training, wireless broadband access and a broadband grant.**

Management of the Tye - MSDC were once again contracted to cut the Tye, and have to take some of the credit for Barking winning the Open Spaces Award. The council has applied to DEFRA to enter the Tye into the Environmental Stewardship Scheme and we should soon hear which level we will be accepted into – the Entry or Higher Level. The application was a very complicated and time-consuming process, and although we have received no income for two years, a bridging payment was secured and will be paid when the application has been accepted. Moles and rabbits have been causing problems on the Tye, but have now been dealt with quite successfully.

There have been **13 meetings** in all - 7 full council meetings, 3 Easement Committee Meetings, 2 Planning Committee Meetings and 1 Budget Setting Meeting.

Nothing more has been heard about the proposed boundary change between Barking and Needham Market, so this council continues to receive planning applications for the Lion Barn Industrial Estate. In all, there have **been 11 planning applications** for consideration, 3 of which were for the Lion Barn Industrial Estate, 2 for Darmsden and 6 for Barking.

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. The Council receives a Cleansing Grant from MSDC which covers the cost of the litter picking.

The **access drive to the Village Hall** was resurfaced last June, just before the Village of the Year judging took place. Our thanks to the Needham Market & Barking Welfare Charities for providing all of the necessary funding.

A full review of the **Council's Internal Audit process** was undertaken and it was considered that the scope and frequency was considered sufficient for the size and level of business activity of the Council.

6 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.

The Barking Parish Web Site continues to attract many visitors, managing to reach the heady heights of the top 20 most visited sites on the oneSuffolk portal. Since its launch in May 2005, it has had over 1,000 hits (1,0180). The site is maintained by the Parish Clerk at no additional cost to the parish other than a contribution to the broadband connection.

The **Parish Plan Steering Group** has been formed, headed by Councillor Steve Austin, and the necessary funds are being secured. It is anticipated that the resultant Action Plan will be issued at next years' meeting.

The Future

The **Budget for 2008/2009** was set at £14,396 which resulted in an increase in the Precept to £8,095 to ensure that the Parish Council has sufficient

funds to meet its' day to day expenses. Funding will be sought for special projects as and when needed.

It is still hoped to provide a **fence around the play area** on the Tye. David Bishop has provided us with detailed plans of the play area, so Councillor Bailey is now working on the application to the Secretary of State plus all the necessary advertising.

Regarding the **footway** through the village, it is hoped that by this time next year, another phase will be completed.

We will know more about the **restructure of Local Government** and which Unitary Authority we will be working with, and whether we will be working more closely with other Parish Councils (or even merged with them!).

We will know soon which **Stewardship Agreement** will dictate how we manage the Tye and what we can do and how much income we will receive. A smaller income may mean we cannot afford to have the grass cut as often as it is now? Or we have to look for other ways to create an income from the Tye.

Finally - **The Parish Plan** will be a large focus for the coming year. It is important that everyone completes their questionnaire, as the feedback we receive as a Parish Council may well be incorporated in our plans for the future 5 – 10 years.

Alan Jones
Chairman
Barking Parish Council
15th May 2008