

SPROUGHTON PARISH COUNCIL
Annual Report of the Council for the Year Ending 31st March 2015

Council Details : The Clerk to the Council and the Responsible Financial Officer of the Parish Council is Mrs Sue Frankis. The Clerk is required to give clear guidance to Councillors before decisions are reached, even when that guidance may be unpalatable; advising on governance, ethical and procedural matters. The Clerk is an employee of the Council.

Mrs Frankis continues to provide and support the Council with a professional and quality service in an efficient way. Very many thanks Sue.

Councillors for the year were: Simon Curl (chairman), John Kitson (vice chairman, resigned), Helen Davies, Vic Durrant, Gwen Moore, Keith Barwick and Peter Powell (co-opted). At the year end, there were 6 Councillor vacancies.

The Council held regular public meetings through the year in the Barley Room; 12 in total. Agendas and minutes were publicly available on noticeboards and the Council's website. Attendances were as follows; 1 Cllr attended 11 meetings, 2 Cllrs attended 10 meetings, 1 Cllr attended 9 meetings and 1 Cllr attended 8 meetings. John Kitson attended 4 meetings prior to his resignation and since being co-opted Peter Powell attended all 3 meetings. Meetings were open to the public, and the Council was pleased to have in regular attendance Sproughton's 2 District and 1 County Councillor together with Police representatives.

Thank you to Parish Councillors for their time and dedication, particularly to John Kitson for his time and work on detailed matters of contracts, health and safety and risk management.

The Council has one committee, the Planning Committee, which considers planning applications received from Planning Authorities, and to consider other matters of a Planning nature affecting the parish. The Committee meets generally fortnightly. The Council also has Panels, which membership is open to parishioners. The most active being the Transport Panel and the recently constituted Tithe Barn Management and Development Advisory Panel. These Panels are chaired by Cllr Vic Durrant and Cllr Helen Davies respectively.

2014/15 Council Finance : Full details are given in a separate **Statement of Accounts Report**. The headline figures being;

Income (£85,385.09) : Precept (£49,573), Tithe Barn lettings (£19,095.80), Beer Festival (£9,490.65), Other Income : Fees, Rents and Interest (£7,225.64).

Expenditure (£45,698.17) : General Admin. (£16,672.37), Tithe Barn (£22,478.83), Other Running Costs (£11,549.77), Beer Festival (£5,471.92), Award of Grants (£1,003.92).

Deposits to Renewal Accrual Funds (£15,140) : Tithe Barn (£7,000), Burial Ground (£1,000), Street Lighting (£3,500), Children's Play Area (£2,640), Bus Shelter and Noticeboards (£1,000).

In the light of uncertainties within the banking world, the Council decided during the year to move its reserves from the Co-Operative bank, and to spread its financial reserves amongst a number of banking institutions.

Allotments : The Council has a lease with the Felix Thornley Cobbold Agricultural Trust on land adjacent to the Wild Man public house for the sole use as allotment gardens. The Council administers the arrangements for the letting and management of the allotments. The annual rent charged to the Council by the Trust is £445.00. The Council currently charges allotment holders £2.25 per rod per year. There are currently no vacant plots and a waiting list of 4.

Burial Ground : The Council is responsible for the management of the burial ground in Church Lane and continues to maintain it to a high standard; grass and hedge cut, paths swept and cleared. The Council authorises burials and the erection of memorials.

Village Caretaking : Mike Herbert is employed by the Council to carryout Burial Ground and village green maintenance, grass cutting and litter clearance with caretaking and ‘odd jobs’ in the Tithe Barn and around the village. Mike provides an ‘on hand’ service to the Council, and continues to deliver a responsive high standard of work. The Council is most grateful to him.

Tithe Barn, Barley Room and Kitchen : The Barn and courtyard are important village resources, having significant historic and community importance and use. The Council is responsible for managing their use, maintenance and improvement. Jane Draper is employed as Tithe Barn warden to oversee use and security, and to assist with hiring arrangements and management. Jane is the Designated Premises Supervisor, administering the requirements of the Premises Licence and Hiring Agreements. Much of Jane’s work is done during unsocial hours; late at night and weekends. The Council offers grateful thanks to Jane for her work. The Tithe Barn kitchen has been recently redecorated. The Council issued an Occupational Licence to the Sproughton Community Shop CIC for use of the West Store area as a shop. The Barley Room is used for the provision of weekly community lunches. The Tithe Barn continued to host wedding receptions and other private functions, dances, keep fitness classes, lectures and presentations, charity sales, craft fairs, the annual beer festival etc.

Planning Applications : The Council is consulted in the main by Babergh District Council (Local Planning Authority) on planning applications and works to trees protected by Tree Preservation Orders. The Planning Committee considers applications and decides on recommendations to be made to the Planning Authority. The Council has been consulted on 32 planning applications during the year (up 39% on the previous year). Babergh granted planning permission for 23, refused 3 (2 of which are currently at Appeal with the Secretary of State), 5 remain undetermined and 1 was withdrawn. The future redevelopment of the old Beet Sugar Factory remains uncertain; concern over environmental impacts on Hadleigh Road area residents and traffic impact on roads in the community exist.

Transport Panel : Cllr Vic Durrant is chairman of the Panel. The Panel reports to the Council, and is made up of a mix of councillors and non-councillors. The Panel remains proactively involved in Lorry Watch, issues over traffic speeding, the Snoasis traffic mitigation measures, extension of 30mph limit on B1113 towards Bramford and street lighting. Significant time and effort has been expended on the SnOasis traffic mitigation measures for High Street and their funding; progress stalled because of safety concerns and potential changes to funding of the scheme. The Panel advised the Council over converting its 40 plus street lights to ‘Part Night’ lighting. Levels, speeds and type of traffic in Sproughton remain key issues. Very many thanks to Vic and Panel members for their work.

Tithe Barn Management and Development Advisory Panel : This Panel is under the chairmanship of Cllr Helen Davies to advise and make recommendations to the Council on strategic matters relating to the management, maintenance, development, improvement of the Tithe Barn complex.

Summary : The level of Councillor vacancies remains a concern and is a limiting factor in what issues and tasks the Council can tackle at any one time. Recruitment to the 6 vacancies is an imperative.

Managing financial and other resources and optimizing income remain important. Thank you all Councillors and the Clerk for their continued work and support in serving their community.