

DEBENHAM PARISH COUNCIL – ANNUAL REPORT FOR THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING 28 MAY 2012

This has been another very busy year for the Parish Council. Following the Parish Council elections on 5 May last year, eight of our Members were elected unopposed leaving five vacant seats. During the year we were pleased to welcome new Members, Mrs Heather Galley, Ramsey Selim, Steve Palframan and very recently Steven Phipps. We welcome them to the council and look forward to working with them in the future. Unfortunately during the year, due to other commitments or due to moving from the village we lost Mrs Jean Parnell and Mr Laurie Stock from our number and very recently Mrs Carol Hellier and Ian Baldwin. On behalf of the Council and Community I thank them hugely for all their efforts on behalf of the village and wish them well for the future.

This still leaves five vacancies and we would be very pleased to hear from any willing parishioners interested in joining the Council.

Following Suffolk CC's divestment and budget cut programme the Parish council has been involved in talks to secure both the Library/Resource Centre and Youth Club in the village. There is now some light at the end of the tunnel the Library Service, having been contracted to IPS, has secured the Debenham Library for 24 months at its present site and talks are still ongoing as to whether it may move the Primary School after that date. We take the opportunity to thank the Library Working Group and Melanie Woods for their past and continued work with Suffolk Cc in retaining the facility in Debenham. We also take the opportunity to thank County Cllr Eddy Alcock for stepping in to talks with Suffolk CC Youth Service to retain the use of the High Suffolk Centre for Debenham Youth and to The Forge for taking over the running of the Youth Club, now known as The Base. Reports state the Club is thriving and attendance numbers have increased. This has been a huge achievement on behalf of our young people and we thank Eddy and The Forge for their efforts on our behalf.

We have welcomed the now quarterly DLC Stakeholder meetings, these have given us a greater understanding of the use and running of the Centre and the financial challenges they have to meet and we welcome these regular meetings continuing.

Some 30 odd planning applications were considered for recommendation to MSDC during the year including the proposal to combine the Police and Fire Station in an attempt to make financial savings. Full details of the Parish Council's recommendations to MSDC are available to view on the Parish Council section of the Debenham Website.

A number of community funding applications were granted during the year, these included : £250 to the Royal Wedding celebrations at the Community Centre; £250 towards the Debenham Arts Festival; £350 to the Fireworks Display at the leisure Centre; £150 towards the proposed replacement of the High Suffolk Community Bus providing a twice weekly service between Debenham and Stowmarket; £1500 to the Debenham Community Swimming Pool Group funding raising for refurbishment of the pool at the Primary School and £100 to the Mid Suffolk CAB.

Following the Public Lavatories consultation last July and in further support of retaining the facility, some 19 members of the parish attended the August meeting to voice their support for retaining the toilets. We are grateful to all those parishioners who took part in the consultation; it gave the Parish Council a clear view as to the future of the toilets. Following the overwhelming support and in an attempt to reduce the running costs the cleaning contract was put out to tender and a new contract was secured reducing running costs by some £1000 pa.

A number of other projects were completed. The installation of the Youth Shelter at the DLC and the provision of some 16 additional allotment plots this March resulting in a nil waiting list at the moment. We thank Mr Martin Durie for his help in bringing this about and the Debenham Allotment Association for marking out the new plots.

There has been a decision to move the siting of the Skate park to the Recreation Ground and we await a presentation by Project D on Wednesday of this week setting out their proposals and dimensions for the park.

Maintenance work during the year has included replacing or providing new dog or litter bins, replacement of the WC in the gents toilets, replacement of the pedestrian gate at the children's play area at the Recreation Ground, installation of a new street light at the corner of Water/Priory lane and again we thank County Cllr Eddy Alcock for a contribution of £500 towards the lamp from his locality budget and tree maintenance work amounting to some £2000 was carried out to numerous trees in Cemetery Lane and Lock Close. We are also pleased to report that transfer of the ownership to the Parish Council of what has become known as SK8499 is now complete; this largely involves the Lock Close and Andrews Close community greens.

The year end accounts will be available during the meeting. The precept for 2012/13 was set at £62,729, a slight decrease on last year of some £93.00.

We were saddened to learn that Mr Geoff Ridge had passed away. Geoff had dealt with pest control in the cemetery, at the allotments and at the woodland on the Council's behalf for many years. His work had been valued and we sent our deep sympathies to his wife and family.

We were pleased to be able to congratulate the Debenham Project on being awarded the Suffolk ACRE Probert Trophy for best community achievement and we thank them for all they are doing within the Debenham community and surrounds. We were also pleased to be part of the celebratory lunch to mark the retirement of Sgt Nick Emerick and organised by Mrs Joan Bedford-Lane. Nick had been based at Debenham for 5 years and we wish him and his wife every happiness in their retirement.

The Saturday Morning surgeries have been poorly attended over the last year and we are now considering alternating the quarterly Saturday sessions with some quarterly mid week Sessions. Details of these will be advertised soon. We are however pleased that the Market Green at the heart of the

village, has continued to be used for village events including cake stalls, plant sales, Christmas Carols and street events.

I would like to thank our street cleansers, Mark and Gilly Sillett for their continued support, our grass cutting contractor, Richard Giffin, for the huge improvements he has made to our green areas and those helpers who regularly turn out annually to help put up and take down both Christmas Trees – not always an easy task and their help is much appreciated.

We thank our County Councillor Eddy Alcock and District Councillor, Kathie Guthrie for their continued support, all Officers based at Debenham Police Station, the easy relationship we have with them all is of huge benefit to the parish. I thank the Clerk, Dina, for her contribution to the work of the council over the last year and lastly my fellow councillors for all their efforts and commitment on behalf of the community.

Richard Blackwell
28 May 2012